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REFRESHER COURSE SURVEY 2011

BACKGROUND

In 2003, the Arizona State Board of Nursing implemented a requirement for 960 hours of nursing practice within the previous 5 years (equivalent to 6 months full time) to renew an RN or LPN license. Renewing nurses are asked to sign a statement testifying that they practice and provide the practice setting. The Board interprets “practice” consistent with the statutory definitions of registered and practical nursing (A.R.S.§ 32-1601) which includes non-patient care activities. Nurses engaged in consulting, recruiting nurses, teaching, coordinating care and supervision of nursing or nursing related services would meet the practice requirement. “Practice” also includes providing nursing services in a volunteer capacity and any employment where the license is required or recommended. If a nurse does not have the required hours of practice, the nurse may either inactivate the license or enroll in a refresher course. Arizona State Board of Nursing approved refresher courses have been surveyed since 2006 regarding enrollments and completion.

The criterion for approval of a refresher course includes:

- A minimum of 40 hours of didactic instruction and 112 hours of supervised clinical practice for a licensed practical nurse program;
- A minimum of 80 hours of didactic instruction and 160 hours of supervised clinical practice for a registered nurse program;
- A planned and supervised clinical experience that is consistent with course goals and provides an opportunity for the student to demonstrate safe and competent application of program content. The student may spend up to 24 of the required clinical hours in a supervised lab setting;
- Instruction in current nursing care concepts and skills including:
 - Nursing process;
 - Pharmacology, medication calculation, and medication administration;
 - Communication;
 - Critical thinking and clinical decision making;
 - Delegation, management, and leadership; and
 - Meeting psychosocial and physiological needs of clients

DATA COLLECTED

Refresher courses approved by the Arizona State Board of Nursing were asked to provide information regarding their courses for the calendar year. The information requested consists of:

- The number of persons admitted into the refresher program
- The number of persons still enrolled from the previous year
- The number of graduates
- The number still enrolled into the next calendar year but progressing at the recommended pace
- The number of persons who failed or withdrew
- The number of persons continuing, but are repeating or lagging

In 2007 the data form was revised to separate RN and LPN enrollments.

Results 2011

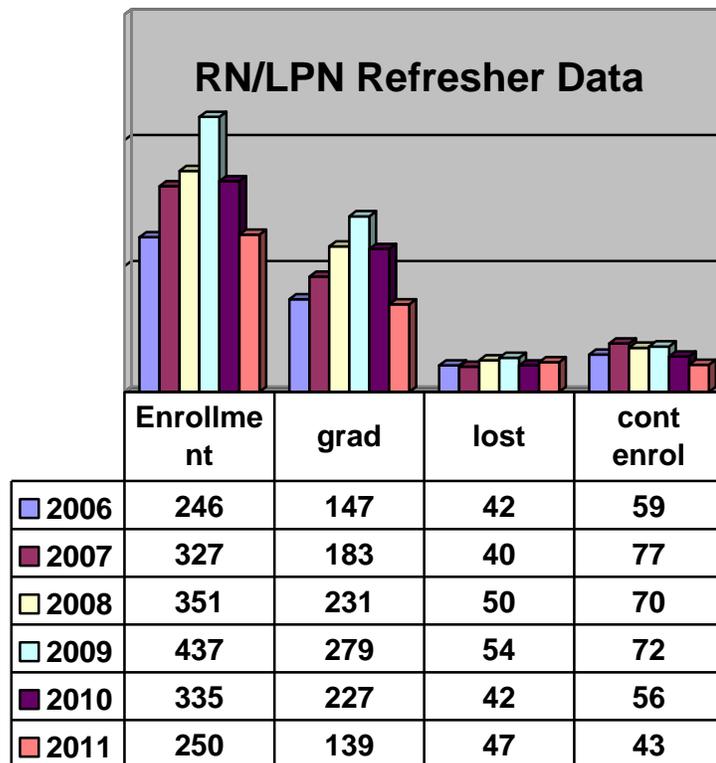
Six RN and 6 LPN refresher programs reported enrollments in 2010. One RN program reported no admissions and one RN program voluntarily withdrew its AZ Board Reporting RN programs include: Pima Community College Center for Training and Development, GateWay Community College, Mesa Community College, Mohave Community College, Northland Pioneer College, South Dakota State University, and SEVEN Academy. Reporting LPN programs include: Pima Community College Center for Training and Development, GateWay Community College, Mohave Community College, Innovative Academic Solutions and SEVEN Academy. The aggregate results are included below.

