

The Looming Nursing Shortage

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT
ON HOSPITALS IN THE YEARS AHEAD

Fastaff[®]
AN INGENOVIS HEALTH COMPANY



THE LOOMING NURSING SHORTAGE UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT ON HOSPITALS IN THE YEARS AHEAD

While the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is certainly behind us, the impacts are sure to be felt for years – if not decades. Medical interventions, coupled with immunity fostered by vaccines and the natural spread of the virus were critical in gaining logistical control over the disease. As overcrowding in hospitals eased, we saw a corresponding reduction in death rates and a decrease in patients suffering long-term complications from the disease.

But the acute medical crisis is only the most visible aspect of the pandemic.

As an already increasing nursing shortage became even more apparent in the wake of the pandemic, hospitals and healthcare organizations are scrambling now, more than ever, to cover nursing shortages. Nurses are leaving the profession in droves because of the trauma inflicted by COVID-19, including long hours on understaffed units, the unique challenges and frightening uncertainties of providing care in a deadly pandemic, the complexity of serving critically ill and dying patients, and more.



As the pioneer and industry leader in Rapid Response[®] nurse staffing solutions, Fastaff has been supporting hospitals since 1989, providing essential nursing services in response to urgent and critical situations, including natural disasters, unexpected staffing shortages and outbreaks such as SARS, H1N1 and, most recently, COVID-19. Fastaff leverages decades of experience responding to critical events to help healthcare facilities meet temporary nurse staffing needs.

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And that's not all. Other factors, including a rapidly aging nursing workforce are coming together in a perfect storm that will challenge nursing administrators like never before. When looking ahead, forecasts show about 203,200 openings for registered nurses projected each year, on average, over the next decade. Many of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, including those who retire.¹ This all combines to create staffing challenges that are certain to impact quality of care.

PANDEMIC RELATED STRESSORS

Alarm bells about a nursing shortage have been ringing for years. The pandemic just increased the intensity of those alarms. In March 2022, the American Nurses Foundation and the American Nurses Association released the results of a COVID-19 Impact Assessment Survey, which found that 52% of nurses are considering leaving their current position due primarily to insufficient staffing, work negatively affecting their health and well-being and the inability to deliver quality care. In addition, 60% of acute care nurses reported feeling burned out, and 75% reported feeling stressed, frustrated, and exhausted.²

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In the course of what only seemed to be days, nursing administrators went from planning for a potential pandemic, to being on the front lines of a critical care situation we hadn't seen in modern times. These have been a difficult few years. But a lot of lessons have been learned that will help us ensure we are ready when we are faced with a similar situation in the future.

– KATHY KOHNKE
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

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While burnout in the nursing profession is not new, the contrast between pre-pandemic and the most recent data is staggering. In a Nurse.com Nurse Salary Research Report conducted in 2022, a whopping 29% of nurses across all license types were considering leaving. This compared to just 11% in 2020. That is a rate increase of almost three times in just two years of the pandemic.³ A variety of other surveys from respected organizations show similar results.

With nursing schools forced to turn tens of thousands of applicants for baccalaureate and graduate programs away because of a lack of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space and other factors,⁴ it seems likely that current shortages will be exacerbated in the coming decade. It won't be long before hospitals and healthcare organizations begin to feel significant pressure from a dwindling workforce.

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We know the nursing workforce is facing burnout. And we know the industry is going to lose more. The time to act in ensuring adequate staffing is now. This isn't a wait-and-see situation.

– LAURA LOVELESS
SENIOR DIRECTOR, CLIENT SERVICES

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LONG-TERM EFFECTS

This looming nursing shortage will have serious implications for hospitals and other healthcare facilities in terms of staffing, patient care and overall efficiency. With fewer nurses available, healthcare providers may struggle to provide adequate patient care as they scramble to fill open positions with qualified personnel. This could lead to longer wait times in emergency rooms as well as delays in transferring patients between departments or facilities. Additionally, as fewer people pursue nursing careers, wages are likely to decline for all nurses, directly affecting morale among healthcare workers and ultimately putting more strain on already exhausted hospital workers.

