CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFESSIONAL NURSING PROGRAMS

This update presents information for the 130 pre-licensure registered nursing (RN) programs in Texas during the 2023 reporting year, including:
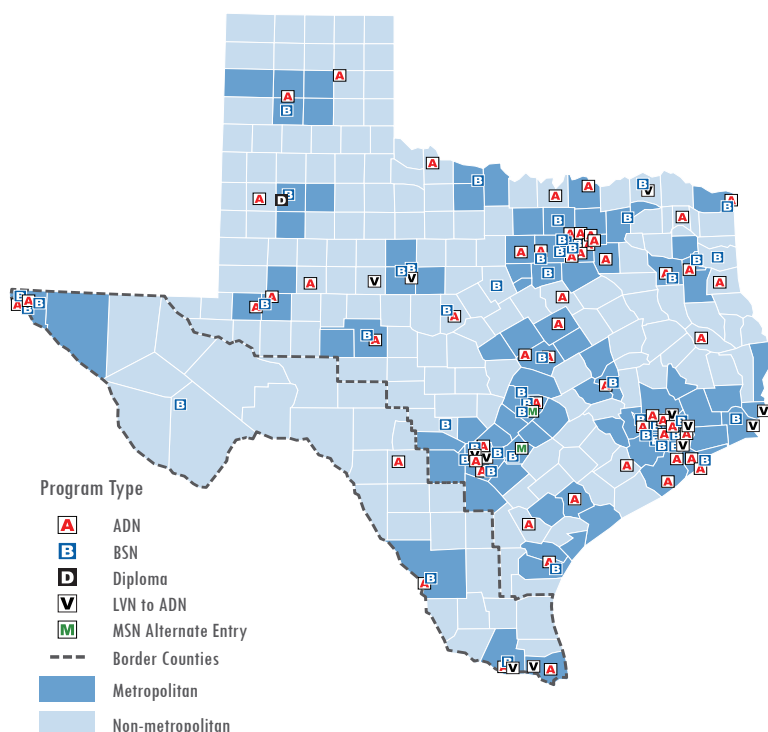
- 1 diploma program;
- 69 Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) programs, including 57 generic ADN programs and 12 licensed vocational nurse (LVN) to ADN stand-alone programs;
- 58 Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs; and
- 2 Master of Science in Nursing Alternate Entry (MSN AE) programs.

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.

Geographic Location of Professional Nursing Programs

Figure 1 presents the locations of the 130 professional nursing programs in Texas by metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties. Table 1 summarizes the location of programs by type and geographic designation.

Figure 1. Geographic Location of Professional Nursing Programs by Type, 2023

Program Type
- **A** ADN
- **B** BSN
- **D** Diploma
- **V** LVN to ADN
- **M** MSN Alternate Entry
- - - - Border Counties
- Metropolitan
- Non-metropolitan

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

Program Type	Geographic Designation				Total
	Metro Border	Metro Non-Border	Non-Metro Border	Non-Metro Non-Border	
Diploma	0	1	0	0	1
ADN	5	39	1	12	57
LVN to ADN	2	8	0	2	12
BSN	5	47	1	5	58
MSN AE	0	2	0	0	2
Total	12	97	2	19	130

- 97 programs (74.6%) were located in metropolitan, non-border counties.
- 19 programs (14.6%) were located in non-metropolitan, non-border counties.
- 12 programs (9.2%) were located in metropolitan, border counties.
- 2 programs (1.5%) were located in a non-metropolitan, border county.

Changes in the Number of Professional Nursing Programs

Table 2 displays the number of newly opened, closed, and total professional nursing programs over the past 10 years.

- During AY 2022-2023, 3 new programs opened and 1 program closed.

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

Year	New Programs	Closed Programs	Total Programs
2014	3	2	114
2015	6	1	119
2016	3	6	116
2017	6	3	119
2018	3	0	122
2019	4	2	124
2020	2	1	125
2021	3	2	126
2022	2	0	128
2023	3	1	130

Table 3 shows the number of professional nursing programs, by program type, over the past 10 years.