Number of Arizona RN refresher students admitted to the refresher program in 2011: TOTAL=174	Number of Arizona RN students admitted in 2010 who continued enrollment into 2011: TOTAL=36	Number of Arizona RNs students who graduated from the program in 2011: TOTAL=115	Of those admitted in 2011, number of Arizona RNs continuing in the program into 2012 at the recommended pace (e.g. regular students): TOTAL=35	Number of Arizona RNs who failed or withdrew from the program in 2011: TOTAL=39	Number of Arizona RNs who remain in the program but are repeating or lagging due to failure or other reasons: TOTAL=3
Number of Arizona PN refresher students admitted in 2011: TOTAL=36	Number of Arizona PN students admitted in 2010 who continued enrollment into 2011: TOTAL=4	Number of Arizona PN students who graduated from the program in 2011: TOTAL=24	Of those admitted in 2011 number of Arizona PNs continuing in the program into 2012 at the recommended pace (e.g. regular students): TOTAL=8	Number of Arizona PNs who failed or withdrew from the program in 2011: TOTAL=8	Number of Arizona PNs who remain in the program but are repeating or lagging due to failure or other reasons: TOTAL=1

With 250 new enrollees and continuing students there were a total of 250 persons enrolled in a nurse refresher course in 2011. This represents a continued decline in refresher enrollments since the high of 437 in 2009 (43% decline over 2 years). One hundred thirty nine (139) students (44% of enrollees) graduated in calendar year 2011 and 43 are continuing at the normal pace, indicating that 72% of students are either successful or have the potential for success. This is somewhat less similar to 2008-2010 were 80-84% of enrolled students were either successful or had the potential for success. Forty-seven students (19%) were lost to the program either through failure or withdrawal, indicating more failure and less persistence than similar to 2008-2010 when 12%-14% failed or withdrew. Four students (1.6%) lagged (continuing but at less than the recommended pace), similar to the 2%-3% lagging in 2008-2010. Trended data on the chart below indicates that 2011 was worse than previous years in terms of enrollees, graduates, and dropped students.

Programs were also asked to report how many students enrolled as a result of a consent agreement or Board disciplinary order. There were 17 (7%) such students in 2011 compared to 6-9 such students in 2009-2010 (2-3%).

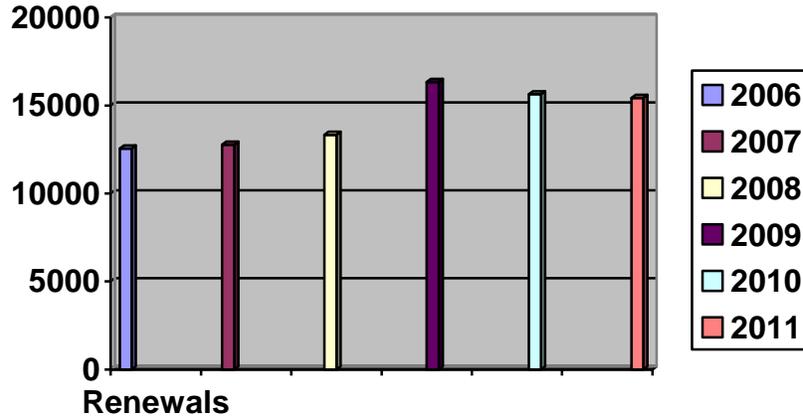
Programs were asked to report how they verified licensure prior to clinical experiences. All reported either using the Board of Nursing website or placing a copy of the license in the student's file. The Board requires either a temporary or permanent license to complete the clinical portion of the program.



Total Renewing Nurses and Refresher Course Enrollments

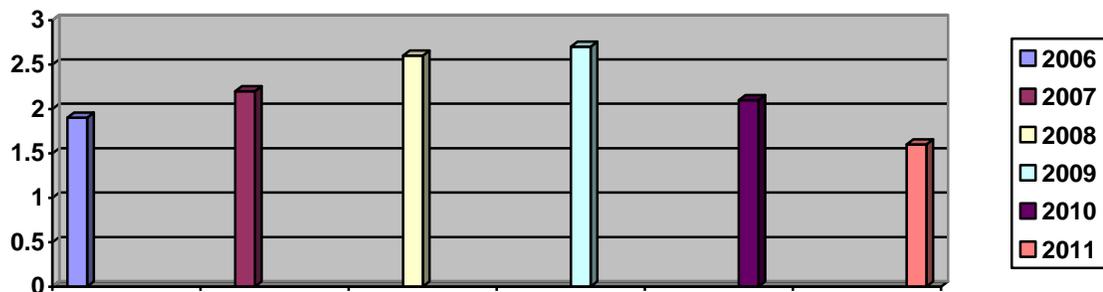
In 2010, 15,433 nurses renewed their license, nearly the same number that renewed in 2009 (15,635).

