

CAN DO Fact Sheet

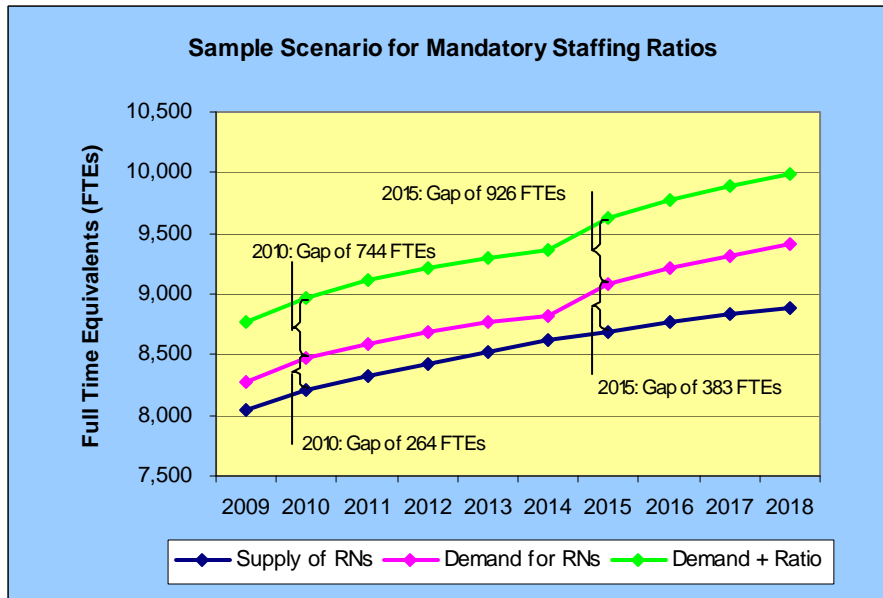
Using Scenario Planning To Understand the Nursing Workforce Shortage

As the western Massachusetts coalition of healthcare, education, workforce development and philanthropic organizations, the CAN DO partners are committed to meeting the future healthcare needs of our community by focusing on the critical role the nursing workforce plays in the delivery of quality care. To provide an adequate supply of diverse and qualified nurses the partnership is creating a seamless nursing education system in Hampden, Franklin and Hampshire counties.

To understand the extent of the region's current and projected nursing shortage, the partnership engaged an economist to develop an interactive nursing workforce supply model. Based on the 2004 HRSA nursing workforce data for Massachusetts, the existing flow of new nurses from the region's six schools of nursing and nurses entering the workforce from outside the region, the partners use the model as a scenario planning tool to facilitate data-driven decision making.

Using the CAN DO supply model, the region's current nursing workforce shortage is estimated at 264 FTEs and grows to a conservative estimate of 383 FTEs by 2015. Today's shortage is across all settings but currently most severe in long term care settings where the demand for RNs is growing due to the aging population. The existing shortage cannot be solved due to lack of educational capacity to accept and graduate more students. Capacity cannot be expanded without additional faculty, clinical placements, infrastructure and resources.

The CAN DO Advisory Board requested the model be used to estimate the potential impact of proposed legislation that mandates nurse staffing ratios. This scenario assumes mandatory staffing ratios will occur in acute care hospitals, which employ 41% of the region's RNs, and will be phased



in over a three year period starting in 2009. Under these conditions, the model projects a 15% increase in demand for nurses which translates to a gap of 728 FTEs in 2009. In 2010, demand grows by 19% and the gap widens to 744 FTEs. In 2015, the gap is estimated at 926 FTEs.

There are many alternatives for closing the gap between the supply and demand for nursing. In this scenario nursing schools will have to increase capacity by

300% to produce enough new nurses, requiring significantly more faculty and clinical resources. Considering the current constraints on capacity growth, simply increasing the supply of new nurses will not be enough to address the growing nursing shortage in all care settings. Demand side strategies are also needed to increase the efficiency of our healthcare delivery system and the utilization of nurses in providing quality care. Further analysis is required to determine this scenario's impact on the regional economy and the broader healthcare system in western Massachusetts.