

WWAMI CENTER FOR HEALTH WORKFORCE STUDIES

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Project Summary

June 2007

Washington State Registered Nurse Supply and Demand Projections: 2006-2025

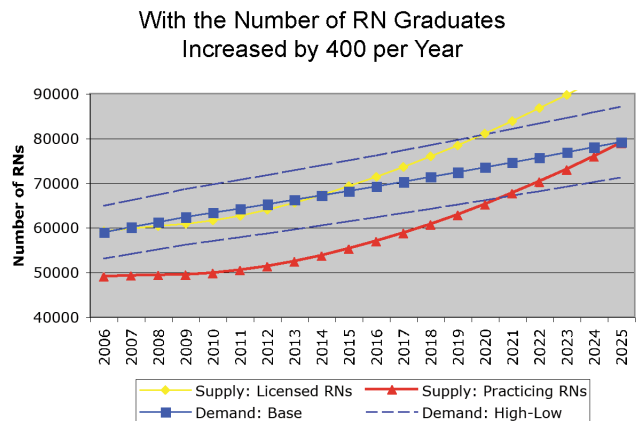
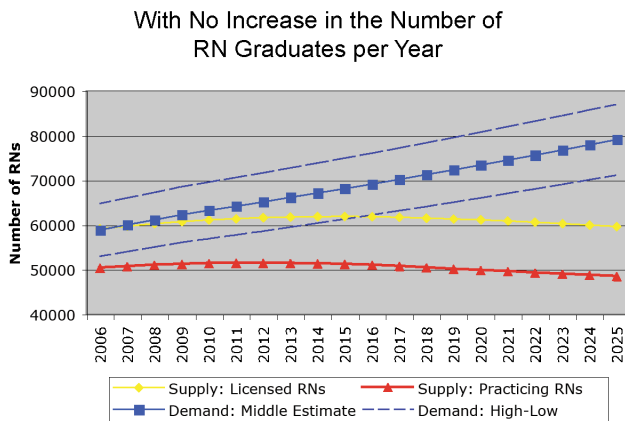
Background: More registered nurses (RNs) are needed to meet the demand for nurses over the next decade. Better understanding of the factors that affect RN supply and demand and which factors have the greatest impact are critical for making policy decisions to address the nursing shortage. This report describes projected trends in RN supply and demand for Washington State through 2025, factors that affect RN supply and demand, and the availability of data for these projections.

Study Design: This projection of RN supply is built upon the base RN supply from Washington State’s 2006 list of licensed RNs with active Washington licenses. The projection model then applies estimates of factors that increase and decrease RN supply, including the number of graduates from Washington nursing schools, NCLEX exam pass rates, foreign-educated RNs entering the U.S.,

in-migration from other states, re-activation of licensure after license expiration, deaths, license expirations due to individuals leaving nursing careers and age-related retirements, out-migration to other states, and RNs not employed in nursing.

RN demand factors include numbers of employed RNs and vacant RN positions. For each of these supply and demand factors, the projections incorporate estimated rates of change over time. The estimated demand for RNs, the supply of licensed RNs, and the supply of RNs working in nursing in Washington through 2025 are described in this report. It also shows comparisons of the projected supply of Washington RNs per 100,000 population with a benchmark national ratio of RNs per 100,000 population. In addition, the report addresses RN supply for workforce development areas of the state.

RN Supply-Demand Projections for Washington State, 2006-2025



Findings:

✘ The average age of Washington’s RNs was 48 years, and more than a third were 55 years of age or older. As a result, the high rate of RNs retiring from nursing practice over the next two decades will significantly reduce RN supply.