Nurses Renewing License



Enrollments in refresher courses represent 1.6% of all 2011 renewal applications, a decrease from 2007-2010. Enrollment figures may be slightly inflated due to the same person re-enrolling in a different course after withdrawal or failure. Refresher courses report that 10-30% of enrollees are not mandated to take the course as a condition of renewal but chose to re-train for a new clinical role in nursing.

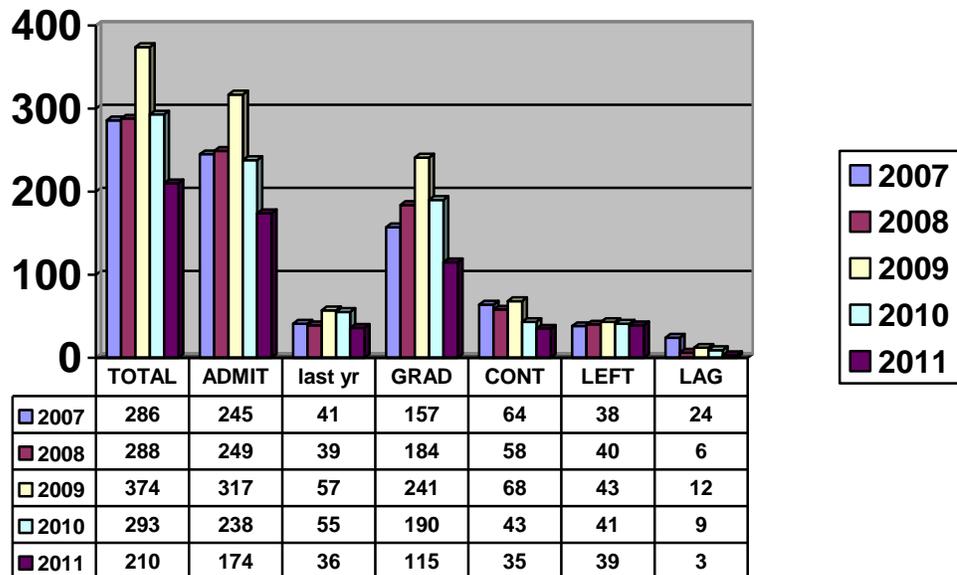
Percent of renewing nurses enrolled in a refresher course



RN Refresher Programs

The bulk of refresher program students are RN refreshers. The numbers of RN refresher students decreased by 28% in 2011 and is the lowest total since collecting these data.. Of total enrollments 82% were admitted within the calendar year and 18% were continuing from 2010. This closely mirrors the proportion of admitted to continuing students in 2007-1010. In 2011, 115 (55%) of refreshers successfully completed within the calendar year, 18% withdrew or failed, and 17% are continuing enrollment into 2012. 1.5% of students are either lagging behind the recommended pace or repeating the course due to failure. These ratios reflect a greater proportion of failures and withdrawals and a less proportion of graduates than all previous years.

