Opportunities for Improved Health Services Delivery
Healthcare Commission Ideas for Governor Freudenthal
June 29, 2005

Increase Nursing Faculty Salaries

1) What is the problem?

a) Three primary factors inhibit practicing nurses from pursuing faculty positions:
  - **i.** Salary
  - **ii.** Workload
  - **iii.** Trading patient care for an academic career

b) There are more applicants than slots for qualified students applying to nursing programs. Lack of qualified faculty is a major contributor to colleges turning away students. Faculty salaries are lower than salaries in clinical settings.

c) The limited educational opportunities contribute greatly to the existing and growing shortage of nurses in Wyoming.

d) The shortage results in more overtime and use of traveling nurses, driving up the cost of healthcare.

2) Describe your ideas.

a) Supplement nursing faculty salaries by $20,000[1] with state funds. This would encourage practicing nurses to pursue faculty positions, encourage current faculty to stay, and allow maximum admission of qualified nursing applicants.

3) Who are your partners?

a) Wyoming Community Colleges

b) University of Wyoming (UW)

4) Please provide supporting evidence and data.

a) Low salary is the primary barrier to filling faculty positions.[2]

b) Several states, including North Dakota and Alaska, have increased nursing faculty salaries for retention purposes.[3] In Alaska, salary increases of $7,000 were implemented for staff with 15 years on the job, $5,000 for staff with 10 years on the job, and $3,000 for staff with 5 years on the job.[4]

c) The average faculty salary in Wyoming is $47,989.[5]

d) The average staff nurse salary in Wyoming was $43,350 (no overtime, shift/weekend differential) in 2003.[6] Assuming a 5% increase in 2004 and 2005, the average staff nurse would make an equivalent salary to a nursing instructor, without the opportunity to earn extra income through overtime and shift differential pay. As a result, there is no economic incentive for nurses to move into faculty positions.

5) What funding or staffing is needed?

a) Faculty salaries: adding $20,000 for each of 85 faculty members (77 current faculty, 8 for expansion) plus a 30% benefit load will cost $2.21 million annually.

6) Who will be better off and how can you measure the improvement?

a) With the barrier to recruiting faculty reduced through higher salaries, faculty positions can be filled and faculty can be retained. This will stabilize and increase enrollment in schools of nursing.

b) Improvement would be measured by numbers of students admitted to nursing programs, and faculty recruitment and retention rates.

7) Could this proposal be included in the Children and Families Initiative?

a) By improving the supply of nurses, the proposal increases access and should improve care throughout the state.

8) Potential drawbacks and political considerations.

a) There may be opposition from college presidents and non-nursing faculty: there are no legal barriers.

b) This may pull badly needed clinical nurses away from their clinical sites. However, the short-term pain must be endured to achieve the long-term goal.

9) Alternative possibilities

a) Other financial incentives for nursing faculty could include free day care or no-down-payment home loans (has been successful in Alaska).[7]

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[1] Based on a consensus of the current nursing program directors.
[2] Colorado Nursing Faculty Supply and Demand Study, 2004
[3] Milbank Foundation Reforming States Group Conference, Seattle, WA March 2005
[4] Interview (phone) with Jackie Pflaum, University of Alaska. June 14, 2005
[5] Based on e-mails and phone calls to WHCC staff from Sheridan College, CWC, Northwest, LCCC, and UW
[6] Glover Study, Wyoming Department of Education, 2003
[7] Interview (phone) with Jackie Pflaum, University of Alaska. June 14, 2005