



New Hampshire Veterans Home

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103 mlc

Margaret D. LaBrecque
Commandant

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January 31, 2022

FEB 01 '22 FY12 RCVD

His Excellency, Governor Christopher T. Sununu
And the Honorable Council
State House
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

Pursuant to New Hampshire RSA 99:8, Increases for Recruitment Purposes and in accordance with Per 904.01 of the Rules of the Division of Personnel, Request for Temporary Increase, authorize the New Hampshire Veterans Home (NHVH) to continue a fifteen percent (15%) base hourly wage enhancement to nursing staff currently paid under the Institutional Nurse (N130) pay scale for recruitment and retention purposes. Additionally, we request a Temporary Increase for Licensed Nursing Assistants and Licensed Medication Nursing Assistants paid under the A130 40 Hour Wage Schedule. This request is projected to increase funding by \$ 2,658,520 over the 24 month period ending in FY 24. This enhancement would be effective from March 9, 2022 through March 9, 2024.

Funding source: 39% Federal Funds, 29% General Funds, 32% Other.

Funds are available due to vacancy savings in 05-00043-043-430010-5359-010, NH Veterans Home, Professional Services, as follows:

	<u>FY2022</u>	<u>FY2023</u>	<u>FY2024</u>	<u>Total</u>
010-500100 Regular Officers And Employees	\$405,922	\$1,319,245	\$933,353	\$2,658,520

EXPLANATION

The New Hampshire Veterans Home (NHVH) continues to experience intense difficulty in filling and retaining nursing positions in the current labor market. The state unemployment rate has remained very low over the past 12 months and the rate in November of 2021 was 2.0% while at the same time occupations in the healthcare sector are projected to grow faster than other sectors. The workforce is aging as predicted and the pace of retirements of state employees has accelerated in the last year. The rate of retirements and resignation has increased due to the COVID pandemic. Consequently, the vacancy rate at NHVH has risen each year even with the 15% enhance enacted in March of 2018 –see Table 1 below.

Table 1 New Hampshire Veterans Home Nurse Positions

Classified Position	Labor Grade	Authorized positions (2022)	Vacant 2021/2022	Vacant 2020	Vacant 2019	Vacant 2018	Vacant 2017
Director of Nursing	34	1	0	0	0	0	0
Asst. Director of Nursing	29	2	0	0	0	1	1
Registered Nurse I	19	3	1	1	1	0	0
Registered Nurse II	21	21	8	6	6	6	6
Registered Nurse III	23	10	3	4	4	4	4
Nurse Specialist	25	5	1	0	1	1	1
Nurse Coordinator	27	6	0	1	1	1	1
Nurse Practitioner	28	2	0	1	0	1	1
Licensed Practical Nurse I	16	15	8	3	3	2	3
Licensed Practical Nurse II	18	1	1	0	0	0	0
Licensed Nursing Assistants/Licensed Medication Nursing Assistants	9-15	142	58	55	50	48	43
Totals		208	80	71	66	64	60
Vacancy Rate			38%	34%	32%	31%	28%

Many complicated dynamics contribute to the NHVH's reduced effectiveness to fill nursing positions. The nursing shortage, the increased occupational choices for women, the state hiring process, wage schedules and classification system to name but a few. Additionally since our initial enhancement request, many healthcare professionals are leaving the field due to the work demands and the pandemic. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the health-care sector has lost nearly half a million workers since February 2020. While there have been some internal efforts to address some constraints the barriers remain in an outdated hiring, wage and classification process which will take extensive time and resources to change. The most impactful and timely intervention is the continued enhancement of 15% and incorporate the LNA and LMNA positions to this request. With this tool, the Home has been able to offer a viable wage in the current labor market (Table 2).

Table 2 NH Occupational Wages 2019			
	Entry level wage	Median wage	Experienced wage
Registered Nurse	RN I Step 1	RN II Step 4	RN III Step 4
State of NH with 15%	\$28.73	\$34.83	\$38.08
Laconia-Belmont	\$30.17	\$42.52	\$48.70
Greater Concord	\$29.64	\$36.77	\$40.33
Nurse Practitioner	LG 28/Step 1	LG 28/Step 4	LG 28/Step 8
State of NH with current 15% enhancement and	\$41.49	\$47.23	\$56.66

direct care			
Laconia-Belmont	43.09	52.35	57.98
Greater Concord	\$45.11	\$53.91	\$58.30
LPN	LPN I 16/Step 1	LPN I 16/Step 4	LPN I 16/Step 8
State of NH with 15%	\$25.27	\$31.89	\$33.48
Laconia-Belmont	\$22.98	\$27.20	\$29.31
Greater Concord	\$22.41	\$27.48	\$30.02
LNA/LMNA	LNA I 9/1	LNA II 11/4	LNA III 14/8
State of NH with 15%	16.13	19.46	25.72
Laconia/Belmont*	14.46	16.12	16.96
Greater Concord*	14.93	17.96	19.26

Demand will continue as population ages

Unfortunately, the labor force continues to shrink while the Healthcare sector and occupations such as RNs continue to grow at accelerating rates. The number of openings in the nursing field is projected to exceed supply over the next decade in all geographic areas. In New Hampshire the Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau is projecting the growth rate of job openings to be 12.9% for registered nurses, 29.9% for nurse practitioners and 19.3% for licensed practical nurses. Private employers are adapting to the increased competition for a limited supply of applicants. There are at least 12 licensed nursing homes in the Belknap /Merrimack County areas at this time. These private sector facilities are offering higher wages and sign-on bonuses/retention bonus, which influence our ability to be competitive even with the total compensation package offered by the State.

Licensed Nursing Assistants and Licensed Medication Nursing Assistants are in high demand with 12 licensed nursing facilities in the area. The 2021 wage statistics from NHES does not accurately depict the competitive wages in the field. Area facilities are offering sign on substantially higher hourly wages and sign and incentives the State cannot match. According to Indeed.com, an entry level LNA working at Genesis Healthcare in Laconia start at 16.82 and Belknap Country Nursing Home is offering up to \$25.66 per hour for qualified staff and MAS Medical Staffing is offering \$19.00 per hour to start.

At the same time, the top seven areas of concentration for current and recent nursing students are legal nurse consultant, nurse midwife, nurse anesthetist, travel nurse, holistic nursing, informatics nurse specialist and surgical nursing. Geriatrics nursing does not attract students as successfully as other areas of concentration, primarily due to lower wages.

The Veterans Home's approach to the staffing crisis is multi leveled and comprehensive. In addition to the 15% enhancement, the Home has contracted with a Travel Nursing agency to fill gaps, has expanded scheduling options for existing staff, and is developing training opportunities internally and externally to develop and retain nursing staff. Recruitment and outreach efforts are collaborative with the best results coming from employee referrals.

Your favorable action on this request would be appreciated.

Respectfully Submitted,

Margaret D LaBrecque

Margaret D. LaBrecque
 Commandant

LaBrecque, Margaret

From: McCann, Barbara
Sent: Monday, January 31, 2022 4:05 PM
To: LaBrecque, Margaret
Subject: FW: Nursing Enhancement from 2016

From: Rudis, Lorrie <Lorrie.A.Rudis@das.nh.gov>
Sent: Monday, January 31, 2022 3:56 PM
To: McCann, Barbara <Barbara.A.McCann@nhvh.nh.gov>
Subject: Nursing Enhancement from 2016

Hi Barbara,
Your request to continue the nursing enhancement is approved.

All the best.