



Health Care Budgets Take a Direct Hit

The Bush administration's Health and Human Services budget request for FY 2007 calls for an overall cut in discretionary spending for health care programs, with cuts to the budgets of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Discretionary budget authority would drop 2 percent, from \$69.2 billion in the current fiscal year to \$67.6 billion in FY 2007.

Beyond actual cuts in discretionary spending, the budget includes freezes that critics say are tantamount to cuts, given rising research and other costs. Included in these freezes is the HRSA funding for the Title VIII – Nursing Workforce Development Programs. In comparison to the cuts suffered under Title VII, nursing did extremely well with just a freeze.

Table with 4 columns: Nursing Workforce Development Programs, FY 2005 Final, FY 2006 Final, President's FY 2007 Request. Rows include Total (Amounts in Thousands), Advanced Education Nursing, Comprehensive Geriatric Education, Loan Repayment and Scholarships, Nurse Education, Practice, and Retention Grants, Nursing Faculty Loan Program, and Nursing Workforce Diversity.

Grants given out by HRSA under Title VII – Health Professions Programs aim to direct nurses, doctors, and dentists to medically underserved communities, i.e., areas of the country that have shortages of health professionals. The administration proposal is to totally eliminate funding for these programs in FY 2007. Title VII programs have gone from a funding level of \$252 million in FY 2005 to \$99 million in FY 2006. These programs have been perennial targets of the Bush Administration's budget cutters, but are strongly defended by family physicians who say the reductions would eliminate funding for family medicine training programs.

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## 2004 National Sample Survey of RNs Released

**H**RSA recently released preliminary findings from its [2004 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses](#). According to the latest data:

- The RN population grew by 7.9 percent from 2000 to 2004 with the total number of RNs estimated to be 2,909,467 in March 2004.
- The average age of an RN increased from 45.2 in 2000 to 46.8 in 2004.
- 42.2 percent of RNs entered the workforce with associate degrees, 25.2 percent with diplomas, 30.5 percent with baccalaureates, and 0.5 percent with graduate degrees.
- As of March 2004, 48,666 RNs were in positions as nurse faculty. Of these nurses, 11 percent were faculty in diploma programs, 40.1 percent were faculty in associate degree programs, and 48.8 percent were in baccalaureate and/or higher degree programs.
- The average age of faculty nurses was 46.8 years, but the estimated average age of faculty nurses with doctorates in nursing or a related field was 55.7 years.
- Average RN salaries increased by more than \$10,000 since the 2000 survey to a national average of \$57,784.
- The number of men in the RN workforce increased to 5.7 percent.

## Illinois Governor Seeks Millions to Stem Nursing Shortage

**G**overnor Rod Blagojevich (D) has called for spending \$3 million to \$5 million more per year on the state's nursing shortage problem through 2020. The money would be used for more nursing teachers, financial aid to students, and creation of a new state Center for Nursing. The Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council estimates Illinois is likely to have 21,000 unfilled nursing positions, or 19 percent of projected demand, by 2020.

A big part of Blagojevich's proposal is aimed at attracting and retaining nursing school teachers, who are in short supply largely because these advanced-degree nurses can make more money outside the classroom. Too few teachers is a big reason that more than 1,100 qualified applicants were turned away from Illinois nursing programs, according to the governor's office.

Blagojevich wants to make available this coming fiscal year \$1.5 million in grants that schools could use to graduate more nurses by adding teachers, for example. An additional \$150,000 would be set aside to supplement the salaries of 15 nursing educators.

The governor also is endorsing new legislation that would change the way nursing scholarships are awarded. The decision would be based on merit, not just financial need, in hopes of selecting candidates most likely to finish nursing school. The bill also calls for the creation of a Center for Nursing that would come up with recruitment strategies and improve working conditions.

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