

# Strengthening Nursing Education and Workforce Capacity in Georgia-Policy Brief

## Executive Summary

- Georgia faces increasing demand for nursing services due to population growth, an aging population, and greater healthcare complexity. Although the state has an established nursing education system and workforce planning infrastructure, challenges such as nursing faculty shortages, limited clinical training opportunities, and partial misalignment with national standards limit the ability to train enough nurses. This issue is significant because nurses play a critical role in maintaining access to safe, high-quality healthcare, and shortages could worsen access to care, particularly in rural and underserved areas. To address these challenges, policymakers should strengthen partnerships between educational institutions and healthcare organizations to increase clinical placements and align state regulatory policies with national nursing education standards to strengthen Georgia's nursing workforce pipeline.

## I. Introduction: Georgia's Current Nursing Education and Workforce Structure

### Nursing Education Pathways

Georgia offers multiple entry and advancement pathways into nursing, including practical nursing programs, associate degree programs, baccalaureate programs, and graduate education at the master's and doctoral levels. These programs are delivered through technical colleges, public universities, and private institutions, providing statewide access to nursing education while producing a workforce with varied levels of educational preparation (Georgia Board of Nursing, n.d.).

### Regulatory Oversight

The Georgia Board of Nursing regulates nursing practice by overseeing licensure, approving nursing education programs, and enforcing professional standards to protect public safety and ensure workforce competency (Georgia Board of Nursing, n.d.). Some regulations that the Georgia Board of Nursing enforces includes those covering licensure, practice standards, and oversight of conduct such as impairment or unprofessional behavior. The Georgia Board of Nursing also is responsible for mandating NCLEX pass rates for nursing education programs as well requirement such as mandated clinical practice hours (*Rules and Laws for the Nursing Board | Georgia Secretary of State*, n.d.).

### Workforce Planning and Data Infrastructure

In Georgia, workforce data infrastructure is heavily focused on sector-specific needs, such as those in healthcare and infrastructure (*Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board's 2024 -2027 Local Workforce Plan*, 2024). Statewide workforce analysis and planning are supported by the Georgia Nursing Workforce Center, which collects and analyzes data on nursing supply, demand, educational capacity, and geographic distribution (Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, n.d.). This organization provides us with data that Georgia has one of the lowest ratios of employed RNs per population (750 RNs per 100,000) (Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, n.d.). This urges a need for more nurses to meet the needs projected. Additional state support is provided through workforce development initiatives and grants aimed at expanding nursing education capacity and addressing shortages in high-need areas.

### Key Workforce Challenges

- Shortages of qualified nursing faculty (HRSA, 2024)
- Insufficient clinical placement capacity
- Persistent workforce shortages in rural and underserved communities

## II. Implications for Policy Change in Georgia

### Education Capacity and Workforce Preparedness

Without targeted policy action, Georgia may face constraints in expanding nursing education enrollment and preparing nurses for increasingly complex healthcare environments (Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, n.d.; HRSA, 2024).

### Regulatory Consistency and Workforce Mobility

Partial misalignment with national regulatory standards may limit licensure portability and workforce mobility, particularly for advanced practice registered nurses (NCSBN, n.d.).

### Data-Informed Policymaking

Georgia has a strong foundation for workforce data collection; however, deeper integration with national benchmarks and predictive modeling would strengthen long-term workforce planning and policy responsiveness (Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, n.d.).

### Equity and Access

Ongoing faculty shortages and clinical capacity limitations risk exacerbating geographic disparities in nursing workforce availability, especially in rural and underserved communities (HRSA, 2024).

### III. Recommendations

#### Recommendation 1: Expand and Institutionalize Academic–Practice Partnerships

**Action:**

Establish sustained state incentives such as, competitive grants, matching funds, or tax credits to support partnerships between nursing education programs and healthcare providers that expand clinical placement capacity, enable faculty sharing, and strengthen transition-to-practice programs.

**Rationale:**

Academic practice partnerships are a nationally recognized strategy for increasing education capacity, improving workforce readiness, and enhancing nurse retention, particularly in high-need regions (HRSA, 2024).

#### Recommendation 2: Strengthen Regulatory Alignment with National Nursing Standards

**Action:**

Aide the Georgia Board of Nursing, in collaboration with state policymakers, to advance regulatory alignment with national nursing education and APRN standards, including broader adoption of the Consensus Model for APRN Regulation and strengthened statewide ADN-to-BSN articulation pathways.

**Rationale:**

Regulatory alignment promotes workforce mobility, improves consistency in education and practice standards, and encourages advancement to higher levels of nursing education associated with improved patient outcomes (NCSBN, n.d.; Rosseter, 2024)

#### Comparative Analysis: National Standards and Best Practices

##### National Workforce and Education Guidance

National advisory guidance from the National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, support. The policy brief’s focus by reinforcing nationally recognized best practices in nursing education and workforce development. These priorities provide a benchmark for evaluating Georgia’s nursing education and workforce structure, to identifying opportunities for regulatory alignment and innovation, and informing actionable policy recommendation for the Georgia Board of Nursing that aimed at strengthening workforce capacity (*National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice | HRSA, n.d.*).

#### Educational Attainment and Outcomes

National research synthesized by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing demonstrates that higher proportions of baccalaureate- and graduate-prepared nurses are associated with improved patient outcomes, lower mortality rates, and enhanced healthcare quality (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2024).

#### Accreditation and Regulatory Alignment

Best practices in nursing regulation and education support alignment with standardized accreditation and competency frameworks, including the Consensus Model for APRN Regulation, which promotes consistency in licensure, education, certification, and scope of practice across states (NCSBN, 2023). Frameworks include rules regulated by the Georgia Board of Nursing, National Accreditation Frameworks such as the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) and Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2025; *Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing – the Leading Authority for Nursing Education Accreditation, n.d.*). In other words, best practices are supporting alignment with standardized accreditation as well as competency frameworks to improve quality, safety, and practice readiness with better consistency regarding licensure, education, as well as certification.

#### Emerging National Best Practices

- Formal academic–practice partnerships to expand clinical education capacity
- Paid clinical placements and structured nurse residency programs (HRSA, 2024)
- Incentives to promote ADN-to-BSN and graduate education progression (Rosseter, 2024)
- Data-driven workforce forecasting and policy planning (HRSA, 2024)

#### Conclusion

Georgia has a strong foundation for nursing education and workforce development, yet structural and regulatory challenges require coordinated policy action. By expanding academic–practice partnerships and aligning state regulations with national best practices, Georgia can strengthen its nursing pipeline, enhance workforce resilience, and better meet the healthcare needs of its population.

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