

## Vermont Nurse Preceptor Incentive Grant Program Annual Report

7/1/2023 – 6/30/2024

### Overview

The Nurse Preceptor Incentive Grants Program was a grant issued by the Agency of Human Services for Vermont's Critical Access Hospitals and other health care employers. The intent of the program is to increase compensation for nurses who provide student preceptor supervision. To that end, the program provided grant funds that will enable successful applicants to distribute incentive pay to employees who provide preceptor supervision for student nurses enrolled in Vermont nursing schools complete their clinical training at their organization. Awardees must disburse grant funds for preceptor supervision completed between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. The grant end period was extended to September 30, 2026.

The desired outcomes of the Nurse Preceptor Incentive Grants Program are to:

1. Address the state's long-standing shortage of nursing professionals, a problem that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health crisis,
2. Expand the number of nurse preceptors for nursing students in Vermont by:
  - a. Encouraging nurses who already provide preceptor supervision for nursing students to continue providing such supervision,
  - b. Encouraging additional nurses to take on preceptor supervision responsibilities for nursing students.

The Agency of Human Services collected annual reporting in the Summer of 2024. The Report is designed to collect information about grantee progress and to provide insight into future planning. This is a summary of the 9 Grantee organizations responses to the report.

### Summary

#### Participation:

The majority of participating employees (1,686) had not provided preceptor supervision in the previous year suggesting the program helped increase the number of new preceptors offering these services significantly.

- A total of 1916 eligible employees received incentive payments to provide 38,463 hours of preceptor supervision to nursing students enrolled in Vermont nursing schools during the July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024 grant period.
- 230 total eligible employees who had already provided preceptor supervision for nursing students enrolled in Vermont nursing schools prior to July 1, 2023

received incentive payments during the July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024 grant period.

- A total of 1686 eligible employees who did not provide preceptor supervision for nursing students enrolled in Vermont nursing schools prior July 1, 2023 received incentive payments during the July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024 grant period.

Providing the supervision required to precept nursing students increases the workload but is an integral part of training future staff. Providing adequate compensation for the added work was critical in providing the increase of preceptor supervision for students enrolled in Vermont nursing schools.

- A total \$149,817.75 of incentive payments supported by the grant award was disbursed to eligible employees during the previous grant period.
- A total \$101,721.85 of incentive payments supported by Grantee matching funds was disbursed to eligible employees during the previous grant period.

### **Program Goals:**

Grantees have an annual goal of obtaining 95% employee participation and 95% of the total possible hours of preceptor supervision provided.

- 4 out of the 9 organizations met their goal of having 95% of eligible employees provide preceptor supervision for student nurses.
- 4 out of the 9 organizations met their goal of preceptor supervision hours to be provided during the first twelve-month period.

### **Challenges:**

The organizations that reported not having met the above goals provided the below information regarding the obstacles. They reported:

- a lack of readiness and requests from students and schools.
- added administrative burden of building, communicating and sustaining an implementation process.
- limited time. Staff were reluctant to participate given the increased frequency of staff turn-over, onboarding new staff and management of travelers. An ongoing environment of burnout, from an overloaded work schedule and reduced work life balance, dissuades nurses from taking on the added work.

The biggest challenges overall were categorized as (1) administrative, (2) contractual, and (3) workload related.

- **Administrative:** The administrative obstacles that fall to frontline nurse leaders of Nurse Managers and Assistant Nurse Managers include the manual payroll coding process, a multi-coding payroll process, manual adjustments for payroll coding errors, and the tracking and accountability at the unit level which was in most cases a manual transcription from a paper entry. Implementing a system to make this process easy and having staff use this grant has been a big obstacle. Finally, obtaining compensation was difficult. This made it difficult to ensure that preceptors received adequate financial reimbursement for their time and efforts, affecting the sustainability and motivation of preceptors to continue supervising and mentoring student nurses.
- **Contractual:** The grant limits the student nurse preceptor grant to those students enrolled in Vermont nursing programs while many organizations have nursing students, particularly APRN students, that are enrolled in nursing schools (online) outside of Vermont. This has led to disparities in Incentive Payments for the same work and dissatisfaction from staff. Grantees also noted internal obstacles to administering the grant and the process of submission was complicated and time-consuming.
- **Workload:** The main obstacle of this grant was reported to be the manual workload that is associated with the implementation, tracking, and payment that is dependent on the frontline nurse leaders. Leaders required training, close monitoring with timecard adjustments and at the elbow training. Front line managers also have to work to assure sufficient staffing and matching need to patient volume. As for the staff who do the precepting, in certain organizations they become overloaded with the number of hours supporting students due to having high numbers of newer staff that aren't quite ready to precept and the existing preceptors' availability is limited. Recipients reported that they are hopeful that with new processes now in place it will be easier moving forward.

## Successes:

Grantees reported the most significant benefits to their organization and employees was staff appreciation, reduced burden, increased preceptorships, better training and recruitment. Additionally, it helped our Home Health and Hospice agency introduce students to the field.

- **Staff Appreciation, Reduced Burden & an Increase Preceptors:** The grant award allowed for organizations to provide additional compensation to RN's thereby adequately recognizing them for the increased work and improving morale. By having this added incentive organizations were able to attract more preceptors which decreased the amount of precepting burn out encountered by a small number of preceptors.



- **Training and Recruitment:** The funding and support was instrumental for hiring graduating clinical students who started their careers with a more robust training and familiarity with the organization. This funding allowed for the adequate support of staff while they dedicated time and resources to mentoring and educating students, thereby enhancing both their professional development and the overall quality of the training programs. Having the RNs provide the direct clinical supervision resulted in more students requesting capstone experiences, which boosted recruitment efforts.
- **Home Health and Hospice:** While student placements often occur in hospitals, or other facility-based settings, the ability to work with students in the Home Health and Hospice setting at the beginning of their healthcare careers is pivotal. It broadens awareness and appreciation of the critical role of home health, hospice, and adult day programs in meeting the needs of our community members by providing needed care and services in a setting that is more accessible, comfortable, adaptable, and aligned with people's daily lives.