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TEXAS CENTER FOR NURSING WORKFORCE STUDIES
IN COLLABORATION WITH THE   TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

2023

CHARACTERISTICS OF VOCATIONAL NURSING PROGRAMS

This update presents data for the 86 vocational nursing (VN) programs and the one military-based VN program[1] in Texas during the 2023 reporting year, including:

- 81 generic programs
- 5 Multiple Entry/Exit Programs (MEEPs)

The Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies (TCNWS) collected data using the 2023 Board of Nursing's (BON) Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS) that was available online as of October 2, 2023. The reporting period was academic year (AY) 2022-2023 (September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023) unless otherwise noted. TCNWS collaborated with the BON in the design and dissemination of the survey.

[1] Data collected from the military-based VN program were analyzed separately. Information about this program can be found on page 5.

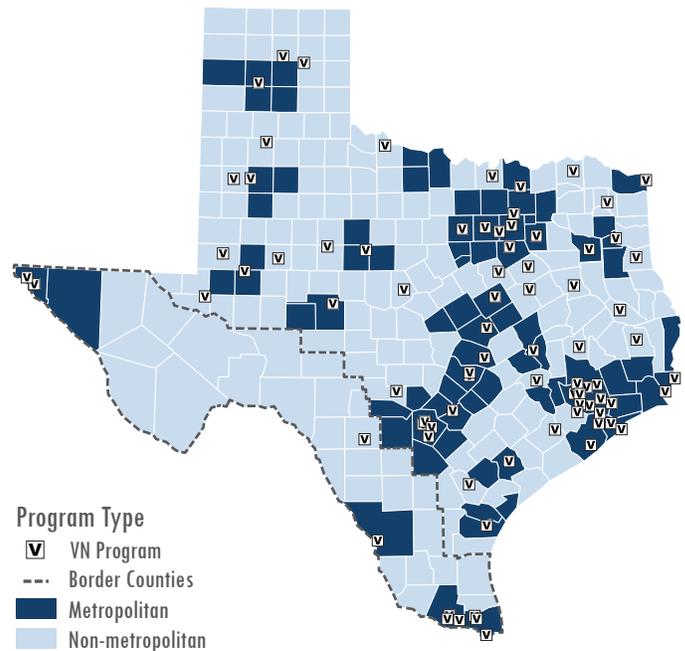## Geographic Location of Vocational Nursing Programs

Table 1 summarizes the location of the 86 VN programs by setting and geographic designation. Figure 1 presents the geographic locations of the 86 VN program main campuses in Texas by metropolitan and border county designation.

- 51 (59.3%) VN programs were located in a metropolitan, non-border area.
- 25 (29.1%) VN programs were located in a non-metropolitan, non-border area.
- 9 (10.5%) VN programs were located in a metropolitan, border area.
- 1 (1.2%) VN program was located in a non-metropolitan, border area.

Figure 1. Geographic Location of Vocational Nursing Programs, 2023

Program Type
- V VN Program
- - - - Border Counties
- ■ Metropolitan
- □ Non-metropolitan

Table 1. Geographic Designation of Main Campuses by Program Setting, 2023

Program Setting	Geographic Designation				Total
	Metro Border	Metro Non-Border	Non-Metro Border	Non-Metro Non-Border	
Community, State, or Technical College	6	41	1	24	72
Private/Independent Institutions for Higher Education	3	10	0	1	14
Total	9	51	1	25	86

Changes in the Number of Vocational Nursing Programs

Table 2 shows the number of newly opened, closed, and total VN programs by year.

- There were 2 closures between 2022 and 2023, and 1 new program opened.
- In the past 10 years, there has been a net reduction of 6 programs.

[2] One program was approved to conduct a teach-out for VN students who were near graduation but attended a VN program that closed in 2016.

Table 2. Changes in the Number of Vocational Nursing Programs, 2014-2023

Year	Newly Opened Programs	Closed Programs	Total Programs
2014	0	6	92
2015	1	2	91
2016	0	3	88
2017	3	1	90
2018	0	1	89[2]
2019	1	5	85[2]
2020	1	0	86
2021	2	3	85
2022	3	1	87
2023	1	2	86

Institution Types[3]

The 86 VN programs operating in Texas were classified as follows:

- 72 community, state, and technical colleges
- 14 private/independent institutions for higher education

These were mutually exclusive categories.

The number of community, state, and technical colleges stayed the same while the number of private/independent institutions decreased by 1 between 2022 and 2023.

[3] Institution types come from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (https://apps.highered.texas.gov/program-inventory/)

Length of Curriculum in Vocational Nursing Programs

In the 2023 NEPIS, programs were asked to report the length of their VN curriculum in months.

