

A Call to Action . . .

Issue: The healthcare workforce shortage is affecting the quality of life in Northern Virginia

The healthcare industry is currently experiencing explosive growth in our region and is one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy. The delivery of quality healthcare requires a highly skilled team. Some members of this team are: registered nurses, paramedics, respiratory therapists, health information management technicians, radiology technicians, dental hygienists, medical laboratory technicians and many other highly skilled healthcare workers. It takes every member of the team to ensure quality healthcare.

There is, however, **today** an alarming shortage of these personnel and the entry of new healthcare workers is stagnant or declining. **Tomorrow** this shortage will be exacerbated over the next several decades by our region's "graying" of the population and new technology which will place a greater strain upon our region's ability to provide quality healthcare services. Because of this demand for expanded healthcare services we must address today's critical shortage of nursing and allied healthcare workers, and we must also plan for the need in the very near future for thousands of additional highly skilled and trained healthcare workers. If we do not take **action now** then we will not have the healthcare team that is required in the future to provide quality healthcare to ourselves and our families.

Today A shortage of healthcare workers exists in Northern Virginia.

Health care providers in Northern Virginia are having difficulty recruiting quality healthcare professionals. There is an estimated shortage of about 2,800 professionals in 24 healthcare job categories.

Tomorrow The shortage will become critical!

The Northern Virginia shortage is projected to increase to 16,600 vacant positions (6,350 of these will be RNs) by 2020 without additional interventions. This is an increase of 13,800 vacant positions from current estimates of 2,800 vacant positions over the next 16 years—or about **a 490 percent increase in vacancies**.

Currently, educational institutions are providing the region about 750 trained graduates annually; 440 of these are RNs. **The projected annual demand is estimated to be 1,300 graduates per year with 800 new RN's needed annually.** At current rates, the region's colleges and universities will not be able to replace the healthcare personnel who are retiring. They have little or no capacity to respond to projected employment growth requirements in the healthcare system

Why does Northern Virginia have this healthcare workforce shortage?

- Significant population growth—the population is expected to grow over 33% by 2020; a rate over twice that of United States growth rate.
- Increased demand for health care services because of the aging population
- Concurrent aging health care workforce and the resultant retirements

- Shortage of Nursing and Allied Health profession faculty, schools, and clinical experience sites along with the inability to find replacements
- Aging of clinical faculty and the resultant retirements
- Difficulties offering market-competitive salaries for clinical faculty
- Supply of graduates from Nursing and Allied Health programs is not keeping up with demand
- Nature of the healthcare profession is stressful and labor-intensive
- Low unemployment rates and high cost of living draws away qualified candidates

How do we know this?

The Northern Virginia Health Care Workforce Alliance, a Coalition of business, academic and community leaders, engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers to conduct a study of these issues. The results are found in the following reports:

The Health Care Workforce Shortage: An Analysis of the Scope and Impact on Northern Virginia. (January 2005)

Executive Summary of: The Health Care Workforce Shortage: An Analysis of the Scope and Impact on Northern Virginia. (January 2005)

For copies of these reports go to: www.NoVaHealthFORCE.com

What must be done?

The Northern Virginia Health Care Workforce Alliance (NVHCWA) advocates that the solution to deal with the Northern Virginia healthcare workforce shortage must be the **Establishment of a long-term, business-driven, sustainable strategy. The solutions must:**

- Be “business-driven”
- Help the business community understand that this affects everyone’s quality of life in Northern Virginia
- Have the entire Northern Virginia community recognize that the healthcare workforce shortage is more than a hospital problem. This problem affects all components of community life
- Provide upward mobility for “New Americans” and underemployed
- Address workforce utilization and retention in the healthcare industry

Actions required now:

Fourteen action steps were developed through the efforts of eight workgroups, composed of subject matter experts representing: healthcare, higher education, proprietary schools, public school districts, local county governments, federal government, social service agencies, workforce development authorities, civic organizations, businesses, economic development authorities, philanthropic organizations and the information technology industry.

I. Increase capacity within the health care education and training system

- 1. Challenge:** The primary obstacle to increasing the enrollment in Nursing and Allied Health programs is the shortage of available faculty.
- 2. Challenge:** The second major factor limiting a significant expansion of Nursing and Allied Programs is the inability to obtain additional clinical training sites.

3. **Challenge:** All of Northern Virginia's Nursing and Allied Health programs are located in the northern and eastern parts of the Northern Virginia region. However, most of the projected population growth and corresponding increase in medical treatment facilities will occur in the western and southern portions of this region.
4. **Challenge:** To ensure that the Northern Virginia education and healthcare institutional resources are being optimally utilized to provide the greatest training capacity and maximum output of healthcare professionals.

