

# How To Overcome the Growing Nurse Shortage

SWIPE  
SENSE



Hospitals have been facing this critical issue for years now, and it's only getting worse. Get actionable strategies to address the problem, and learn why you need to act now.

The current nursing shortage isn't like previous shortages. It's already affecting hospitals' ability to provide care – and all available evidence suggests that the labor shortage is going to get significantly worse.

## The world could face a shortage of 13 million nurses by 2030, according to a 2022 International Council of Nurses report.<sup>1</sup>

There's no light at the end of the proverbial tunnel, either. The current nursing education system simply can't produce enough new nurses to keep up with demand. It will likely take years to increase the capacity of nursing schools and universities.

In order to continue to provide quality patient care, hospitals must take action now to alleviate the challenge. Follow the steps detailed within to overcome the critical nurse shortage.

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# The Nursing Shortage by the Numbers

*“If no actions are taken, there will likely be more patients in the United States who will need care than nurses available to deliver it.”<sup>2</sup>*

**McKinsey & Company**

Americans – including nurses – are getting older. The number of people aged 65 and older in the United States increased by 30 million between 2011 and 2019, from 41 million individuals ages 65+ to 71 million. That number is expected to reach 73 million by 2030.<sup>3</sup>

Over half of all U.S. Registered Nurses (53%) are aged 50 or older, with nurses ages 65+ composing the largest chunk of the RN workforce (19%) in 2020. Just 27.9% of the RN workforce is younger than 40 years old.<sup>4</sup>

Many of these older nurses exited clinical care during the COVID-19 pandemic, with more expected to follow. The number of new nurses isn't keeping pace — and demand for healthcare will only increase in the coming years.



## Demand for nurses is increasing —

- Annual openings for nurses will increase at least 9% annually through 2030.<sup>5</sup>
- The average length of patient hospital stay increased 9.9% in 2021 compared to 2019.<sup>6</sup>
- Inpatient hospitalization days are expected to increase 1-12% in 2025 relative to 2019.<sup>7</sup>



## — while supply is dwindling.

- 1/5 of practicing RNs & LPNs polled in 2020 plan to retire by 2025.<sup>8</sup>
- 29% of U.S. RNs & 20% of LPNs & CNAs plan to leave direct patient care.<sup>9</sup>
- 1-4% of RNs are expected to leave direct patient care annually in 2023-2025.<sup>10</sup>



Most concerning, more nurses are leaving the profession than entering it –

- 7% of U.S. RNs have left direct patient care every year since 2020.<sup>11</sup>
- 1-4% of RNs are expected to leave direct patient care annually from 2023 to 2025.<sup>12</sup>

... and the existing educational system is not equipped to educate an adequate number of new nurses.

- New RN licenses increased by 4% annually from 2016-2019,<sup>13</sup> but only by 1% in 2020.<sup>14</sup>
- 80,000 qualified applicants were turned away from nursing schools in 2020 due to lack of faculty and space.<sup>15</sup>

## Registered Nurse Shortages by State (Projected)

Difference between supply and demand expected by 2030

### Most Severe Shortages

Rank	State	Supply (2030)	Demand (2030)	Difference
1	California	343,400	387,900	-44,500
2	Texas	253,400	269,300	-15,900
3	New Jersey	90,800	102,200	-11,400
4	South Carolina	52,100	62,500	-10,400
5	Alaska	18,400	23,800	-5,400
6	Georgia	98,800	101,000	-2,200
7	South Dakota	11,700	13,600	-1,900
8	Montana	12,300	12,100	200
9	North Dakota	9,900	9,200	700
10	New Hampshire	21,300	20,200	1,100

Source: U.S. Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, "Supply and Demand Projections of the Nursing Workforce: 2014-2030," 2017: <https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/data-research/nchwa-hrsa-nursing-report.pdf>

