

# GRAYING & STAYING

## MATURE NURSE RETENTION STRATEGIES

Based on this study, mature nurses appear to express some similar strategies that will encourage them to continue working longer. The following is a snapshot of strategies cited as having a high impact on morale and increased positive motivation for mature nurses. Preliminary data does not determine if differences exist between direct care nurses and nurse managers or if differences exist between rural and urban employment groups.

## ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

- ◆ Ergonomic assessments and training
- ◆ Supply delivery, i.e. medications, linens, laboratory specimens
- ◆ Use of a transport team
- ◆ Use of lift teams
- ◆ Use of mechanical devices to assist patient lifting
- ◆ Improved design of nursing unit to decrease the amount of walking for nurses

## FLEXIBLE STAFFING

- ◆ Self-scheduling
- ◆ Compressed work schedules
- ◆ Job-sharing
- ◆ Part-time projects for retirees
- ◆ Phased-retirement

## BENEFITS ATTRACTIVE TO 50+ NURSES

- ◆ Full benefits for part-time employees
- ◆ Increased paid time off for nurses over 50+ beyond requirement of Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
- ◆ 401(k) “catch-up” contributions (optional additional contributions allowed for workers age 50+)
- ◆ Medications available at discount

## REDESIGNED ROLES FOR THE MATURE NURSE

- ◆ Mentoring roles
- ◆ Admissions and Discharge Coordinator
- ◆ Quality Improvement Coordinator
- ◆ Case Manager

## PROMOTING MATURE NURSE WELLNESS

- ◆ Annual physicals
- ◆ Gym membership
- ◆ Stress reduction programs
- ◆ Back care/safety training in orientation and annual refreshers
- ◆ On-the-job strength training
- ◆ Massage and/or alternative therapies

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

- ◆ Financial/retirement planning programs
- ◆ Formal succession planning
- ◆ Career counseling
- ◆ RN refresher courses
- ◆ Support for continuing education
- ◆ Management training to address age bias in the workplace

## DEVELOP A “HIRE AND REHIRE RETIREES” PROGRAM

- ◆ Reinforce “mature worker” message
- ◆ Recognize longer service employees

For a full report of the findings of this initiative, please go to [www.ncnurses.org](http://www.ncnurses.org) and click on ‘Graying & Staying Initiative.’



If you are interested in exploring the issues related to mature nurses in your own facility, please contact:

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## IDENTIFYING STRATEGIES TO RETAIN MATURE NURSES

*An initiative of the North Carolina Nurses Association with grant funding from the Center for American Nurses*



**NORTH CAROLINA  
NURSES ASSOCIATION**  
[www.ncnurses.org](http://www.ncnurses.org)

## GRAYING & STAYING: Identifying the Strategies to Retain Mature Nurses

'Graying and Staying' is an initiative of the **North Carolina Nurses Association** with grant funding from the **Center for American Nurses**. The initiative is designed to provide tools to hospitals to continue to make the best use of the knowledge capital, skills and expertise of their mature nurses.

*"Nurse-employers should rapidly identify and implement strategies that encourage their mature nurses to continue to play a vital role in the delivery of quality health care services!"*