- The number of diploma programs has remained the same from 2014 to 2023.
- The number of LVN to ADN programs increased by 1 since 2022.
- The number of ADN programs has remained relatively steady since 2014.
- The number of BSN programs has increased by 31.8% from 2014 to 2023.

Table 3. Number of Professional Nursing Programs by Program Type, 2014-2023

Year	Diploma	LVN to ADN	ADN	BSN	MSN AE
2014	1	10	58	44	1
2015	1	9	60	48	1
2016	1	8	59	47	1
2017	1	11	57	49	1
2018	1	11	57	52	1
2019	1	11	57	54	1
2020	1	11	56	56	1
2021	1	11	55	58	1
2022	1	11	57	57	2
2023	1	12	57	58	2

Institution Types[1]

The 130 professional nursing programs operating in Texas during AY 2022-2023 were classified as follows:

- 56 community colleges
- 2 state colleges
- 2 technical colleges
- 42 universities

- 6 health-related institutions
- 17 for-profit colleges & universities authorized by certificate
- 5 other institutions authorized by certificate

These were mutually exclusive categories.

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

Length of Curriculum in Professional Nursing Programs

In the 2023 NEPIS, programs were asked to report the length of their nursing curriculum in months, not including nursing prerequisites. Table 4 displays the curriculum length by program type.

- Aside from the one Diploma program, BSN programs had the longest curriculum length with an average of 23.3 months.

- LVN to ADN programs had the shortest curriculum length with an average of 13.8 months.

Table 4. Curriculum Length in Months by Program Type, 2023

	Range	Mean	Median
Diploma	-	24	24
LVN to ADN	12-20	13.8	12.0
ADN	9-24	21.1	22.0
BSN	12-36	23.3	22.5
MSN AE	12-20	16	16

Program Tracks in Professional Nursing Programs

Program tracks are alternate pathways for students to meet the nursing program's objectives or outcomes. 110 of the 130 RN programs (84.6%) offered tracks in addition to their primary/main program.

- In addition to the 12 stand-alone LVN to ADN programs, 51 programs (39.2%) offered an LVN to ADN track.

- In addition to the 3 stand-alone RN to BSN programs[2], 52 programs (40.0%) offered an RN to BSN track, including 24 programs that offered the entire didactic portion online.

- 6 programs (4.6%) offered a pre-licensure RN track that offers the entire didactic portion online.

- 20 programs (15.4%) offered a paramedic/EMT to ADN track.

- 12 programs (9.2%) offered a bachelor's degree in another field to BSN track.

- 18 programs (13.8%) offered an accelerated/compressed curriculum.

Programs were asked if they offered a transition track for active duty, former, and retired military personnel.

- 4 programs currently offered such a track. This was a decrease from 8 programs in 2022.

- These 4 programs included 2 BSN programs and 2 ADN programs.

- Programs cited challenges to implementing military tracks, such as applicants not having enough experience (3 programs).

No RN programs reported having options for high school students.

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[2]Data for the stand-alone RN to BSN programs is not included in this report. Information on these programs can be found on the "2023 Post-Licensure RN to BSN Programs" report.

Advanced Placement in Professional Nursing Programs[3]

Some professional nursing programs offer advanced placement for students.[3] Students with prior VN or RN nursing education, paramedics, students with a background in allied health, LVNs, or students who hold a baccalaureate or master's degree in a discipline other than nursing may be eligible for advanced placement. As shown in Table 5, programs were asked what types of advanced placement they offer. Programs could select more than one option.

- 55 programs (42.3%) offered advanced placement to LVNs and 45 programs (34.6%) offered advanced placement to students with prior VN or RN nursing education.

- 49 programs (37.7%) did not grant advanced placement. These included 29 BSN, 10 ADN, 7 LVN to ADN, 1 diploma, and 2 MSN AE programs.

