

Illinois HealthCare Action Coalition - Education Workgroup Position Statement on Seamless Academic Progression for Nurses

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) 2010 report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, was clear in the key message that nurses should have the support needed to achieve higher levels of education and training through a collaborative education system that promotes seamless academic progression. Advances in the complex United States' healthcare system require nurses to be highly educated, critical thinkers, diverse, and able to adapt to the various environments in which healthcare occurs. In the IOM report, a goal was set to increase the percentage of registered nurses who hold a bachelor's degree at 80% and to double the number of doctorally prepared nurses by year 2020. This paper sets forth the vision and goal of the Illinois HealthCare Action Coalition (IHAC) Education Workgroup in support of advancing the seamless education of nurses.

In order to advance the education of nurses in the state of Illinois, it is important to know the status of nursing education. In the latest report on academic preparation of Illinois nurses, approximately 41% of nurses in Illinois have an associate's degree in Nursing (ADN), and approximately 39% have a bachelor's degree in Nursing (BSN) (National Research Corporation, 2007). These findings mimic the latest report from the *Registered Nurse Survey* which indicates that nationally, 5% of the work force are licensed practical nurses (LPN), 18% have a diploma in nursing, 39% have an ADN, 36% a BSN, 3% have a master's degree in Nursing (MSN), and less than 1% have doctoral degrees or higher (Budden, Zhong, Moulton, & Cimiotti, 2013).

In Illinois, seamless academic progression for all levels of nursing education is the goal. For this to occur, academic progression models must be valued, streamlined and promoted to increase the number of nurses with bachelor's and advanced nursing degrees. According to the IOM,

“Community colleges play a key role in attracting students to the nursing education pipeline” (IOM, p. 177). Nurses enter the profession with a variety of educational backgrounds. Some students complete requirements to become licensed as an LPN. To be licensed as an RN, nurses may enter the profession after attending a community college and receive an ADN degree, while others may enter the profession with a diploma, or with academic degrees such as a BSN, MSN, doctor of nursing practice (DNP) or doctor of philosophy (PhD). This committee proposes a seamless educational progression for nurses that will allow nurses to progress to higher academic degrees in nursing thereby enhancing the health of the State of Illinois.

According to the report, *2011 Final: Labor Market Supply-Demand Analysis for Patient-Care Registered Nurses Illinois Statewide*, there will be a predicted shortage of 860 nurses by 2018. In order to address this issues, the state has a responsibility to provide educational opportunities for nurses to advance their education. The proposed *Seamless Progression Model* for Nursing Education in Illinois will advance the healthcare of the state of Illinois.

The 2013 IHAC Education Workgroup proposes the following:

A Seamless Progression Model for Nursing Education

The *Seamless Progression Model* proposes to create a system that allows nursing students to progress from an ADN program to an advanced degree program utilizing one admission process and a standardized or universal curriculum. Students could progress through the educational pipeline without loss of coursework and time. Sharing resources, data, and information will be cost-effective for nursing schools, result in a diverse education and support the IOM recommendation of seamless progression of education for nurses. In addition, this seamless progression model will allow for schools to graduate more nurses in order to meet the healthcare needs of the State of Illinois. New and innovative strategies must be developed to facilitate a seamless progression throughout all levels of nursing education.

In order to initiate the *Seamless Progression Model*, the following support would be required:

- **Ongoing funding to support operation and administration of the proposed seamless program in the form of a consortium**
- **Availability of data-based information to all consortium member schools in order to enhance student success**
- **Administrative structure to operationalize the proposed program including full-time administrative support**
- **Ongoing evaluation of program outcomes**

The Illinois HealthCare Action Coalition Education Workgroup believes that by implementing the above model of Seamless Progression for Nursing Education the quality of healthcare for all consumers in the State of Illinois will be enhanced.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Illinois Healthcare Action Coalition Education Workgroup

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References

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