In the last two decades, several published works have established the correlation between high quality nursing care and positive patient outcomes. As competition for a smaller number of highly skilled nurses ramps up, hospitals and healthcare organizations that are proactive and innovative in their recruiting efforts have an advantage. These organizations stand to benefit greatly from being able to maintain staffing ratios and a high quality of care, even in the face of what is anticipated to be a wave of rising admissions in the coming years due in part to Baby Boomers moving into their later years.

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The most strategic hospitals and healthcare organizations are putting plans in place today to ensure they can adequately staff their patient care units tomorrow. These forward-thinking organizations are going to have an advantage in the years to come.

– KATHY KOHNKE
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

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STAFFING SOLUTIONS FOR HOSPITALS

The new playing field for hospitals and healthcare organizations requires an innovative approach to staffing. Among the most effective strategies is working with Fastaff Rapid Response® Travel Nursing to ensure adequate staffing is available in short order when the need arises.

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Time to Fill

One call to Fastaff results in instant action. Our in-house team of experts addresses all staffing issues with urgency, often providing qualified candidates for initial review within two days. Fastaff's guaranteed delivery promise enables hospitals to keep all units operating at full capacity, including highly specialized critical units. While a hospital is recruiting for a hard-to-fill specialty staff nurse, Fastaff can deliver instant relief with a highly skilled travel nurse.

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With a deep database of experienced nurses in hard-to-fill specialties, Fastaff differs from traditional travel agencies by guaranteeing coverage in even the most critical units. This allows hospitals to avoid long delays during recruitment searches by supplementing existing staff with a short-term, highly qualified Fastaff nurse.

Fastaff ensures hospitals and healthcare organizations meet their unique needs quickly and efficiently while simultaneously minimizing the administrative burden associated with securing clinicians. And Fastaff guarantees the delivery of qualified clinicians in 10 days or less, which is significantly faster than traditional recruitment methods.

Flexible-length Assignment

Hospitals have flexibility to use Fastaff nurses only for as long as they need them, without being locked into a traditional 13-week assignment. Once a full-time employee has been recruited and hired, the Fastaff nursing assignment can be canceled within a four-shift notice with no penalty fees. Alternatively, if recruiting a replacement takes longer than originally planned, hospitals can easily extend the Fastaff assignment.

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Fastaff understands the dilemmas facing hospitals today in terms of recruiting and retaining nurses, and the risks associated with short staffing. Adding experienced nurses to the core staff on an as-needed basis, not only provides continuous, high-quality patient care, but helps to prevent burnout and dissatisfaction among existing nurses. Our proven Fastaff operational flexibility method has earned us a reputation as the leader in delivering hospitals and healthcare organizations the expertise and nimble response they need to continue providing excellent patients care. By partnering with facilities and creating strategic staffing plans, Fastaff can support both clinical outcomes and the hospital's bottom line.

Rural Area Recruitment

Fastaff has a track record of successfully placing travel nurses in more than 900 client facilities of all sizes, in all locations. Fastaff nurses can be deployed to rural hospitals for flexible-length assignments, while long-term recruitment efforts are underway.



Fastaff is relentlessly focused on meeting the needs of our partners. No matter how unique your organization is, we are committed to developing a plan of action that will address your priorities now and into the future.

– LAURA LOVELESS
SENIOR DIRECTOR, CLIENT SERVICES

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CONCLUSION

As we move closer to 2030 - the year many experts anticipate the nurse shortage to peak - hospitals and health organizations must be proactive. They must make recruitment of nurses a priority. They must design systems that ensure nurses are compensated for their demanding work. They must implement strategies that create an environment where nurses thrive, and patients receive quality care.

And they must identify partners who can quickly jump in to provide qualified nurses when gaps materialize. Partnering with Fastaff enables facilities to build a strategic plan to fill staffing gaps, while also meeting quality and financial objectives.

By acting now, hospitals and healthcare organizations throughout the U.S. can ensure they remain adequately staffed while maintaining high quality patient care services well into the future.

Start the conversation today by emailing HelpNow@Fastaff.com

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Staffing is our business, and we take pride in our approach. As a strategic partner, everything we do is focused on improving efficiency and effectiveness for the hospitals and healthcare organizations we are fortunate to serve.

– KATHY KOHNKE
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

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FOOTNOTES/REFERENCES

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