Mechanisms included direct transfer of credit or granting credit with a transition course, the completion of designated courses, or passing written exam(s). Table 6 indicates the types of mechanisms used to grant advanced placement by program type.

- Direct transfer of credit was the most widely used mechanism to grant advanced placement to pre-licensure nursing students across all program types (63.0% of the 81 programs that offered advanced placement), followed by granting credit with a transition course (53.1% of the 81 programs).

Table 5. Number of Programs that Grant Different Types of Students Advanced Placement by Program Type, 2023

Program Type	Type of Advanced Placement					
	Students with prior VN or RN nursing education	Paramedic/EMT	Allied health	LVN	Baccalaureate/ master's in discipline other than nursing	Military healthcare personnel
Diploma	0	0	0	0	0	0
ADN	23	17	1	44	0	5
LVN to ADN	3	0	0	2	0	1
BSN	19	1	0	9	2	2
MSN AE	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	45	18	1	55	2	8

Table 6. Number of Programs Using Different Mechanisms to Grant Advanced Placement by Program Type, 2023

Program Type	Type of Advanced Placement				
	Direct transfer of credit	Grant credit with transition course	Grant credit with completion of designated courses	Grant credit with passing written exam(s)	College credit for active duty, former, and retired military personnel
Diploma	0	0	0	0	0
ADN	25	36	15	8	2
LVN to ADN	3	2	0	1	1
BSN	23	5	7	10	1
MSN AE	0	0	0	0	0
Total	51	43	22	19	4

[3]Advanced placement is defined as a mechanism by which students with relevant prior education and/or experience may be offered course credit by meeting certain other requirements.

Online Availability of Professional Nursing Programs[4]

Programs were asked whether they offered nursing courses via online technology. Of the 130 professional nursing programs:

- 2 programs (1.5%) offered the entire didactic program curriculum online. Both were BSN programs.
- 61 programs (46.9%) offered select courses online.
- 74 programs (56.9%) offered blended/hybrid courses (courses partially online and partially face-to-face).
- 34 programs (26.2%) had no online course availability.

From 2014 to 2023, the percent of programs that offered the entire didactic curriculum online has decreased from 7% in 2014. However, the percent of programs offering select courses online has increased from 30.7% in 2014.

Table 7. Online Availability by Program Type, 2023

Program Type	Entire Didactic Program Online	Select Courses Online	Blended/ Hybrid	No Online Courses
Diploma	0	0	0	1
ADN	0	19	34	17
LVN to ADN	0	4	4	7
BSN	2	36	34	9
MSN AE	0	2	2	0
Total	2	61	74	34

[4]Please note that 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 and Program Hours in Professional Nursing Programs

Curriculum

In the 2023 NEPIS, programs were asked what type of curriculum they used.

- 63 (48.5%) programs reported using a block curriculum,[5] 29 (22.3%) used an integrated curriculum,[6] and 28 (21.5%) used a concept-based curriculum.[7]
- 4 programs (3.1%) reported using other curriculum types. 3 of the 4 reported using some combination of curriculum types.

If programs implemented permanent curriculum changes during AY 2022-2023, they were asked to select which changes were implemented (Table 8).[6] Programs could select more than one type of change.

- 70.8% of programs did not implement a permanent curriculum change.
- "Other" responses included general education editorial changes, increasing contact hours, and implementing revised Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs).

Table 8. Types of Permanent Curriculum Changes Implemented, 2023

Types of Curriculum Changes	# of programs	% of programs
No permanent change	92	70.8%
A minor change (editorial changes, moving content, hours between courses)	22	16.9%
Changes in clinical hours	4	3.1%
Online delivery (more didactic online, moving to hybrid courses)	2	1.5%
A total revision of curriculum	9	6.9%
Adding and removing courses	4	3.1%
A change in program objectives, major concepts	1	0.8%
Other	14	10.8%

[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.

[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.

Program Hours

Programs were asked to provide information regarding the number of contact hours required in each of the following areas in their program of study: didactic, computer lab, skills lab, simulation lab, and patient care clinical situations.