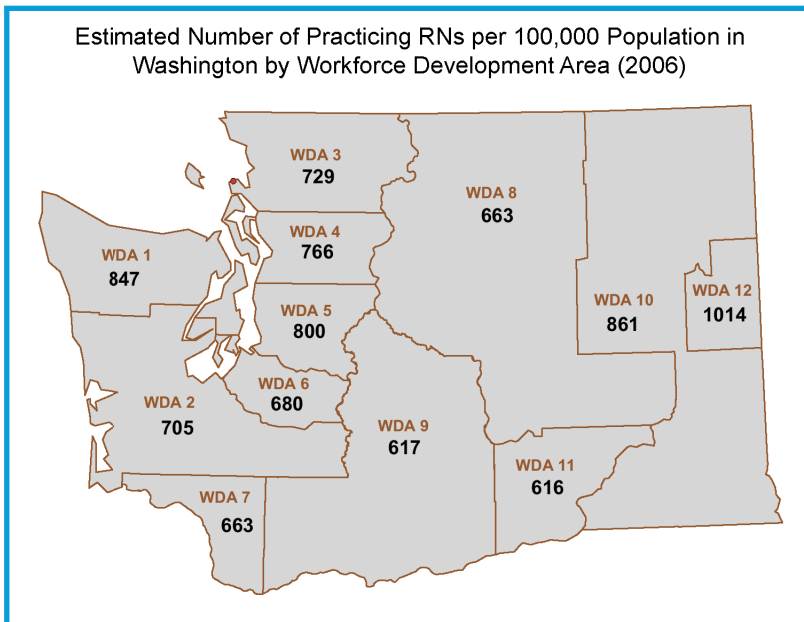
✘ RN education capacity is a factor under policy control that has a large impact on state RN supply.

✘ If the rate of graduation from nursing schools in Washington does not increase above that of 2006, these projections show that RN supply in Washington will begin to decline in approximately 2015. If graduation rates increase by 400 RNs per year, supply will increase over the next two decades and reach the range of estimated RN demand by approximately 2021.

✘ The demand for RNs appears likely to increase steadily due to growth and aging of the state’s population. Major changes in health care delivery systems or the economic environment, however, could alter the rate of increase in RN demand.

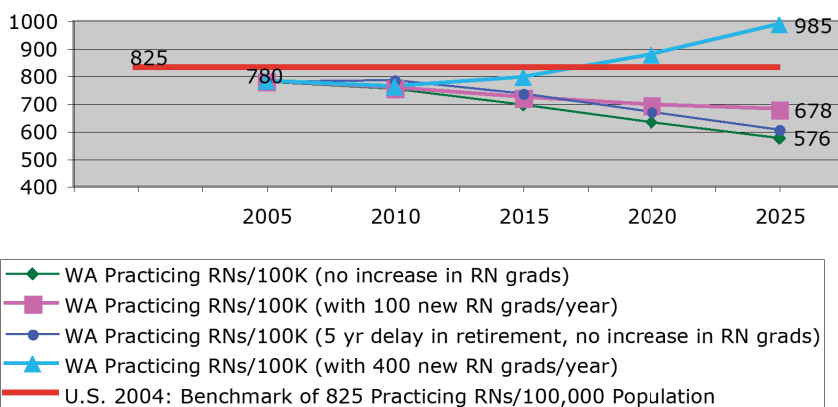
✘ At the sub-state level it is difficult to project RN supply and demand because few sub-state data are available and because RNs often do not work in the areas where they reside. The age of RNs in small areas may be the best predictor of future RN shortage.

✘ Data needed for future RN supply and demand projections include more accurate counts of the number of foreign-educated RNs beginning U.S. practice in Washington, RNs who obtain licenses in the state after entering from other states, and licensed Washington RNs who are not employed in nursing.



Policy Implications: Understanding the factors that influence the rates of change of RN supply and demand are important policy tools. Projection models, such as those presented in this report, allow policymakers and planners to test the impact of different decisions and conditions on the RN workforce. Increasing education capacity so that more RN graduates are produced in the state may be the most effective policy lever for overcoming projected shortages in Washington’s RN supply.

Estimated Number of RNs per 100,000 Population Under Different Supply Projection Scenarios, 2005-2025, Compared with 2004 U.S. Benchmark



Findings from this study are more fully described in WWAMI Center for Health Workforce Studies Final Report #112: Skillman SM, Andrilla CHA, Hart LG, Washington State Registered Nurse Supply and Demand Projections: 2006-2025, June 2007.