

The Apprenticeship Advantage: Building a Sustainable Future Nursing Workforce

Executive Summary

Ensuring a stable and well-prepared nursing workforce is a top priority for healthcare leaders. In addition to addressing workforce stability, nurse leaders must also focus on ensuring that new graduates enter the profession practice-ready. Bridging the gap between education and practice has been challenging historically, and these challenges were significantly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic when students faced limited clinical training opportunities. This workforce crisis coincides with broader financial pressures facing healthcare organizations, further complicating efforts to sustain and strengthen the nursing pipeline.

Apprenticeships have long been a proven model for workforce development across various industries, integrating hands-on training with structured educational components. While widely utilized in fields such as skilled trades, healthcare has yet to adopt this model fully. However, the disruptions caused by the pandemic prompted many hospitals and academic institutions to explore apprenticeships as a viable, sustainable strategy for preparing the future nursing workforce. Several states have implemented variations of nursing apprenticeship programs, including fully registered models, yielding promising results and encouraging further adoption nationwide.

Recognizing the critical need for a sustainable nursing workforce, the Policy and Practice Committee has undertaken an initiative to develop nursing apprenticeships in Massachusetts at both practical and registered nursing levels. In collaboration with the Massachusetts Division of Apprenticeship Standards, the Smith Family Foundation, the Apprenticeship Degree Initiative, and key apprenticeship leaders across the country, the committee has worked to establish a framework for implementation.

This document outlines the first phase of this initiative, providing an overview of the apprenticeship model and its potential return on investment. It serves as a foundation for expanding and institutionalizing registered nurse apprenticeships to strengthen the future nursing workforce in Massachusetts.

Background

Apprenticeship programs provide paid on-the-job training and have short and long-term advantages for employers, employees, and the workforce. Apprentices are employees who are also students in educational programs and are paid to perform occupation-specific work, which

may be completed as part of their program requirements. Apprenticeships are successfully used in many industries, with employers reporting improved retention and work productivity, decreased employee costs, and an employee pipeline. The success of these programs has increased their utilization; the number of Registered Apprentices in the United States has increased by more than 200,000 since 2015 (Cheney, 2019).

Benefits for apprentices include practical skill development, applicable experience, mentorship, and consistent compensation. Financial support helps students enter and stay in educational programs and allows them to continue being paid while they work toward program requirements. Apprenticeships offer a career trajectory, with outcomes such as achieving a license or credential and higher wage compensation at program completion. Apprentice programs benefit the workforce by contributing to overall workforce development and growth.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is invested in supporting apprenticeships that comply with federal regulations related to program design, worker protections, and other criteria. Both federal and private grants are available to support the development and implementation of apprenticeships. Federal support for apprenticeship programs has been increasing yearly since 2016. In 2024, the DOL appropriated \$285,000,000 for apprenticeship expansion (Congressional Research Services, 2025).

The Uniqueness of Nursing Apprenticeships

While nursing apprenticeships share many foundational principles with traditional apprenticeship models, such as providing access and opportunity for individuals who might otherwise struggle to complete their training, they diverge in critical ways due to the regulatory and educational frameworks unique to nursing.

Nursing education is governed by rigorous standards, guidelines, and competencies established by both local and national regulatory bodies. All nursing students, regardless of their participation in an apprenticeship, are required to meet these pre-defined learning outcomes. Importantly, nursing apprenticeships are designed to complement, not replace, formal nursing education. They operate alongside accredited nursing programs, enhancing student learning rather than altering or diminishing the program's academic or clinical requirements.

In a nursing apprenticeship, students are paired with mentors who guide and support them in achieving the specific outcomes of the apprenticeship. However, unlike other apprenticeship models, the clinical hours required for nursing licensure are entirely separate from employment responsibilities. During clinical rotations, nursing students function solely in a student role, under faculty supervision, with defined clinical objectives and outcomes. They are not counted as part of the organization's workforce or staffing plan during these hours.