From **The 2021 American Nursing Shortage: A Data Study**, USAHS

### TIME TO ACT!

**2021**

Clinical workforce is the #1 concern for hospital CEOs<sup>16</sup>

**January 2022**

More than 1 in 6 U.S. hospitals report critical nursing shortages<sup>17</sup>

**April 2022**

Nurse labor shortage expected to intensify over next 18 months<sup>18</sup>

**2025**

Predicted U.S. nurse shortage: 200,000 – 450,000 nurses<sup>19</sup>

**2030**

U.S. healthcare facilities unable to meet demand for patient care unless 1.2 million new RNs added to workforce between 2022 & 2030<sup>20</sup>

# How the Nurse Labor Shortage Affects Hospitals' Bottom Line

The nurse labor shortage is increasing costs, decreasing income, and shrinking margins. Travel and contract nurses are expensive, and outsourcing staffing is simply not sustainable. Without sufficient staffing, infection rates and average length of stay increase, driving up costs. Numerous studies have linked high patient-to-nurse ratios with nurse burnout and higher rates of infection.<sup>21</sup> And without sufficient staffing, hospitals can't increase their patient volume or number of elective surgeries. In some places, hospitals are even closing as a result of staffing shortages.<sup>22</sup>

## Increased costs

To meet the demand for care, many hospitals have hired contract or travel nurses to supplement their nursing workforces — at great expense. In January 2022, contract travel nurses accounted for almost ¼ of total hours worked by nurses — and 40% of nurse labor expenses — in U.S. hospitals.<sup>23</sup> In July 2022, the Boston Globe reported that the “nursing shortage at hospitals leads to multimillion-dollar costs,” citing the example of UMass Memorial Health, the largest healthcare system in the area, which spent \$10 million monthly for 700 travel nurses as the health system tried to fill at least 500 nurse vacancies.<sup>24</sup>

The cost of providing care also increases due to the nursing shortage. Understaffing increases nurses' workload, and heavier patient caseloads have been proven to increase in infections, length of stay, and hospital readmission rates.<sup>25</sup>

## Decreased Income

Patient satisfaction scores, which are tied to reimbursement rates, decrease when sufficient staff are not available to meet patient needs.<sup>28</sup> A low HCAPS score limits the amount of funding a hospital can receive from Medicare — and low HCAPS and Leapfrog scores may cause some patients to seek care elsewhere.

Clinical shortages also inhibit revenue generation opportunities. According to a McKinsey report, 90% of hospital leaders surveyed in February 2022 said “workforce shortages were a barrier to increasing elective surgery volume.”<sup>29</sup>



### Contracted RNs are Expensive

Average hourly rate for a staff RN:

**\$43<sup>26</sup>**

Average hourly rate for contract RN:

**\$165-\$170<sup>27</sup>**

# What Nurses Want

Compensation is important – nurses want to be paid fairly for their expertise – but it's not the most important factor in nurses' employment decisions.

**Nurses want to work in a safe, supportive environment.** They don't want to sacrifice their personal well-being for a healthcare system that doesn't seem to care about their needs. These educated healthcare professionals are looking for three key things:



## Manageable Workload

- High nurse-patient ratios that nurses perceive as “unsafe” are a major reason that nurses leave clinical practice.<sup>30</sup>
- 75% of new graduate nurses are worried about staffing shortages.<sup>31</sup>

## Work-Life Balance

- Long hours increase nurse burnout, which often leads to nurse resignations.<sup>32</sup>
- Nurses who have left direct patient care say flexible scheduling and the “ability to take time off” would influence their decision to return to clinical practice.<sup>33</sup>

## Respect & Regard

- Nurses who do not feel valued by their employer are more likely to leave.<sup>34</sup>
- “Not feeling listened to or supported at work” is among the strongest drivers of intent to leave a nursing position.<sup>35</sup>





# 7 Strategies to Find and Keep Great Nurses

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*Staffing shortages are now the nation's top patient safety concern.*<sup>36</sup>

U.S. News & World Report

Every nurse is looking for a job that fits into their life and allows them to utilize and grow their professional expertise. Nurses who find a workplace that meets their needs and doesn't devalue their time or experience are incredibly loyal – and often recruit other nurses to join them.

