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## **Massachusetts Coalition Receives \$300,000 to Advance Nurse Education and Build More Diverse Nursing Workforce**

Massachusetts is one of nine states awarded a \$300,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to create a more highly educated, diverse nursing workforce. This is the second RWJF grant, part of its national Academic Progression in Nursing (APIN) initiative, to support Massachusetts' efforts to make it easier for current and future nurses to advance their education to the BSN or higher degree.

Other states receiving grants under this second phase of the APIN initiative are California, Hawaii, Montana, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Texas, and Washington State.

“This grant is an important show of faith in Massachusetts’ work to increase the capacity and diversity of the nursing workforce,” said David Cedrone, Associate Commissioner for Economic and Workforce Development at the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. “We will use this continuing support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to deepen and broaden the scope of our work to help nurses advance their education to baccalaureate-level or higher.”

Massachusetts’ accomplishments in the first phase of the APIN grant program include:

- Development of a Nursing Education Transfer Compact (NETC), approved by the Board of Higher Education, to facilitate the transfer of academic credit between two- and four-year nursing programs at the Commonwealth’s public higher education institutions. Outreach to more than 800 working nurses with information about benefits of earning a bachelor’s degree in nursing (BSN) and available RN-to-BSN nurse education programs.
- Development and distribution of the Massachusetts Nursing Core Competencies Toolkit, a resource guide to help nursing education programs and practice settings implement ten core competencies, paving the way for seamless progression across all levels of nursing education and practice.
- Collection and analysis of data on faculty recruitment, retention, and retirement trends to identify opportunities for increasing the pool of faculty to educate nurses at the bachelor through doctoral levels.

“A more highly educated nursing workforce can lead to improved patient care, innovations in health care delivery, and improved coordination of care,” said Sharon Gale, MSN, RN, FAAN, Chief Executive Officer of the Organization of Nurse Leaders of MA & RI. “Our efforts to build a more educated and diverse nursing workforce will

make Massachusetts better able to meet the health care needs of its aging and increasingly diverse population.”

In announcing the \$2.7 million grant, Pamela Austin Thompson, MS, RN, CENP, FAAN, national program director for APIN, chief executive officer of AONE, and senior vice president for nursing at the American Hospital Association, said the states “have been making great progress developing initiatives and curricula that are encouraging and making it easier for more nurses to earn their BSN degrees. We know that the nation needs a well-educated nursing workforce to ensure an adequate supply of public health and primary care providers, improve care for patients living with chronic illness, and in other ways meet the needs of our aging and increasingly diverse population. The strategies these nine states are implementing, and the models they are developing for other states to replicate, will help us meet the IOM’s target for BSN and higher prepared nurses.”

In its groundbreaking 2010 report, [The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health](#), the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommended that 80 percent of the nursing workforce be prepared at the baccalaureate level or higher by the year 2020. At present, about half of nurses in the United States have baccalaureate or higher degrees. While acknowledging the contributions of Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses and associate-degree-prepared Registered Nurses, the IOM report said a better educated nursing workforce can help ensure that our nation’s population has access to high-quality, patient- and family-centered care and can meet the growing need to provide preventive care in schools, communities, and homes.

Massachusetts has a goal to increase the proportion of nurses with baccalaureate degrees (BSN) or higher from 55% in 2014 to 66% by 2020. Research shows that BSN-prepared nurses have stronger critical thinking and decision-making skills and are better at evaluating interventions.

“This second RWJF grant is a vote of confidence in Massachusetts’ work in this national effort,” said Pat Crombie, MSN, RN, Project Director of the Mass. Action Coalition. “It’s a wonderful opportunity to share what we’ve learned and learn from others as well as provide nursing leadership both at the local and national level.”

“Advancing a more highly educated, diverse workforce where nurses are able to practice to the top of their education and training is essential to achieving the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s mission to advance a culture of health in our nation,” said RWJF Senior Adviser for Nursing Susan B. Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN. “In the last two years, APIN grantees have laid important groundwork to build that workforce. We are pleased to provide the financial support they need to continue their essential work.”

RWJF is also helping advance recommendations in the IOM report by supporting the [Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action](#)—a collaborative effort to advance solutions to challenges facing the nursing profession in order to improve quality and transform the way Americans receive health care. It is coordinated through the Center to Champion Nursing in America, an initiative of AARP, the AARP Foundation, and RWJF. It supports state-based Action Coalitions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia; Action Coalitions are leading the APIN work in each of the nine funded states.

APIN is advancing state and regional strategies aimed at creating a more highly educated, diverse nursing workforce. It is run by the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) on behalf of the Tri-Council for Nursing, consisting of the American

Association of Colleges of Nursing, the National League for Nursing, American Nurses Association, and AONE, which is leading the four-year initiative.

During the two-year grant period, Massachusetts and the other states will develop sustainability plans to ensure that the work to promote seamless academic progression for nurses in their states will continue beyond the grant period. During Phase II, each state also will develop a robust diversity plan and focus on academic-practice partnerships to expand and support the work to date.

#### About the Massachusetts Action Coalition

The Massachusetts Action Coalition is a partnership of the MA Department of Higher Education and the Organization of Nurse Leaders of MA & RI. The coalition is part of the nationwide Campaign for Action, a joint initiative of AARP Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to help implement the Institute of Medicine's recommendations on the future of nursing. For more information, visit [www.campaignforaction.org/state/massachusetts](http://www.campaignforaction.org/state/massachusetts) and [www.mass.edu/nursing](http://www.mass.edu/nursing).

#### About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve the health and health care of all Americans. We are striving to build a national Culture of Health that will enable all Americans to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. For more information, visit <http://www.rwjf.org>. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at <http://www.rwjf.org/twitter> or on Facebook at <http://www.rwjf.org/facebook>.

#### About the Tri-Council for Nursing

The Tri-Council for Nursing is an alliance of four autonomous nursing organizations each focused on leadership for education, practice and research. The four organizations are the: American Association of Colleges of Nursing; American Nurses Association; American Organization of Nurse Executives; and the National League for Nursing. While each organization has its own constituent membership and unique mission, they are united by common values and convene regularly for the purpose of dialogue and consensus building, to provide stewardship within the profession of nursing. These organizations represent nurses in practice, nurse executives and nursing educators. The Tri-Council's diverse interests encompass the nursing work environment, health care legislation and policy, quality of health care, nursing education, practice, research and leadership across all segments of the health delivery system.