II. Develop and sustain an ongoing supply of persons interested in entering health care careers:

5. **Challenge:** Increase awareness of the healthcare career fields among students, parents, educators, counselors and community organizations.
6. **Challenge:** Improve healthcare career preparedness of Northern Virginia high school students.
7. **Challenge:** Provide upward mobility opportunities in the healthcare careers for new Americans, ethnic and racial minorities, low-income, and low-skilled working adults.
8. **Challenge:** Facilitate foreign-trained healthcare personnel to enter the Northern Virginia healthcare workforce

III. Nurture Innovation:

9. **Challenge:** The adoption of information technology in healthcare has not kept pace with other industries.
10. **Challenge:** The healthcare consumer is the greatest underutilized resource in healthcare.
11. **Challenge:** The enormous demand for qualified healthcare workers, coupled with the shrinking supply as well as a low unemployment rate and an aging healthcare workforce will set in motion the impetus for the healthcare industry to improve on existing human resources and educational approaches. The healthcare industry must make better use of incumbent employees.
12. **Challenge:** In order to remain competitive and meet the evolving requirements of healthcare delivery and technology, Northern Virginia must be focused on the healthcare careers of the future.
13. **Challenge:** The healthcare industry (ambulatory, inpatient, long-term) and ancillary businesses do not have a common forum in Northern Virginia to share its best practices and information.
14. **Challenge:** An organization should be designated in Northern Virginia to have responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the actions outlined in this report
Visit www.NoVaHealthFORCE.com for more details.

What is the Plan to accomplish these actions?

At the June 23, 2005 Press Conference the following NoVaHealthFORCE Action Plan was announced for 2005 -2009:

Change name from Northern Virginia Healthcare Workforce Alliance to:
NoVaHealthFORCE

Increase Healthcare Training Capacity in Northern Virginia

- Increase by 350 the annual number of RNs and increase by 50% the number of BSN's/MSN's graduating annually in the region.
- Increase by 50% or more the number of graduates in selected allied health occupations such as health information technology, diagnostic imaging, respiratory therapy, and physical therapy assistant.
- Educational institutions should work together as a system of coordinated resources rather than isolated entities.
- Healthcare training resources should be established in Loudoun and/or Prince William Counties where population growth is projected to be highest.

Create a Pipeline Strategy for New & Incumbent Workers in Healthcare Jobs

- Create a healthcare careers outreach strategy to middle and high schools.
- Establish magnet high schools with an emphasis upon life sciences and healthcare disciplines that are closely linked with college and university programs.
- Create healthcare worker intake programs for immigrant and low-income communities.
- Develop career ladders from entry-level positions to high-skill jobs within the healthcare system working with the higher education system.
- Create an incumbent worker training and development system that retains & develops existing healthcare workers and increases their productivity.

Nurture Innovation

- Increase the use of technology to improve worker productivity.
- Empower healthcare consumers to reduce demands on the healthcare system.
- Design and test healthcare jobs of the future in fields such as health information technology, long-term-care and assisted living, and Pharmacogenomics.

For more information visit:

www.NoVaHealthFORCE.com or contact:

Brian P. Foley, M.Ed., MHA, CPHQ, FACHE

Special Assistant to the President,

Northern Virginia Community College

(703) 822-6515

<http://www.novahealthforce.com/>

Submitted by Brian F. Foley, MEd, MHA, CPH2, FACHE, Special Assistant to the President, Northern Virginia Community College.

Editor's Note: Articles on nursing shortage in Virginia and nationally, and efforts at solutions, are welcomed and printed when feasible.

The estimated demand for healthcare workers in Northern Virginia in 2010 and 2020 is noted on the following chart.

Estimated Demand for Healthcare Workers through 2020

Occupation Title	Current Employment	Current Shortage	Current Demand	Projected Health Care Workforce Needs by 2010	Projected Health Care Workforce Needs by 2020	Percent Shortage in Workforce by 2020
Registered nurses (including CRNAs, nurse practitioners, and nurse midwives)	9,082	1,038	10,120	12,056	15,432	41.1%
Nursing aides, orderlies, certified nurse assistants, attendants	3,245	323	3,568	4,251	5,441	40.4%
Medical records and health info technicians	1,337	172	1,509	1,872	2,547	47.5%
Dental assistants	1,110	20	1,130	1,402	1,906	41.8%
Medical and nurse managers	1,054	76	1,130	1,345	1,722	38.8%
Home health aides	1,080	40	1,120	1,334	1,708	36.8%
Dental hygienists	750	30	780	967	1,316	43.0%
Emergency medical technician/ paramedics	864	19	883	1,052	1,347	35.9%
Radiologic technologists and technicians	723	109	832	991	1,268	43.0%
Licensed practical nurses	1,111	390	1,501	1,669	1,919	42.1%
Physical therapists	573	119	692	825	1,056	45.7%
Physical therapist assistants	255	91	346	430	584	56.3%
Occupational therapists	350	67	417	496	635	44.9%
Respiratory therapists	233	39	272	324	415	43.9%
CT scanning technologists	237	24	261	312	399	40.6%
Medical and clinical lab technologists	397	30	427	474	545	27.2%
MRI technologists	172	22	194	232	296	41.9%
Speech language pathologists	122	46	168	200	256	52.3%
Pharmacy technicians	149	16	165	196	251	40.6%
Pharmacists	139	24	163	194	249	44.2%
Surgical technologists	134	21	155	184	236	43.2%
Medical and clinical lab technicians	228	32	260	289	332	31.3%
Phlebotomists	156	15	171	190	218	28.4%
Surgical technicians	33	-	33	40	51	35.3%
Grand Total	23,534	2,763	26,297	31,325	40,129	41.4%
Projected Health Care Workforce Vacancies from Current Employment Estimates				7,791	16,595	

Source: The Healthcare Workforce Shortage: An Analysis of the Scope and Impact on Northern Virginia. (January 2005)