Hospital and healthcare systems that don't act now may be forced to cancel procedures and close facilities due to lack of sufficient staffing. It's going to take time to reverse the national nursing shortage, but there are several steps you can take today to begin filling nurse vacancies.





## Where to Find Nurses

### Online

- Hire a digital marketing pro to help you with programmatic display advertising, pop-up banners, and re-targeting displays.
- Feature nurse stories in social media posts. Share videos and photos, and post contests and surveys to create engagement.

### On their phones

- SMS/text campaigns are a great way to reach Millennial and Gen Z nurses.
- Targeted email can help you reach new nurse grads.

### Via your current nurses

- Update or create an employee referral program. Offer cash bonuses or gift cards.
- Consider a contest with a big reward for the employee who recruits the most new nurses.

1

## Prioritize Nurses' Needs

If your workplace isn't nurse-friendly, nurses won't stay on staff, regardless of pay.

**Action Item:** Hire additional support staff, including housekeeping, technicians, CNAs, and people who can assist with patient transport and supply runs, so nurses can practice at the top of their scope of licensure. Ask nurses what they need, and do your best to implement some of their suggestions.

2

## Involve Nurses in Decision-Making & Problem-Solving

Nurses know how to improve patient care and clinical efficiency. Involve them and act on their input.

**Action Item:** Ask nurses how to improve clinical workflows.

3

## Minimize Workloads by Maximizing Efficiency

Use technology to streamline and automate repetitive non-clinical tasks, such as looking for equipment. Digital tools like an automated nurse rounding application can help you identify and correct workflow challenges to enable top-of-license practice.

**Action Item:** Utilize asset tracking technology so staff don't waste time locating necessary equipment. Determine where extra help is needed with an automated nurse rounding program.

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*Highlighting the employee experience and hospital culture are very important in nurse recruitment.”<sup>37</sup>*

**Julie Perkins**

Director of Digital Strategy  
AMNY Health Marketing

## How Ambassador Nurses Help with Nurse Recruitment

Prospective nurses want to know what it's really like to work at a hospital before they commit to employment. That's where ambassador nurses are helpful.

Ambassador nurses can:

- Post and share stories on social media
- Visit nursing schools
- Represent your hospital at career fairs and nursing conferences
- Meet nurse applicants and answer questions

4

### Provide Continuing Education & Support

Nurses want to grow their skills. Consider offering new-graduate residency programs, transition-to-practice programs, ample professional development, and tuition reimbursement for relevant education.

**Action Item:** Survey staff nurses and ask what educational offerings would best meet their needs. Take steps to connect them with appropriate programs.

5

### Offer Flexible Scheduling

Shorter shifts are attractive to some nurses, and many nurses would love the opportunity to choose their shifts. Don't be afraid to get creative.

**Action Item:** Involve nurses in scheduling.

6

### Appoint Ambassador Nurses

Enthusiastic nurses make excellent brand ambassadors who can recruit their peers organically.