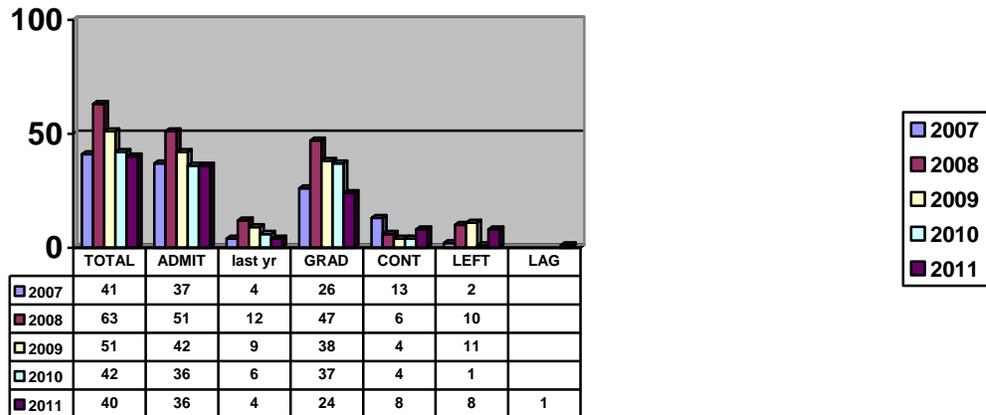
RN REFRESEHER



LPN Refresher Programs

LPN refresher program admissions remained stable in in 2011 as compared to 2010.. In 2011 there were 40 LPN refresher students as compared to 42 in 2010, This is fewer than the LPN refresher enrollments in 2007-2009. 60% of enrolled LPN students graduated in 2011 as compared to 88% of enrolled students graduated in 2010. Previous years had 63-75% of enrolled students graduate. Eight LPN students withdrew or failed and one student is enrolled but lagging behind. While the LPN enrollments did not drop as significantly as RN enrollments, graduation rates and failures/withdrawals show the same worsening pattern.

LPN REFRESEHER



CONCLUSIONS 2011

Based on the data provided by refresher programs, the following patterns were observed in 2011.

- There is a decrease in enrollments in RN refresher programs
- A smaller proportion of enrolled students graduated from both RN and LPN refresher courses
- A larger proportion of enrolled students in both RN and LPN refresher programs withdrew or failed
- A smaller proportion of renewing licensees enrolled in a refresher programs
- A larger proportion of refresher students are enrolled as part of a disciplinary order by the Board.

These data reflect the continuing challenges facing refresher programs. Refresher programs should prepare to educate fewer nurses, however based on these data, the nurses enrolled appear more high risk for failure and withdrawal necessitating different and unique educational approaches.

DISCUSSION 2010

The annual meeting of all refresher courses took place on April 19, 2011. Discussion focused on program innovations and challenges. Innovations included:

- Addition of a transition course for new graduates unable to obtain employment and refresher students incorporating 240 hours of clinical preceptorship
- Courses geared to those who do not pass NCLEX within 2 years of graduation
- One college acquired funding for technology to support pediatric, obstetric and specialty preparation for preceptorships
- Incorporation of an evidence-based project not only helped students with gathering evidence but improved computer skills.

Challenges experienced by program included:

- Finding clinical placements
- Older students lacking computer skills
- Internationally educated students experience difficulties adapting to the American health care culture and environment

DISCUSSION 2009

The annual meeting of all refresher courses took place on April 9, 2010. Discussion focused on evidence for success of refresher graduates and clinical placements.

Discussion included:

- Presentation of an offering for a transition course for currently practicing nurses seeking career moves to a new care setting; this course would not need Board approval and may also be suitable for new graduates who lack employment.
- One program is cutting back on refresher enrollments due to lack of clinical space
- Clinical space may be more available in dialysis units and the OR
- Programs are adding simulation to refresher courses and report the students are enjoying it
- The issue of Board referrals was discussed. Participants were asked to compile case studies of each Board referral including factors that contributed to their success or failure in the course.
- It was agreed that refresher programs would retain student records for a period of 3 years
- Bontrager provided an overview of licensure issues including a handout on the process to obtain a Temporary License for Refresher Course Only.

DISCUSSION 2008

At the annual refresher course provider meeting held in the Board offices on February 5, 2009. The following is a reflection of the discussion that took place at the meeting as categorized by issues facing refresher course providers.

Out of practice for extended periods

- Older nurses in their 60s and above are trying to come back into nursing; many are successful; nurses out of practice more than 15 years need extra attention that is not provided in a basic on-line refresher course;
- Those who have never worked need more structure than a basic on-line refresher course can provide; Instructed clinical has helped students who have been out more than 15 years;
- One program requires those nurses out more that 20 years to fill out a questionnaire and self evaluation; they are also directed to talk to nurses in health care facilities to ascertain the differences in practice over the past 2 decades; many potential students, realizing the obstacles, elect not to enroll, but 3 individuals did enroll, were successfully mentored and completed the course;

Computer Skills

- Refresher students need to obtain computer skills—many do not have e-mail or know how to attach a document;
- Refresher students are under the impression that an on-line program is easier despite not having computer skills