In contrast, when students work as nurse apprentices, they serve as paid employees of the healthcare organization and fulfill the learning goals of the apprenticeship program. However, these employment hours do not count toward their required clinical hours for nursing education. This dual structure is a distinctive feature of nursing apprenticeships, ensuring both regulatory compliance and robust, hands-on professional development.

Apprenticeships and Education in Nursing

In 2024, the healthcare industry supported 37,325 registered apprentices, reflecting a substantial increase over the past five years and a significant rise from 24,492 in 2023. Comparatively, in 2016, there were only 1,852 registered healthcare apprentices (ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025).

The majority of registered healthcare apprentices in the United States are in entry-level clinical occupations, such as medical and nursing assistants, which typically do not require college degrees or college-credit-bearing coursework. However, in professions like registered nursing, where the U.S. faces a shortage exceeding 78,000 nurses, with projected demand for approximately 197,200 additional registered nurses (RNs) by 2032 (HRSA Health Workforce, 2022; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024), apprenticeship models remain underutilized.

Establishing nursing apprenticeship programs presents challenges, including the accreditation standards set by the Accreditation Commission for Nursing Education, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, and the National League for Nursing Commission on Nursing Education Accreditation, which mandate the requirements for awarding a degree, diploma, or certificate in nursing, depending on the type of nursing program. As a result, collaboration between nursing schools and healthcare employers is essential to integrating apprenticeship experiences within nursing education programs across all program types and credentials.

Colleges face significant barriers to expanding nursing education, including limited enrollment capacity, faculty shortages, and complex state approval regulations and programmatic accreditation standards. In 2023, Becker's Hospital Review reported that over 65,000 qualified nursing applicants were turned away due to insufficient program capacity (Asin, 2024). The primary constraints include limited clinical rotation placements and challenges recruiting experienced and credentialed faculty, exacerbated by faculty retirements, burnout, and the higher wages available in clinical practice settings.

As a result, post-licensure nursing apprenticeships are becoming more common. These include programs such as the Registered Nurse Residency and School Nurse Apprenticeship models. The Registered Nurse Residency is typically a 12-month program designed to equip new nurses with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to provide competent, safe, and patient-centered care. The School Nurse Apprenticeship focuses on preparing nurses to support students' emotional, mental, physical, and social well-being in educational settings.

Expanding nursing apprenticeships—both pre- and post-licensure—has the potential to strengthen the workforce pipeline, improve retention, and address critical shortages in the nursing profession.

The Need for Nurse Apprenticeships

According to a [Health Workforce Analysis](#) published by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in November 2022, federal authorities project a shortage of 78,610 full-time RNs in 2025 and a shortage of 63,720 full-time RNs in 2030. The ten states with the largest projected nursing shortage in 2035 are Washington (26%), Georgia (21%), California

(18%), Oregon (16%), Michigan (15%), Idaho (15%), Louisiana (13%), North Carolina (13%), New Jersey (12%), and South Carolina (11%). Data for each state may be accessed through HRSA's [Workforce Projections Dashboard](#).

In April 2022, Dr. David Auerbach and colleagues [published a nursing workforce analysis](#) in [Health Affairs](#), which found that the total supply of RNs decreased by more than 100,000 from 2020 to 2021, the largest drop observed over the past four decades. A significant number of nurses leaving the workforce were under 35, and most were employed in hospitals (Auerbach et al., 2022).

Attrition is also driving the workforce shortage. Twenty-nine percent of RNs reported that they plan to retire within the next five years (6.6% more than in a 2020 survey). [NCSBN National Workforce Survey, 2022]. Nurses are leaving the profession before retirement age. The U.S. has more than four million active RNs, but only 81% of those RNs are actively employed in nursing full or part-time. [NCSBN National Workforce Survey 2022]. Nearly 18% of nurses leave the profession within their first year, and three in 10 say they plan to leave. [AMN Nurse Survey 2023, Nursing World 2023]. More than 25% of RNs reported feeling burned out from work every day [see NCSBN 2022].

