

Report

**To The Members of the Legislative Study Commission on Aging
on the Review of the Education and Training Requirements for Nurse
Aide in North Carolina.**

As Required In SL 2010-69

**The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Service Regulation**

October 31, 2010

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Response to Legislative Request

As directed by the North Carolina General Assembly and the Governor the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Health Service Regulation convened a committee, membership included as Attachment B, to review and make necessary recommendations on the appropriate levels of education and training for nurse aides in North Carolina. This committee met two times resulting in the development of three areas of focus, two of which are currently underway to improve the nurse aide allied health profession and one specific recommendation to the Study Commission focusing on nurse aide wages and benefits.

The first meeting of the review committee was held on September 1, 2010, where an overview of the legislative charge to the committee was provided which stressed that the charge clearly stated that this effort was to review the education and training requirements for nurse aide and not other unlicensed direct care worker categories.

Presentations followed addressing the federal requirements for Nurse Aide I Training and Competency Program and the state's system for administering this program. This presentation identified that while the federal regulations require a minimum of 75 hours in training of which 16 must be clinical hours, North Carolina programs average 142 hours of which 91 are in laboratory and/or clinical settings. The presentation further covered other training opportunities for nurse aides those being, medication aide certification, geriatric aide certification and one currently under development for nurse aide home care specialty certification.

A second presentation was given by the NC Board of Nursing on two nurse aide training programs available to Nurse Aide I's, those being the Nurse Aide I +4 and Nurse Aide II programs. This presentation also included a discussion of the scope of practice, nurse supervision and task delegation requirements.

The third presentation focused on concerns with the current nurse aide requirements for listing on the Nurse Aide I Registry and on direct care worker training in other care settings. The primary focus of the presentation was on concerns that nurse aide training is not required prior to taking the Nurse Aide I competency exam. The presentation provided information on training requirements in other states and the number of training program hours required by those States.

The final presentation addressed the role the state Community College System plays in the licensing of proprietary schools that teach five or more students and what this process involves.

There was discussion by the members of the committee of the concerns that were identified with the primary focus being on the lack of training requirements, the number of training hours required, and a general discussion on the needs of new nurse aides entering the profession that would help keep these individuals in the profession and

reduce the overall high turnover rates. At the conclusion of this discussion the committee was charged to review the information presented and discussion that followed and come prepared to the next meeting with any recommendation that would improve the education and training requirements of nurse aides.

The second meeting of the committee was held on September 13, 2010, at which the members of the committee discussed their concerns, their perspectives on what needs or is currently being done in North Carolina to address these concerns and what other issues need to be addressed to further improve the overall nurse aide profession. There was discussion on the fact that federal regulations require persons who want to become a Nurse Aide I to either take and successfully complete a state approved nurse aide training and competency program or successfully complete a state approved nurse aide competency program. There was a concern by one of the committee members that because of this option that some persons were able to take and pass the competency exam without first having any training. This concern is based on data collected by the Division of Health Service Regulation as to the eligibility route persons use to register for North Carolina's Nurse Aide I Competency exam. The specific route that causes this concern is the exam "Challengers" route that is used by persons who have completed nurse aide training outside of North Carolina, or are listed on Nurse Aide Registries in other states, are EMT's, or other health professionals, or those with no nurse aide training. While the majority of the committee believes that a very small proportion of persons who use this eligibility route have not had nurse aide or related training the concern registered by one of the committee members is that without data to support this we can not be sure how many of these individuals are taking and passing the exam with no prior training. The specific concern expressed was that these persons are ill prepared to serve as nurse aides. Several committee members reminded the group that nurse aides must be directly supervised by a Registered Nurse and that prior to delegating any task to the nurse aide the nurse must determine the nurse aide's competency to perform that task. After more discussion the committee decided that the "Challenger" eligibility route needed further study to determine if it is possible to identify those persons who have had no nurse aide or related training and what percentage of this group are actually able to pass the exam. The remainder of the meeting focused on the restructuring of the State's Nurse Aide I training curriculum to a more client centered focus and the need for the State to study ways to improve wages and benefits for the nurse aide profession.

Recommendations

The committee identified three areas of focus that are either currently underway or need to be addressed to help improve the nurse aide/direct care workforce in North Carolina.

