

# Predicting Transitions in the Nursing Workforce: Professional Transitions from LPN-to-RN

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**Objective:** Licensed practical nurses (LPNs) are an untapped resource in the health care workforce because they represent a group that can transition to become registered nurses (RNs), and also bring diversity to the RN workforce (IOM, 2011). We know very little about the factors that affect LPN-to-RN transitions, or the policies needed to foster LPN-to-RN transitions. This study examined the career trajectories of LPNs in North Carolina (NC) to describe predictors of their transitions to the RN role.

**Data/Setting:** Data on LPNs, including those who transitioned to become RNs, were drawn from the NC Health Professions Data System (HPDS). The HPDS is comprised of annual licensure files from various licensing boards in NC, including the NC Board of Nursing.

**Design/Methods:** A retrospective cohort design was used to study LPN to RN professional transitions. This project developed a concatenated dataset, using data from 2000 to 2013, to examine LPN-to-RN transitions that occurred between 2001 and 2013.

**Results:** Using logistic regression, several characteristics of LPNs at the time of their licensure were associated with a greater likelihood of a LPN to RN transition: obtaining LPN licensure between 1996-2013, and particularly between 1996 and 2004; obtaining licensure at younger ages; obtaining nursing education in the US; being employed in a hospital setting; being employed part-time; and specializing in medical/surgical nursing.

**Conclusions:** While very little is known about LPNs who transition to become RNs, they are a valuable resource for expanding the RN workforce. Strategies are needed to support LPN-to-RN transitions, including strategies that focus on individuals enrolled in LPN programs, on LPN education programs, and on LPN employers. Incentives are needed to foster LPN career development and bring diversity to the RN workforce.

**Key Words** LPN workforce, LPN transitions, nursing career ladder, RN workforce

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