- Length of curriculum ranged from 9 to 18 months among VN programs.

- 74 (86.0%) VN programs were 12 months in length.
- 7 (8.2%) programs had a curriculum longer than 12 months, and 5 programs (5.8%) reported a curriculum less than 12 months in length.

Online Availability of Vocational Nursing Programs[3]

46 of 86 (53.5%) VN education programs indicated that they offered nursing courses via online technology:

- 0 programs offered the entire didactic portion online in 2023, the same as in 2022.
- 25 programs offered only select nursing courses entirely online, a decrease from 26 in 2022.

- 34 programs offered hybrid courses (greater than 50% but less than 85% online)[4], an increase from 29 in 2022.

[4] Please note that these are not mutually exclusive categories, and programs may offer select courses entirely online and select courses as hybrids. Also note that all programs, whether or not they offered any portion of their program online, offered hands-on, face-to-face clinical experiences. Didactic curriculum is defined as including actual hours of classroom instruction in nursing and non-nursing Board-required courses/content.

Curriculum

Programs were asked what type of curriculum they used.

- 57 (66.3%) reported using a block curriculum,[5]14 (16.3%) used an integrated curriculum,[6] and 8 (9.3%) used a concept-based curriculum.[7]
- 2 programs (2.3%) reported using a traditional curriculum.
- Lastly, 5 (5.8%) programs used a Texas model of concept-based curriculum.

If programs implemented permanent curriculum changes[8] during AY 2022-2023, they were asked to select which changes were implemented (Table 3).
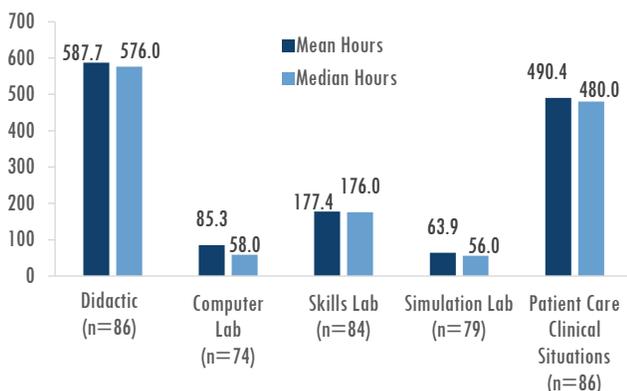
- Programs could select more than one type of change. 73.3% of programs did not implement a permanent curriculum change.

Program Hours

Programs were asked to report the total number of hours students were required to participate in didactic and clinical portions of the program of study. The clinical portion is the sum of computer lab, skills lab, simulation lab, and patient care clinical situation hours.

Figure 2 reports the mean and median number of contact hours (didactic and clinical) reported by VN programs. Clinical hours are further broken down by computer lab, skills lab, simulation lab, and patient care clinical situation hours.

Figure 2. Mean and Median Didactic and Clinical Contact Hours Reported by Vocational Nursing Programs, 2023

Note: n is the number of programs reporting more than zero hours for that type of activity.

Table 3. Types of Permanent Curriculum Changes Implemented, 2023

Type of Curriculum Change	# of programs	% of programs
No permanent change	63	73.3%
A minor change (editorial changes, moving content, hours between courses)	9	10.5%
Changes in clinical hours	9	10.5%
Online delivery (more didactic online, moving to hybrid courses)	2	2.3%
A total revision of curriculum	5	5.8%
Adding and removing courses	9	10.5%
A change in program objectives, major concepts	2	2.3%
Other	7	8.1%

Didactic Contact Hours

The didactic contact hours included face-to-face or online delivery of classroom instruction. The mean number of didactic hours reported by VN programs was 587.7 hours. The median number of hours was 576.

Computer Lab

Computer lab was an optional component of clinical hours that included interactive tutorials and learning modules. The mean and median hours reported by 74 VN programs for computer lab were 85.3 and 58 hours, respectively. The mean decreased from 89.2 hours in 2022.

Nursing Skills Lab (low- and moderate-fidelity simulations and task training)

Skills lab was defined as low- and medium-fidelity simulations and task training. The mean and median hours reported by 84 programs were 177.4 and 176 hours, respectively.

High-Fidelity Simulation Lab

Simulation lab was defined as high-fidelity situations including orientation, learning objectives, simulation experience, debriefing, and evaluation. The mean and median hours reported by 79 programs for simulation lab were 63.9 and 56 hours, respectively.