1. Specifically related to the training and education of nurse aides the committee recognized the current and continued efforts by the Division of Health Service Regulation and the members of the State's Nurse Aide Advisory Committee to update the Nurse Aide I curriculum to reflect a move in training focus from task performance to more patient centered care. This effort, once completed, will not only prepare nurse aides to

perform various nursing and nursing related tasks being delegated to them by the Registered Nurse but will also help them to better understand the relationship between these tasks and the client's plan of care.

2. The committee also recognized that nurse aides work in many settings other than nursing homes, home care and hospitals that require more specific training in the care needs of those individuals being served in those settings. While the core nurse aide training and competency program provides a strong education and training foundation, additional training to address the specific needs of other populations being served in these other settings is essential. In recognition of this reality the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Service in cooperation with the NC Foundation for Advanced Health Programs and a broad based Partner Team applied for and have been selected as one of six states to receive a Personal and Home Care Aide State Training (PHCAST) grant. This effort is designed to develop, pilot, implement, and evaluate a four phase comprehensive training and competency program for direct care workers in long term care settings (Abstract attached). The Committee feels that many of the issues, such as the adequacy of current North Carolina Nurse Aide I training and competency requirements, that led the General Assembly to seek this review of nurse aide education and training requirements will be addressed as part of this grant effort. Therefore, the Committee strongly supports the focus of the grant program and expects, as the program moves forward, that recommendations for legislative actions will be forthcoming to implement various direct care workforce initiatives.

3. It has been widely documented that nationally, by 2016, there will be a need for one million additional direct care workers, nurse aides, home care/home health aides and personal care aides to care for aging baby boomers and growing numbers of people with disabilities. Specifically, it is estimated that North Carolina will need an additional 46,000 direct care workers by 2016. This tremendous demand and the challenges employers face in attracting workers to these jobs has lead the Committee to make a specific recommendation to the Study Commission on Aging to address the wage and benefit issues that directly impact supply, retention and high rates of direct care worker turnover in long term care setting. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly consider the establishment of a study focusing on wages and benefits paid to direct care workers and possible improvements to the State's Medicaid and State/County special assistance payment policies that rewards providers who achieve NC NOVA special licensure status.

ATTACHMENT A

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2009**

**SESSION LAW 2010-69
SENATE BILL 1191**

AN ACT TO DIRECT THE DIVISION OF HEALTH SERVICE REGULATION, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, TO COORDINATE A REVIEW OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR NURSE AIDES, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE NORTH CAROLINA STUDY COMMISSION ON AGING.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) The Division of Health Service Regulation, Department of Health and Human Services, shall coordinate a review of the education and training requirements for nurse aides. In conducting the review, the Division shall include an equal number of representatives from the Division of Health Service Regulation; Division of Aging and Adult Services; the North Carolina Board of Nursing; the North Carolina Community College System; the Direct Care Workers Association of North Carolina; the North Carolina Medical Society; the North Carolina Health Care Facilities Association; the North Carolina Hospital Association; the Association for Home and Hospice Care of North Carolina; the North Carolina Assisted Living Association; the North Carolina Association of Long Term Care Facilities; the North Carolina Association of Non-Profit Homes for the Aging; and individuals representing residents in long-term care. The review shall include an evaluation of the current education and training requirements for nurse aides.

SECTION 1.(b) The Division of Health Service Regulation shall report findings and recommendations on the appropriate levels of education and training for nurse aides to the North Carolina Study Commission on Aging on or before November 1, 2010.

SECTION 2. This act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 30th day of June, 2010.

s/ Walter H. Dalton
President of the Senate

s/ Joe Hackney
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Beverly E. Perdue
Governor

ATTACTMENT B

Committee to Review Education and Training Requirements for Nurse Aides

Jesse Goodman	DHSR
Kathy Turner	DHSR
Donna White	Division of Aging and Adult Services
Linda Burhans	NC Board of Nursing
Sandy Spillman	Direct Care Workers Association of NC
Mike Vacario	NC Hospital Association
Lou Wilson	NC Association of Long Term Care Facilities
Polly Welsh	NC Healthcare Facilities Association
Kathie Smith	Association for Home and Hospice Care of NC
Peggy Smith	NC Assisted Living Association
Dr. LeRoy King	Friends of Residents of Long Term Care
Renee Batts	NC Community College System
Amy Whited (for Steve Keene)	NC Medical Society
Margaret Olson	NC Association for Non- Profit Homes for the Aging