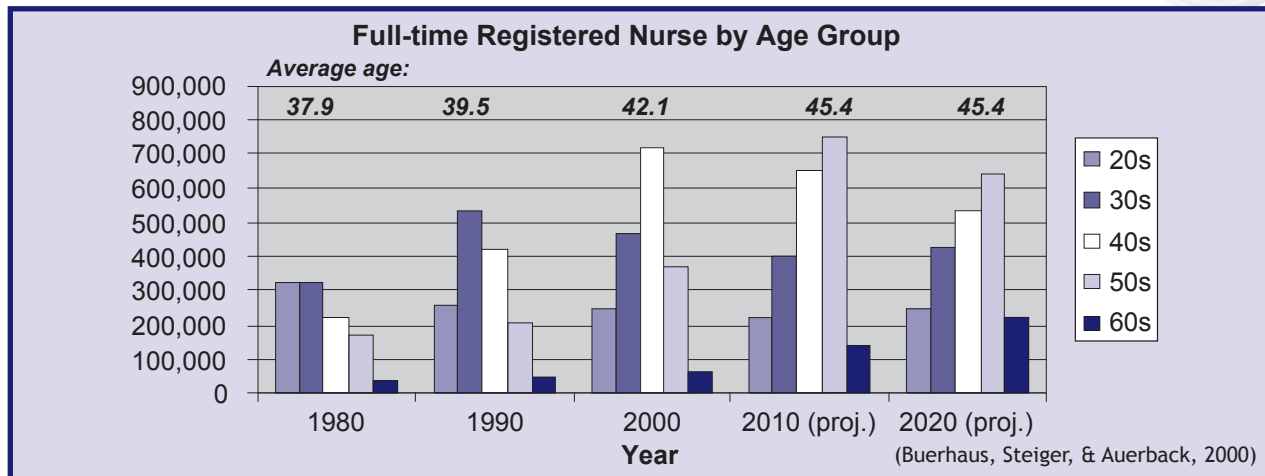
The nursing workforce is aging twice as rapidly as the rest of the workforce population. The average age of RNs in the United States has increased substantially from 37.4 years in 1983 to 44.5 years in 2000 while the total US workforce has aged only two years during the same 17-year period. By 2010 the average working RN will be 50 years old<sup>[1]</sup> and many nurses retire in their 50s.

The situation is dire.

In many health care organizations little is being done to retain mature nurses. A survey of 571 hospital and nursing home administrators found that only 6% had policies in place to address the needs of older workers.<sup>[2]</sup>

Mature nurses bring a wealth of wisdom and experience to your workplace and identifying strategies that retain these experts can help to prevent unit and agency shortages. Graying and staying – the retention of mature nurses can help assure the delivery of quality patient care in your workplace.

### THE HEALTH CARE PICTURE



### THE REALITY

- ◆ The workforce and population is aging
- ◆ 50+ age group is the fastest growing segment of the nurse workforce
- ◆ Nearly 51% of nurses are over 45 years and most retire between ages 55 and 58
- ◆ Many workers intend to work beyond traditional retirement age

### GRAYING & STAYING - THE SURVEY

A survey was conducted for this initiative with survey items adapted as a collaborative effort between the North Carolina Nurses Association and the North Carolina Center for Nursing, Nursing Management Journal, and Bernard Hodes Group.

The target audience was nurses aged 50+. It included twenty-five items and was completed online. The following are some of the demographics included:

- ◆ Age
- ◆ Gender
- ◆ Employment Status
- ◆ Practice Area
- ◆ Practice Role
- ◆ Years of Experience
- ◆ Intent to Remain with Current Employer
- ◆ Intent to Continue in Nursing
- ◆ Intended Retirement Action
- ◆ Nurse Satisfaction

### THE RESULTS

Hospital	Nurses Employed	Nurses 50+	Mature Nurses
001	452	162	36%
002	248	68	27%
003	252	66	26%
004	190	86	45%
005	437	103	24%
006	570	151	26%

### SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS:

#### Age

- ◆ 44% are 50-54
- ◆ 36% are 55-59
- ◆ 16% are 60-64
- ◆ 3% are 65-69
- ◆ >1 % are 70-74

#### Employment Status

- ◆ 77% are Full-Time
- ◆ 5% are Part-Time
- ◆ 3% are Per Diem/Flex Time

#### Practice Role

- ◆ 67% are employed as Direct Care Providers
- ◆ 19% are employed in a Supervisory/Administrative role

#### Years of Experience

- ◆ 40% have 31+ years of experience
- ◆ 23.5% have 26-30 years of experience
- ◆ 14% have 21-25 years of experience
- ◆ 10% have 16-20 years of experience

#### Intended Retirement Action

- ◆ 45% plan to continue working full-time until retirement
- ◆ 20% plan to reduce their hours
- ◆ 17% plan to work Full-Time in a less demanding role
- ◆ 7% plan to work Part-Time in a less demanding role
- ◆ 3% plan to work Per Diem

*The North Carolina Nurses Association wishes to thank Dennis Sherrod, EdD, MSN, RN of Winston-Salem State University and Susan Letvak, PhD, RN of the University of North Carolina Greensboro for leading the Graying & Staying initiative.*

<sup>[1]</sup> (Buerhaus, Steiger, & Auerback, 2000) <sup>[2]</sup> Letvak, 2003