

Nursing Health Services Research Unit

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Employer Perspectives on Implementing an Employment Strategy

In 2007 the Nursing Graduate Guarantee (NGG) was launched to ensure that every Ontario RN and RPN graduate would have the opportunity to work full-time hours (MOHLTC, 2007). An evaluation of the NGG is reported in *Employment of Nursing Graduates: Evaluation of a Provincial Policy Strategy (2008)* (<http://www.nhsru.com/reports.html>). This fact sheet presents the perspectives of employers who participated in the NGG initiative.

Background

An economic downturn in the 1990's was followed by a loss of nurses from Ontario's labour market and casualization of the nursing workforce. Numerous government funding initiatives to support nursing have been launched since 2004 with the most recent being the NGG initiatives in 2007 and 2008 in support of full-time employment for new graduates.

Methodology and Sample

Data on employer perspectives of the NGG were collected through surveys, interviews and focus groups. Focus groups were formed according to sectors with representation across the 14 LHINs. Only 24.7% (296 out of 1198) of employers posted positions on the portal. Of these employers, 230 (78%) responded to the survey. A total of 42 employers from acute care, long-term care, public health and community care who registered on the NGG portal participated in one of seven focus groups (6-7 per group).

Findings: Employer perspectives of the NGG

Employer responses were related to: 1) use of the portal; 2) matching and creating supernumerary positions; 3) orientation and mentoring; and 4) employment processes associated with offering permanent FT employment.

Portal Evaluation:

- Two-thirds of surveyed employers rated the clarity of NGG portal instructions as high but many experienced difficulty in actually using the portal.
- Satisfaction ratings for the overall experience were similarly distributed across three categories: 38% high, 28% neutral and 34% low.
- Approximately one-third of the participants reported low or very low satisfaction with the design (33.3%) and user-friendliness (39.6%) of the portal.
- The employer focus groups indicated that they had difficulty navigating the site and recommended a more user-friendly portal.

Matching and Creating Supernumerary Positions:

- The most often reported reason for not offering a supernumerary (above staff complement) position was that the new graduate had accepted an offer elsewhere or rejected the offer (20.9%).

- Employers reported that the length of time (24 hours) which new graduates had to change decisions about accepting a job offer was too short.

Benefits/challenges of the orientation and mentorship program:

- Extended orientation and mentorship was supported by all employers as reflected in the following quote:
 “...extensive orientation and thorough integration into a nursing unit is the only way...otherwise I think you’re going to see people leaving the profession early because they just can’t handle the stress and pressure of not being supported properly”.
- Issues with baccalaureate graduation are as follows: new graduates enter the market primarily during the summer months and their need for orientation and mentoring conflicts with senior staff summer vacations.
- Keeping the new graduate from being counted as base staff during the extended orientation was a challenge due to staffing issues.
- Smaller organizations had to mount new programs specifically for the NGG.
- Some organizations reported that simultaneously providing preceptors for students and mentoring new graduates put a strain on their resources.

Employment processes and offering Permanent FT positions:

- Reasons for not offering a FT position are presented in Table 1.
- The first two reasons for not offering FT positions accounted for over 50% of reasons, both of which were validated in the employer focus groups.
- Employers in focus groups reported they used a variety of methods to offer FT employment.
- In larger acute care centers FT positions could be created through float pools, a strategy not applicable to community, public health, and Long Term Care.
- If unable to offer FT employment, the organization paid for an additional 6 weeks of FT employment and did not have extra resources for educational programs.
- Seniority and union agreements in some cases interfered with their ability to offer new graduates FT positions.

Table 1. Employer Reasons for Not Bridging a New Graduate into a Permanent FT position

| Reason Stated | % of Employers |
|---|----------------|
| Lack of availability of full-time positions | 30.5 |
| Nursing graduate rejection of the full-time offer | 22.8 |
| Failure of the registration exam | 15.2 |
| Seniority/union agreements | 7.6 |
| Inadequate performance | 6.6 |
| Lack of funding | 6.6 |
| Mismatch between offer and interest of nursing graduate | 6.6 |
| Other | 8.6 |

Overall Response

The overall response of the employers to the NGG was very positive. The majority of employers rated the responsiveness of clinical staff and administrators as receptive, 84% and 95% respectively. Employer focus group data supported these findings reporting that the overall response to the NGG was very positive and that they intend to participate in the initiative again.

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