**Action Item:** Appoint ambassador nurses and provide them with additional compensation for their recruiting efforts.

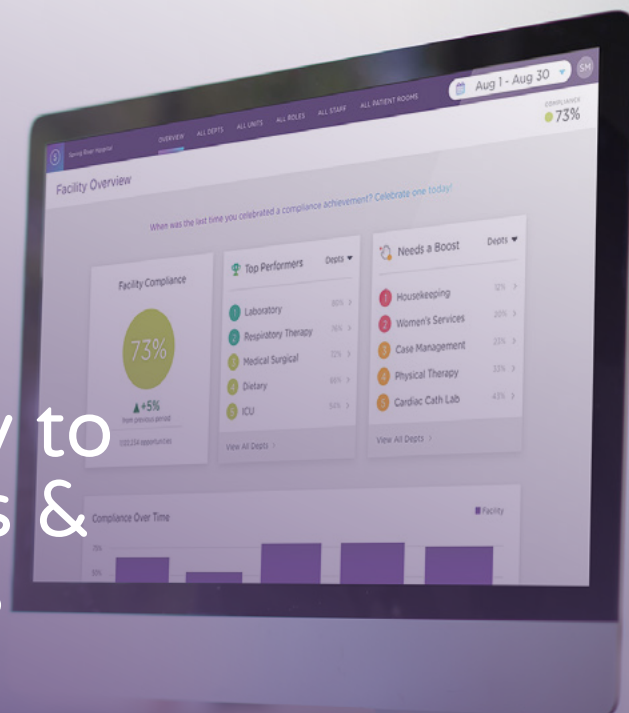
7

### Increase Compensation for Staff Nurses

To stay competitive, it may be necessary to increase compensation. Bumping up pay for existing nurses decreases the likelihood they'll leave for contract positions.

**Action Item:** Notify recently retired nurses and those who've left clinical practice of increased salary.

# Use Technology to Ease Workloads & Support Nurses



*“The core goal for hospital and health IT leaders right now should be to elevate and optimize nurses’ abilities and day-to-day experience through the use of technology.”*

**Bill Siwicki, Healthcare IT News**

Nursing is a highly personal, high-touch job. You can’t automate nursing care – but you can use technology to ease nurse workloads and support professional nursing practice.

A lack of technology solutions, systems, and automation contribute to inefficient clinical workflows and nurse frustration and burnout, according to a recent report by Healthcare IT News.<sup>38</sup> The same report notes, “outdated, inefficient and manual workflows ... consume too much of nurses’ time and attention.”

**Nurses – especially Millennial and Gen Z nurses – want digital support.**

**53%**

of nurses want streamlined processes that ensure visibility into patient needs and communication.

**45%**

want better communication and coordination across departments.

Technology that provides real-time information about patient needs and clinical workflows can help hospital leaders make smart staffing decisions – and provide just-in-time support as needed. And technology that supports best practices helps nurses provide top-notch care.



# About SwipeSense

**SwipeSense empowers hospitals to make data-driven changes that lead to predictable outcomes in an effort to save lives, improve patient and clinician experiences, and create operational efficiencies.**

The SwipeSense platform provides real-time, actionable data that health systems can use to ease nurse workloads and support nursing practice. The applications utilize a cloud-based sensor network to cost-effectively boost efficiency.

## Asset Tracking

More than 1/3 of nurses spend at least an hour searching for necessary medical equipment during an average hospital shift – and another hour helping staff on other wards locate items. In a month, a nurse may spend up to 40 hours – the equivalent of one whole work week – locating equipment.

Asset Tracking allows staff to instantly pinpoint the location of tagged equipment, freeing up nurse time for more important matters. Deploying asset tracking in your hospital can reduce the number of staff you need to effectively meet patient needs.

## Nursing Insights

Understanding clinical workflow is crucial to proper staffing. Nursing Insights provides reliable data regarding staff movement so hospital leaders can address inefficient workflows and provide just-in-time staff support. The application fits seamlessly into nurses' existing workflow, requiring no extra effort or documentation from nurses. Nursing Insights also facilitates purposeful rounding and bedside shift reporting, two evidence-based best practices that allow nurses to streamline care.

## Contact Tracing

Understanding who may have been exposed to an infectious agent is key to making smart staffing decisions while preventing the spread of disease. Because the SwipeSense system automatically captures all employee-to-employee and employee-to-patient contacts, infection control and occupational health staff can generate an initial list of at-risk staff, patients, and equipment with the click of a button.

## Electronic Hand Hygiene Monitoring

Decrease healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) – and their associated costs – with an electronic hand hygiene system that non-intrusively promotes positive behavior change. Hand hygiene performance contributes to Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grades, and the Leapfrog Group has communicated “a strong preference for the use of electronic monitoring” in its guidance.





# Get in Touch



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SwipeSense, Inc.

4424 N Ravenswood Ave  
Chicago, IL 60640

Learn more about  
hospital safety  
technology

**Contact our team**

or

**Request a Custom Demo**

Virtual patent markings



## Endnotes

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