



## Enhancing Diversity in the Wisconsin Nursing Workforce

A diverse nursing workforce, reflective of the population it serves, contributes to improved patient access, satisfaction, and health outcomes. The 2004 Sullivan Report stated, "The fact that the nation's health professions have not kept pace with changing demographics may be an even greater cause of disparities in health access and outcomes than the persistent lack of health insurance for tens of millions of Americans." (p. 1)

**According to the 2014 Healthiest Wisconsin 2020: Baseline and Health Disparities Report, Wisconsin health disparities include:**

- **Men** who died before age 75 from **coronary heart disease**: Black 73%, Hispanic 68%, Asian 71%, and American Indian 73%, as compared to 42% of White men. **Women** who died before age 75 from **coronary heart disease**: Black 54%, Hispanic 48%, Asian 35%, American Indian 50%, as compared to 19% of White women.
- **Men** who died before age 75 from **stroke**: Black 66%, Hispanic 59%, Asian 68%, and American Indian 64%, as compared to 28% of White men. **Women** who died before age 75 from **stroke**: Black 53%, Hispanic 46%, Asian 43%, and American Indian 40%, as compared to 15% of White women.
- Black adults are 2.5 times more likely, American Indians 2.3 times more likely, and Hispanics 1.5 times more likely to be diagnosed with **diabetes** than White adults.
- Blacks were 12.8 times as likely, American Indians 3.2 times as likely, and Hispanics 2.5 times as likely to be the victim of **homicide**.
- **Infant mortality**: An infant born to a Black woman is 3 times as likely to die before reaching his or her first birthday as an infant born to a White woman.

Note: Although, the Hmong population encompasses a significant percentage of Wisconsin's diversity, no Hmong-specific data are available at this time.

**A diverse workforce is required to better meet the health needs of an increasingly diverse population. The Wisconsin nursing workforce lacks diversity on all levels and exists across the state and across all regions. Nursing has not made adequate progress recruiting minorities and does not mirror the diverse populations for which it provides care.**

- Wisconsin population: 85% White, 6% Black, 6% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 1% American Indian
- Wisconsin RNs: 94.8% White, 1.8% Black, 1.4% Hispanic, 1.3% Asian, 0.3% American Indian
- Wisconsin LPNs: 88.1% White, 6% Black, 1.7% Hispanic
- Gender gap: 93.5 % of Wisconsin RNs and 95.4% of LPNs are female

**Projections indicate there is a pending nursing workforce crisis with the shortage of RNs growing to nearly 20,000 nurses in Wisconsin by 2035. An inability to recruit and retain nurses from under-represented groups will impede efforts to grow the nursing workforce.**

Barriers to achieving greater diversity in nursing education, and ultimately the profession, include financial needs, academic support, feelings of isolation of under-represented groups, and potential for racism and discrimination. In order to enhance diversity in the nursing profession, concerted efforts must be made to address barriers which prevent under-represented groups from entering the profession, as well as advancing to levels of nursing leadership, including becoming educators.

**To address these barriers, the Wisconsin Center for Nursing Diversity Taskforce developed the following recommendations and strategies in its 2013 report:**

- 1. Make diversity an organizational priority and system-wide approach.**
  - Include diversity in the mission statement, core values and strategic plan of each institution.
  - Support diversity specific departments, positions or councils.
  - Create mechanisms, programs to support success and retention of under-represented populations.
  - Establish collaborative academic-practice-community partnerships between schools, healthcare organizations, community, and consumer organizations.
  - Dedicate efforts to seek funding to support diversity growth through innovative approaches and outreach to new philanthropy sources.
- 2. Provide a variety of support mechanisms for underrepresented populations in both academic and practice settings.**
  - Provide specific programs which provide support to under-represented populations i.e. mentoring, coaching, student/employee academic and employment resources, social networks.
- 3. Train all staff and students to ensure higher levels of cultural competency.**
  - Require cross-cultural, competency training and/or courses for all students, faculty and staff including specific courses and programs on cultural awareness and building and maintaining positive interracial relationships.
- 4. Develop a standardized system with agreed upon benchmarks for tracking data on under-represented populations in nursing programs and health systems throughout the state.**
  - Formalize an inclusive tracking system of numbers for all nursing students and faculty in public, private, ADN, BSN, and higher programs.
  - Collect, analyze and monitor data to include demographics, program participation, NCLEX results and acquired employment post-graduation.
  - Standardize employment metrics on practicing nurses from under-represented populations, including recruitment, employment, and retention.
- 5. Join forces for a statewide initiative to increase funding for nursing scholarships for under-represented populations.**

#### **Call to Action**

The nursing workforce in Wisconsin is predominantly white and female. This lack of diversity will affect our ability to provide culturally competent care to the populations we serve, hamper efforts to address health disparities, and retard efforts to grow the nursing workforce in the face of a looming workforce crisis. A nursing workforce that is inclusive and embraces diversity enriches both productivity and innovative approaches to care. The recruitment, preparation, and retention of a diverse nursing workforce is a key to a healthy Wisconsin population for decades to come. The health of our state depends on it.

## Resources

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2011). *Effective strategies for increasing diversity in nursing programs*. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges of Nurses. <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/aacn-publications/issue-bulletin/effective-strategies>.

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2011) *Enhancing diversity in the workforce*. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges of Nurses. <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/media-relations/fact-sheet/enhancing-diversity>.

IOM (Institute of Medicine). (2011). *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. Washington, DC: The National Press. [http://www.thefutureofnursing.org/IOM-ReportInstitute\\_of\\_Medicine](http://www.thefutureofnursing.org/IOM-ReportInstitute_of_Medicine).

Sullivan, L. (2004). *A Report of the Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce. Missing persons: Minorities in the Health Professions* [http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/Sullivan\\_Report\\_ES.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/Sullivan_Report_ES.pdf)

Wisconsin Center for Nursing (2013). *Enhancing Diversity in the Nursing Workforce: A Report by the Wisconsin Center for Nursing Diversity Taskforce*. Wisconsin Center for Nursing, Inc. [http://www.wicenterfornursing.org/documents/2013%20WCN%20DiversityReport\\_final.pdf](http://www.wicenterfornursing.org/documents/2013%20WCN%20DiversityReport_final.pdf)

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Wisconsin Center for Nursing (2013). *Wisconsin Registered Nurse Survey 2012 Report*. Wisconsin Center for Nursing, Inc. <http://www.wisconsincenterfornursing.org/documents/2012%20RN%20Survey%20Main%20Workforce%20Report%20Rev%20FINAL.pdf>

Wisconsin Department of Health Services (2014). *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020: Baseline and Health Disparities Report*. Wisconsin Department of Health Services. <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/hw2020/hw2020baselinereport.htm>

For full reports and more information on nursing diversity initiatives by the Wisconsin Center for Nursing, Inc., go to [www.wicenterfornursing.org](http://www.wicenterfornursing.org)



*This fact sheet is a product of a State Implementation Program (SiP) grant, # 70696, awarded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation® to the Wisconsin Center for Nursing, Inc.*