Figure 2 graphs the median value for each of the program activities for ADN, LVN to ADN, BSN, and MSN AE programs. Please note that there was only one diploma program so the median value was equal to the actual value reported by the program. For that reason, they are not graphed in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Median Didactic and Clinical Contact Hours Reported by Program Type, 2023
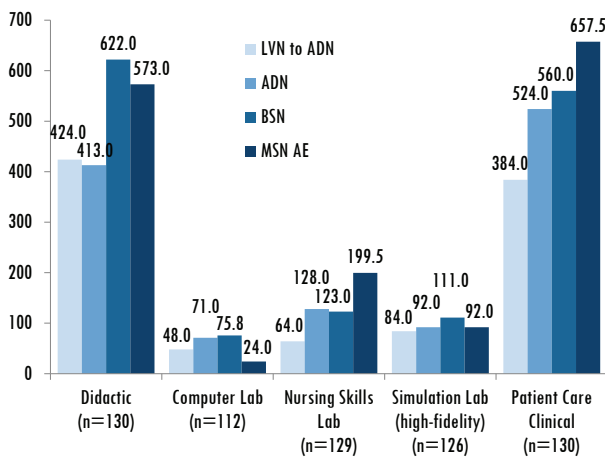
Note: n is the number of programs reporting more than zero hours for that type of activity.

As evidenced by Figure 2, there was variation in the hours required by professional nursing programs both between and within program types. Some reasons for the variation may include: inherent differences between the program types (e.g., LVN to ADN programs are generally more abbreviated programs of study than ADN or BSN programs), differences between the operational definitions used in the NEPIS and how programs define these activities, or variations in the accuracy of self-reporting these hours by professional nursing programs.

Didactic Contact Hours

In this report, didactic includes actual hours of classroom instruction in nursing and non-nursing Board-required courses/content. The didactic hours reported by professional nursing programs ranged from 37 to 2,730 hours.

Computer Lab

Computer lab is defined as interactive tutorials and learning modules that are part of a curriculum that is separate from didactic. 112 programs (86.2%) reported computer lab hours for their program of study. The computer lab hours reported ranged from 0.7 to 770 hours. The median number of computer lab hours reported by all programs has increased since 2014 (from 45.5 to 69.0, or 51.6%).

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

In this report, nursing skills lab is defined as low- and medium-fidelity simulations[9] and task training. 129 programs (99.2%) reported nursing skills lab hours for their programs of study. The skills lab hours reported by professional nursing programs ranged from 4 to 504 hours. The median number of nursing skills lab hours reported by all programs has decreased from 135 in 2014 to 128 in 2023.

High-Fidelity Simulation Lab

Simulation lab refers to high-fidelity situations which are defined as structured learning experiences with computerized mannequins that are anatomically precise and reproduce physiologic responses. The environment mimics the clinical setting. 126 programs (96.9%) reported simulation lab hours for their programs of study. The simulation lab hours reported ranged from 5 to 445 hours. The median number of simulation lab hours reported by all programs has increased from 68.5 in 2014 to 98.0 in 2023, and the percent of programs offering simulation lab hours has increased from 90.4% to 96.9%.

Programs were also asked to provide additional information on their simulation lab hours as seen in Table 9.

Table 9. Simulation Hours, 2023

	Yes	No
Plan to Increase Simulation Lab Hours	39 (30.0%)	91 (70.0%)
Simulation Lab Hours Weighted Differently	50 (38.5%)	80 (61.5%)

- 39 programs (30.0%) reported that they had plans to increase the number of simulation lab hours over the next academic year.

- 50 programs (38.5%) reported that they weight simulation lab hours differently from hands-on clinical practice hours.

Patient Care Clinical Situations

In this report, patient care clinical situations were defined as hands-on clinical practice with actual patients in a clinical setting including all faculty-supervised activities in the clinical setting, such as direct care, observational experiences, and clinical conferences. The patient care clinical situations hours reported ranged from 77.8 to 2,305 hours. The median number of patient care clinical situations hours reported by all programs has decreased from 672 in 2014 to 542.5 in 2023.

