

Title: **Recruitment of Foreign-Educated Nurses to the U.S.**

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Purpose: To describe the structure and practices of an emerging international nurse recruitment industry, as well as the national and international responses to this phenomenon.

Background:

- Since the start of the current nursing shortage, reliance on foreign-educated nurses (FENs) has grown from 6% of newly licensed nurses in 2000 to almost 17% in 2007.
- The economic recession and visa retrogression have slowed down the entry of FENS to about 50% of 2007 levels, although most observers assume that by 2011 the situation will return to its previous highs.
- A U.S. House of Representatives comprehensive immigration bill under consideration removes limits on visas for nurses.
- Over 90% of the FENs entering the U.S. come from less developed countries with nurse to population ratios that are about one tenth of the ratio in the U.S.
- India has replaced Canada as the second largest source of FENs. Nigeria and the Caribbean are also important sources.
- The World Health Organization has expressed concern that international recruitment may harm health systems in less developed countries.
- An international Code of Practice on the Recruitment of Health Professionals may be approved by the May 2010 World Health Assembly.
- In an effort to protect FENs and urge employers to avoid active recruitment in poor countries with severe nurse shortages, a coalition of U.S. unions, nurse associations, hospitals and recruiters developed a Voluntary Code of Conduct. The Alliance for Ethical International Recruitment was created to certify employers and recruiters that agree to comply with the Code www.fairinternationalrecruitment.org

Key Findings:

- The international recruitment industry has grown exponentially since the start of the current nurse shortage, from just 30 firms in 2000 to almost 300 firms in 2007.
- While some large hospitals and health systems recruit directly, two types of intermediaries are often used: placement firms that charge health care organizations a fee per nurse, and staffing agencies that lease nurses to facilities.
- FENs are almost always required to sign 2–3 year commitments and high penalties fees are included for termination of contracts.
- Unlike U.S. travel nurses who are paid more than direct hire nurses, FENs working for staffing companies tend to be paid at a lower rate.
- Focus groups with FENs revealed several cases of unconscionable contract practices as well as work place intimidation.
- The high cost of access to legal counsel has meant that most of these cases have remained undisputed in U.S. courts.

References:

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