Programs were also asked to provide additional information on their simulation lab hours as seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Simulation Hours, 2023

	Yes	No
Plan to Increase Simulation Lab Hours	25 (29.1%)	61 (70.9%)
Simulation Lab Hours Weighted Differently	22 (25.6%)	64 (74.4%)

- The number of programs planning to increase simulation lab hours increased from 24 programs in 2022 to 25 programs in 2023.

- 64 programs (74.4%) indicated that simulation lab hours were not weighted differently than hands-on clinical hours.

Patient Care Clinical Situations

Patient care clinical situations were hands-on clinical practice with actual patients in a clinical setting, including all faculty-supervised activities in the clinical setting, observational experiences, and clinical conferences. The mean and median number of hours reported by all 86 programs for patient care clinical situations were 490.4 and 480 hours, respectively. This was a decrease from 499 and 498 hours in 2022.

Total Clinical Contact Hours

The mean and median total clinical contact hours reported by VN programs were 795.7 and 830 hours, respectively. The highest number of hours reported was 2,068.

Programs were asked to indicate whether they used Dedicated Education Units (DEUs)[9] as a clinical format.

- 5 programs stated they used DEUs, a decrease from 6 in 2022.

Table 5 shows the percentage of hands-on clinical practice time programs reported students spent in several different clinical settings.

Table 5. Percentage of Hands-On Clinical Time Spent by Setting, 2023

Clinical Setting	Mean % of Time Spent	Median % of Time Spent
Acute Care	47.7%	46.0%
Long Term Care	32.9%	25.0%
Community	9.6%	7.1%
Observational	4.1%	0.0%
Other	5.7%	0.0%

- The majority of hands-on clinical practice hours were spent in acute care settings, with programs reporting an average of 76.5% of clinical practice hours in the acute care setting.

- The next most used setting was the long term care setting, with an average of 32.9% of clinical practice hours.

- The "Other" category includes settings like pediatric and maternal clinics, school health fairs, daycare centers, mental health centers, and home health and hospice.

The 2023 NEPIS asked how many hands-on clinical contact hours in the VN program were devoted to the nursing care of children and maternity nursing.

- The mean and median number of hands-on clinical contact hours devoted to the nursing care of children were 36.4 and 30.0 hours, respectively.

- Programs reported a mean of 37.3 hours and a median of 32.0 hands-on clinical contact hours devoted to maternity nursing.

Academic Practice Partnerships

Programs were asked to indicate whether they partnered with health care facilities in a clinical agreement to allow students an opportunity for an enriched and concentrated clinical experience under the supervision of a trained preceptor or nursing faculty.

- 22 programs (25.6%) did partner with health care facilities.

- The number of partnerships ranged from 1 to 97, with the mean and median being 15.4 and 9.5, respectively.

- Of these 22 programs, only 1 program indicated that their students were paid for these experiences.

- 7 of the 22 programs (31.8%) stated that they were using a clinical evaluation tool to evaluate these clinical experiences. 7 programs (31.8%) used preceptor's evaluation.

[5] Block curriculum: blocks or chunks of nursing content that are structured around particular clinical specialty areas, patient population, pathology, or physical systems. The content and focus of each course tends to be unique to that course. Content commonly is specific to areas such as medical-surgical nursing, mental health nursing, pediatric nursing, maternity nursing, gerontological nursing, and community nursing.

[6] Integrated curriculum: curriculum pattern where nursing content is woven across courses in the curriculum rather than being based on body systems or specific health problems.

[7] Concept-based curriculum: curriculum based upon faculty-identified concepts that are considered core to nursing practice and threaded across the curriculum. Each concept is presented through application to exemplars of each concept.

[8] Programs are asked specifically about permanent curriculum changes to avoid reporting on temporary curriculum changes programs may have made to address special circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

[9] A Dedicated Education Unit is a nursing education model based upon a contractual agreement between a hospital and a nursing education program. Staff nurses on a specific hospital unit function as the primary instructors for nursing students during clinical learning experiences, and nursing program faculty serve as mentors and education resources for the staff nurses.

The 2023 VN NEPIS asked programs about options for high school students.[10]

- 8 programs reported offering options for high school students.

- 1 of these programs allows students to complete the entire nursing curriculum in high school.

Programs were asked to report whether they had implemented a track that gives active duty, former, or retired military personnel nursing credit for allied health care training and/or experience.

- In 2023, 1 program reported having a track that gives active duty, former, or retired military personnel nursing credit for allied health care training and/or experience.

- The program is not an accelerated track, did not identify any challenges to planning or implementing the track, and reported 0 students in that track.

[10] More information on nursing programs for high school students can be found in the 2023 Nursing Education for High School Students report located at: https://www.dshs.texas.gov/texas-center-nursing-workforce-studies/nursing-education-reports