Total Clinical Contact Hours

Figure 3 displays the median total clinical contact hours reported by program type. Total clinical contact hours includes patient care clinical situations, nursing skills lab, simulation lab, and computer lab hours.

Figure 3. Median Total Clinical Contact Hours Reported by Program Type, 2023
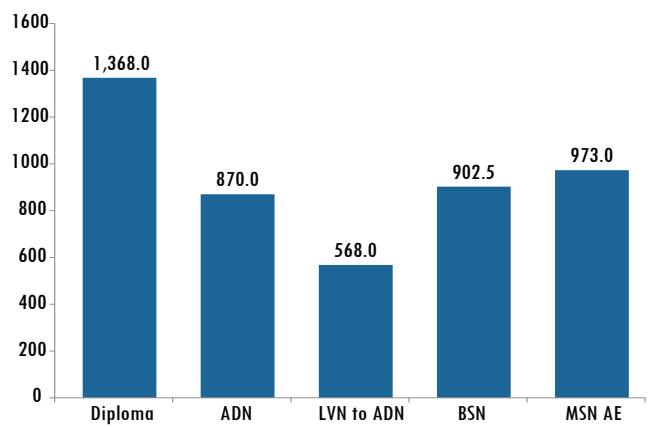
- There was only 1 diploma program, so their reported 1,368 total clinical contact hours was the same as the median.

- There were only 2 MSN AE programs, making the mean and median of clinical contact hours the same (973 hours). Hours were 946 and 1,000.

- BSN programs reported a median of 902.5 for total clinical contact hours. The mean clinical contact hours for BSN programs was 950.8. BSN program clinical contact hours ranged from 100 to 3,222.

- ADN programs reported a median of 870 and a mean of 926.5 total clinical contact hours. ADN programs reported a range of total clinical contact hours from 288 to 2,055.

- LVN to ADN programs had a median of 568 and a mean of 603.2 clinical contact hours. Hours ranged from 448 to 872.

- 17 programs (13.1%) reported that they used Dedicated Education Units (DEUs) as a clinical format.[10]

Table 10 displays the percentage of hands-on clinical practice time programs reported students spent in a variety of settings.

Table 10. Percentage of Hands-On Clinical Time Spent by Setting, 2023

Clinical Setting	Mean % of Time Spent	Median % of Time Spent
Acute Care	76.5%	79.4%
Long Term Care	5.8%	3.6%
Community Settings	10.6%	10.0%
Observational	2.6%	0.0%
Other	4.4%	0.0%

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

- The next most used setting was the community setting, with an average of 10.6% of clinical practice hours.

- "Other" settings included psych/mental health (9 programs) and simulations (3 programs).

[9]Low-fidelity simulation allows the user to practice skills in isolation. Moderate-fidelity simulation offers more realism than low-fidelity simulation, but does not have the user completely immersed in the situation.

[10]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.

Use of Outside Vendors

Programs were also asked about use of outside vendors for recruiting, marketing, etc.

- 15 programs (11.5%) reported that they use an outside vendor for recruiting students, marketing, assistance with online formatting and curriculum, contracting clinicals, or finding faculty.

Academic Practice Partnerships

Programs were asked if they partnered with healthcare 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.

- 53 (40.8%) programs indicated partnering with health care facilities.

Those programs that indicated partnering with healthcare facilities were then asked how many partnerships they have, whether students are paid for the experiences, and how the program evaluates the nursing experiences.

- The number of partnerships ranged from 1 to 149.
- Of the 53 programs, 17 indicated that their students were paid for these experiences. A little over half of these were BSN programs (10, 58.8%). The remaining were ADN programs (6, 35.3%) and the 1 diploma program.
- All 53 programs indicated that they evaluate their clinical experiences. Programs responses were varied, however the most frequent response was student evaluation (15 programs), followed by clinical evaluation tool/form (11 programs) and preceptor evaluation (9 programs).