

Methods of Interim Staffing

The Hospital Nurse Staffing Survey (HNSS) assesses the size and effects of the nursing shortage in hospitals, Texas' largest employer of nurses. During the spring of 2012, the TCNWS administered the HNSS to 603 Texas hospitals. These included for-profit, non-profit, public, and Texas Department of State Health Services-operated hospitals, as well as hospitals linked to academic institutions; military hospitals were not surveyed. The facilities surveyed were general acute care, psychiatric, special, and rehabilitation hospitals. 373 (61.9%) hospitals responded to the survey. The hospitals that completed the 2012 HNSS were representative of all Texas hospitals by region and bed size.

This report presents data on how hospitals use varying methods of interim staffing to provide direct patient care by licensed nursing staff including RNs, LVNs, APRNs, and NAs, as well as the costs of these methods.

Types of Interim Staffing Methods Used

Section 257.003 in the Health and Safety Code requires hospitals to “adopt, implement, and enforce a written nurse staffing policy to ensure that an adequate number and skill mix of nurses are available to meet the level of patient care needed.”¹To replace sick or absent Registered Nurses (RNs), cover budgeted but vacant positions, and handle unusual workloads, hospitals reported using voluntary overtime, managerial staff in patient care positions, and in-house staffing pools, among others.

Figure 1. Percentage of Responding Hospitals Using Methods of Interim Staffing

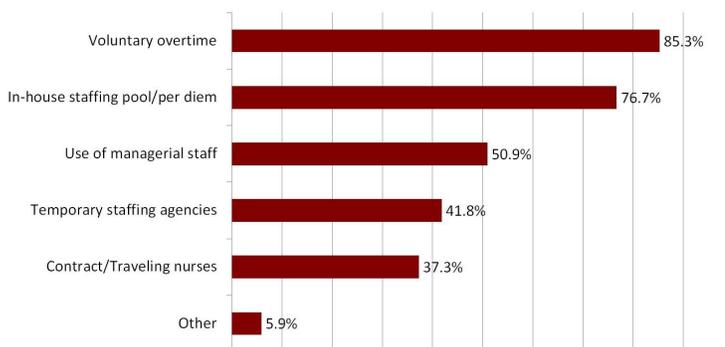


Figure 1 shows the percentage of hospitals using each type of interim staffing method.

- Voluntary overtime was used as a method of interim staffing in 318 (85.3%) hospitals.
- Staff not directly employed by the hospital, either through temporary staffing agencies or contract/traveling nurses, were used by 156 (41.8%) and 139 (37.3%) hospitals, respectively.

Table 1. Number and Percentage of Hospitals Using Each Method of Interim Staffing by Region

Region	n	Voluntary overtime		In-house staffing pool/per diem		Use of managerial staff		Temporary staffing agencies		Contract/Traveling nurses		Other	
1	37	31	83.8%	17	45.9%	15	40.5%	18	48.6%	8	21.6%	0	0%
2	107	91	85.0%	87	81.3%	56	52.3%	35	32.7%	41	38.3%	8	7.5%
3	34	29	85.3%	25	73.5%	15	44.1%	14	41.2%	9	26.5%	0	0%
4	65	56	86.2%	55	84.6%	27	41.5%	29	44.6%	21	32.3%	1	1.5%
5	39	35	89.7%	32	82.1%	26	66.7%	20	51.3%	23	59.0%	12	30.8%
6	40	36	90.0%	35	87.5%	25	62.5%	22	55.0%	16	40.0%	0	0%
7	15	11	73.3%	8	53.3%	7	46.7%	3	20.0%	6	40.0%	1	6.7%
8	36	29	80.6%	27	75.0%	19	52.8%	15	41.7%	15	41.7%	0	0%
Total	373	318	85.3%	286	76.7%	190	50.9%	156	41.8%	139	37.3%	22	5.9%

Note: n= # of responding hospitals in each region.

Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
Panhandle	North Texas	East Texas	Gulf Coast	Central Texas	South Texas	Rio Grande Valley	West Texas

Data in Table 1 show the number of hospitals using each type of interim staffing method in each region.

- Voluntary overtime was the most used method of interim staffing for hospitals in all regions.
- Region 5 (Central Texas) had the highest percentage of hospitals using contract and traveling nurses (59.0%) while the statewide rate was just 37.3%.
- 90.9% of hospitals (20 of 22) using other unspecified methods of interim staffing were located in either Region 2 (North Texas) or Region 5 (Central Texas).

