

# Hospital Nurse Staffing Facts



## FACT 1

**Staffing decisions in hospitals prioritize patient safety and are made by bedside nurses, along with experienced nurse managers and supervisors, in collaboration with other hospital leaders.**

These are informed decisions made in the best interests of patients, nurses and the community.

## FACT 2

**Nurses at the bedside need flexibility to make real-time staffing decisions that consider how sick their patients are, the number of patients on their units, the experience level of their nurses and other local factors.<sup>1</sup>**

## FACT 3

**Hospitals serve diverse populations and use different staffing approaches depending on the number of staff available and community needs.**

Hospitals currently employ numerous tactics to avoid mandatory overtime whenever possible.

## FACT 4

**States that allow hospital staffing decisions to be made by nurses at the local level have equal, if not better, quality scores than states with legislatively mandated nurse staffing ratios.**

Michigan has the same percentage of 5-star hospitals (10%) and a lower percentage of 1- and 2-star hospitals (21% to 27%) compared to California, which has had a legislative mandate for more than 20 years.<sup>2</sup> In addition, patient outcomes such as pressure ulcers, deep vein thrombosis/pulmonary embolism, postoperative sepsis, urinary tract or bloodstream infections **did not improve following implementation of staffing ratio mandates.**<sup>3,4</sup>

## FACT 5

**Michigan hospitals prioritize safety and quality and have voluntarily participated in MHA Keystone Center efforts to improve healthcare safety and quality for 20 years.**

In partnership with the MHA Keystone Center, Michigan hospitals have collectively saved thousands of lives, avoided tens of thousands of potential harmful incidents to patients and significantly reduced the rate of many hospital-acquired infections by implementing evidence-based practices to increase safety and quality.

## FACT 6

**The national shortage of registered nurses (RNs) impacts Michigan hospitals, who are currently trying to hire 4,700 nurses.**

85% of licensed RNs living in Michigan under the age of 65 are currently employed<sup>5,6</sup> as nurses, with an average age of 47.4 years.<sup>7</sup> 2022 was the first year since the early 2000s that enrollment in nursing programs decreased, and Michigan hospitals are actively engaged in developing the pipeline of nursing professionals.<sup>8</sup>

## FACT 7

**Care teams rely on a variety of different roles to deliver safe and quality care at the bedside.**

Nurse aides, licensed practical nurses (LPN), patient care techs and physicians all make important contributions, along with RNs.<sup>9</sup> Safe staffing is accomplished by implementing new models of care that include all members of the healthcare team.

## FACT 8

**Mandated nurse staffing ratios will harm Michigan by forcing the closure of 5,100 hospital beds if hospitals can't hire enough nurses to comply with the ratios.<sup>10</sup>**

As a result, patients will experience longer wait times to receive care and will be forced to travel further as hospitals close service line or facilities.<sup>11</sup>

## FACT 9

**The rate of occupational injuries in hospitals is high across the country, regardless of a mandated staffing ratio being in place.<sup>12</sup>**

Michigan hospitals dedicate significant resources every year to protect staff from violence, including increased security and law enforcement staffing, physical facility improvements and providing de-escalation training to employees.

## FACT 10

**Michigan hospitals are focused on long-term solutions to hire and retain more nurses, including offering better pay, improved benefits and expanding educational opportunities to encourage students consider a nursing career.<sup>13</sup>**

Staffing ratios do not create more nurses nor solve staffing shortages. California has a shortage of 40,000 RNs, despite the presence of mandated staffing ratios for more than 20 years.<sup>14</sup>

## FACT 11

**Michigan hospitals are retaining and recruiting RNs at a higher level than the national average.**

In 2023 the RN turnover rate for Michigan hospitals was 3.7 percentage points lower than the national average and the RN vacancy rate was 2.4% lower than the national average.<sup>15</sup>

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