

Service-Linked Scholarships, Loans and Loan-Repayment Programs for Nurses in the Southeast

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

Public and private programs offer financial support in exchange for service commitments to make nursing careers more affordable and entice nurses to work in rural, underserved, and otherwise needy areas. Little is known about the size and designs of these support-for-service programs. We describe nursing support-for-service programs in eight southeastern states.

Methods

Eligible programs were identified through available compendia and telephone contacts to potentially eligible programs. Data on the characteristics of eligible programs were gathered through a review of publicly available documents, phone interviews with program staff and mailed questionnaires. Data were double-coded and qualitative and quantitative analyses conducted.

Results

Twenty-four nursing support-for-service programs met our eligibility criteria in the eight-state region we studied. Together these programs had fiscal year 2004 budgets of an estimated \$28.8-31.8 million and provided financial support to an estimated 4,900 nurses in the region. Nearly all programs had a primary mission of increasing the number of nurses in their home state. Most programs also required that nurses fulfill their service obligations in a particular region of the state and several stipulated that nurses work specifically in underserved areas.

Conclusions

Nursing support-for-service programs are a substantial component of federal, state and local workforce efforts in the southeast. Future research should measure the outcomes of these programs, assess their contributions to alleviating local shortages of nurses, and offer recommendations to enhance programs' effectiveness.