Source: ¹Texas Health & Safety Code § 257.001 - 005

Hours and Cost* of Interim Staffing

Hospitals were asked to detail the types of interim staffing methods they had used in the past year, as well as the hours and costs of each method. Of the 373 hospitals who responded to the survey, 351 (94.1%) reported using at least one method of interim staffing. 234 hospitals (62.7%) provided information on the hours and costs of these methods. The response rates for each method of interim staffing varied as many hospitals do not track this information.

Table 3. Hours and Cost of Interim Staffing in Texas

	n	Hours	Cost*	Cost/Hr
Voluntary overtime	187	5,882,033	\$203,199,296	\$34.55
In-house staffing pool/per diem	133	3,713,345	\$130,800,117	\$35.22
Contract/Traveling nurses	91	1,475,680	\$56,311,006	\$38.16
Temporary staffing agencies	76	396,531	\$16,023,123	\$40.41
Use of managerial staff	57	64,002	\$2,351,488	\$36.74
Other	10	11,577	\$927,311	\$80.10
TOTAL		11,543,168	\$409,612,341	\$35.49

Note: n= # of hospitals reporting hours and cost for each method of interim staffing

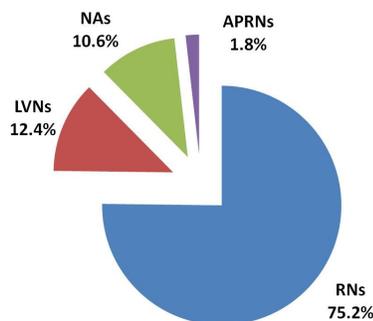
Table 4. Average Hourly Cost* of Interim Staffing by Region

Region	Voluntary overtime	In-house staffing pool/per diem	Use of managerial staff	Temporary staffing agencies	Contract/Traveling nurses	Other
1	\$32.37	\$30.54	\$32.84	\$53.51	\$25.55	-
2	\$28.39	\$33.71	\$40.05	\$33.78	\$34.52	-
3	\$28.85	\$32.52	\$31.62	\$43.21	\$55.37	-
4	\$40.34	\$42.62	\$35.74	\$39.69	\$32.61	\$18.00
5	\$33.42	\$36.97	\$37.79	\$53.02	\$60.65	\$82.20
6	\$25.49	\$30.44	\$35.25	\$33.70	\$49.07	-
7	\$31.43	\$34.93	\$38.40	-	\$48.44	-
8	\$35.99	\$28.87	\$41.05	\$52.46	\$52.46	-

* - The analysis on cost of interim staffing is to demonstrate the cost differential between staffing methods, and is not intended for use in estimating nurse wages.

Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
Panhandle	North Texas	East Texas	Gulf Coast	Central Texas	South Texas	Rio Grande Valley	West Texas

Figure 2. Temporary Staffing Agency and Contract/Traveling Nurse Hours by Nurse Type



- During the week of January 22 to January 28, 2012, 185 responding hospitals reported filling 1,956.05 FTEs using contract/travelling nurses or temporary staffing agencies.
- Of these FTEs, 75.2% of the contract, agency, and traveling staff hours were worked by RNs followed by LVNs (12.4%), NAs (10.6%) and APRNs (1.8%) (Figure 2).
- Among APRN FTEs, Certified Nurse Anesthetists comprised 77.3% of the FTEs used.

Note: RN= Registered Nurse, LVN= Licensed Vocational Nurse, NA= Nurse Aide, APRN= Advanced Practice Registered Nurse

Table 3 includes the total hours and cost* for each interim staffing method for all licensed nursing staff. Hospitals using interim staffing reported:

- A total of more than 11.5 million hours of interim staffing coverage at a cost of over \$409.6 million. This equates to \$35.49 per hour.
- Over \$203 million in expenses for over 5.8 million hours of voluntary overtime. This equates to \$34.55 per hour.
- The use of temporary staffing agencies and contract/traveling nurses cost an average of \$40.41 and \$38.16 per hour, respectively.
- "Other" types of interim staffing had the highest per hour cost (\$80.10), but this was affected by outliers in Region 5.

Data in Table 4 show the average hourly cost* of methods of interim staffing for all licensed nursing staff in Texas by region.

- The interim staffing method that cost the most per hour varied by region. However in three regions (6-8), contract/traveling nurses were the most expensive option.
- The average hourly cost of voluntary overtime was not the most expensive method in any region. Voluntary overtime was the least expensive method in Regions 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7.
- The cost of voluntary overtime was highest in Region 4 (\$40.34) and lowest in Region 6 (\$25.49).
- Region 6 (South Texas) also had the lowest per hour costs for in-house staffing pool (\$30.44) and temporary staffing agencies (\$33.70).