Clinical Preceptorships/Hiring

- It was the consensus of all programs that finding preceptors/clinical is very difficult
- Up to 30% in one program do not finish related to inability to find preceptor
- Facilities are reluctant to take precepted refreshers due to liability issues;
- It is “impossible” to obtain preceptors in Phoenix hospitals but some alternative placements are successfully obtained;
- One program has successfully placed students who subsequently were hired at Catholic Health Care West, Hacienda los Ninos, and other rehabilitation facilities; this program has also successfully placed every LPN;
- Most acute care facilities have a hiring freeze;
- There are too many new grads for acute care to consider refresher students as hires; in the past most refresher students were hired by the preceptor agency but that is not the case this year; even new LPN grads are having difficulty being hired in long-term care

Board Ordered Refresher Students

- Students under Board order for a refresher course are having difficulty obtaining insurance; this is usually only a problem if the nurse’s license was revoked or suspended; GateWay offered that such students would be covered under group insurance if they attended their program;
- Board ordered refreshers take a tremendous amount of time; one program stated that most board-ordered nurses in their program had significant behavior problems and dysfunction; if the problems stemmed from a medical problem, the program has been successful in teaching the student; if there are underlying psychological problems, the student requires intensive counseling.
- Students on Board order were reported to do better in a program where there is more traditional structure and instructed clinicals;
- CANDO students do very well;

Innovations

- Mesa CC received a grant from the DOE to pilot modules; their program will change to a series of core modules covering all of basic nursing and ½ credit of pharmacology; after completing the core modules, the student may choose a specialty path (med-surg, OB, peds) and take that module plus another ½ credit in pharmacology specific to the specialty; clinical would be in the area of choice
- GateWay changed their case studies to multi-system case studies and is incorporating evidence-based practice concepts; they require a final paper with 10 references; drug dosage calculation tests must be passed or the student will need to complete a math class; they have also added an additional 1 credit on-line class on medication errors and documentation. GateWay is starting an evening refresher program at the end of March for RNs only and is developing a live class on ethical decision making to start Fall ‘09.

- Pima Community College CTD is requiring a “shadow” experience the first week of the course; many students find this “scary” but some enjoy it so much that they elect to do multiple shadowing experiences; the student finds their own nurse to “shadow” and since no hands-on care is delivered, there is no need for insurance/agreement etc.
- Abrazo reported that they conducted clinical concurrent with didactic instruction matching patients to the module discussed; students seem to enjoy this;
- SEVEN Academy has received approval from the South Dakota Board of Nursing—is working with the Board to see if compact extends to refresher course license so nurse can complete clinical in South Dakota;

SUMMARY 2008

It was the consensus of the group that clinical placements and future employment is more difficult to obtain for refresher students in the current economic environment. Successful strategies for students out of practice 15 years or more include shadowing, pre-course interview, and structured class and clinical experiences. Board ordered students also appear to do better in a structured classroom and clinical environment. Innovations include tailoring the course to specialty areas of class, incorporating EBP, shadowing, and concurrent clinical reflecting didactic content. All participants agreed that the meeting was helpful and they enjoyed sharing their experiences.

CASE STUDY—2007

Nurse A graduated from nursing school over 25 years ago. She worked for less than a year as a nurse, then returned to school and earned a master’s degree in counseling. She has continuously worked as a counselor in a mental-health setting for 25 years. She sought licensure in AZ but did not qualify since she has not worked as a nurse for over 25 years. As required by the Board, she enrolled in a refresher course and requested a clinical experience in a psych-mental health clinic. Her performance in the didactic portion of the course was erratic with widely varying scores for tests and quizzes. She had difficulty with pharmacology and math calculations, but seemed to compensate and presented believable rationale for her performance. She was well liked by faculty and fellow students. She was placed in a psych mental health clinical setting and her preceptor noted several deficiencies in her nursing care. The preceptor stated that it appeared that she never really practiced nursing. She could not appropriately draw blood or administer an IM injection despite repeated coaching and instruction. She also did not seem to be aware of her limitations. Although she was considered stellar in interviewing patients and mastered the psychosocial aspects of patient care, she could never adequately demonstrate the nursing skills expected. She subsequently failed her clinical experience and was offered another clinical experience in a long-term care setting where basic nursing skills could be honed. She attended for a brief period, then decided not to seek licensure and dropped the program. A complaint was filed against the program for poor preparation of the student for clinical. The program made several changes to

their policies and the Board dismissed the complaint in light of the remediation instituted by the program.