In 2022, the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association conducted a member survey of acute care hospitals to assess workforce vacancies across 47 critical clinical and operational positions. Findings revealed that vacancy rates for key nursing roles varied significantly, ranging from 8% for clinical nurse specialists, labor and delivery RNs, and Post Anesthesia Care Unit RNs to 56% for licensed practical nurses (LPNs) (Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association, 2022).

A 2024 survey of post-acute hospitals reported a 14.8% RN vacancy rate and a 24.1% LPN vacancy rate, underscoring ongoing workforce challenges. Both reports emphasized the need to develop and support pathways into nursing careers that alleviate financial burdens on students, provide comprehensive wraparound support, and offer structured career ladder opportunities to facilitate long-term professional growth (Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association, 2024).

The Need for Student Support

Financial support for students is integral to successful program completion; many students must work while completing their LPN or RN program to support themselves and their families.

Rigorous nursing programs are almost always considered full-time and have semester-by-semester schedule changes. Wage uncertainty due to class or clinical schedules may contribute to students leaving their program to work consistently or more hours. Students with families or limited financial resources are especially vulnerable. Those who already hold a bachelor's degree and aspire to pursue a nursing career are ineligible for Pell Grants, regardless of the nursing program they choose, resulting in a substantial out-of-pocket cost. Consistent income for training in an educational program may be pivotal to supporting this population.

Nursing Education in the Post-COVID Era

The landscape of clinical education post-COVID is stark due to the aforementioned attrition.

Nursing programs struggle to find appropriate and available clinical sites and clinical faculty. Apprenticeship programs can build bridges between healthcare agencies and educational programs, providing sites for clinical training to support their student employees in meeting their educational requirements.

Due to attrition rates, producing practice-ready nurses is paramount to support quality patient care and health outcomes. Apprenticeships provide opportunities for nursing students to take a clinical role while in nursing school and to orient to the systems used within health care agencies to provide a continuum of care. On-the-job training is integral to being practice-ready and provides work experience for the apprentice to develop soft skills such as flexibility, communication, critical thinking, and a professional attitude. Well-structured apprenticeship programs will support both student training and patient safety through competency-based training and evaluation. The DOL has apprenticeship framework recommendations, including a competency-based approach (Congressional Research Service, 2025).

The American Academy of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) has transitioned to competency-based curriculum standards for bachelor's degree in nursing education (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2021). These competency-based standards are well-positioned to guide apprentice programs in creating training, evaluation criteria, and checklists, ensuring that trainees gain skills and are competent to provide safe, appropriate care. After a trainee completes their degree and attains their nursing license, transitioning to a nurse role within the agency should be seamless with minimal onboarding time.

Nursing Apprenticeship Models in Other States

States across the U.S. are implementing nursing apprenticeship programs to strengthen the nursing workforce pipeline and enhance clinical training opportunities.

California

The California Department of Corrections, in partnership with SEIU and local community colleges, has established an earn-and-learn nursing apprenticeship program for nursing candidates employed within the state's prison system. This model allows participants to maintain their employment and salaries while dedicating half their work hours to training for registered nursing roles (High Road, 2022).

North Carolina

In 2020, Davidson-Davie Community College partnered with Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist to establish the state's first registered nursing apprenticeship program. This initiative enables students enrolled in the associate degree in nursing (ADN) program to gain practical experience in the healthcare industry while concurrently preparing for the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) (Thomas, 2024).

Employers participating in the program receive financial incentives, including up to \$2,000 per apprentice for onboarding and training, and a 50% salary reimbursement for wages up to \$15 per hour for non-high school students and \$14 per hour for high school students. Additionally, colleges receive up to \$2,500 per apprentice to cover tuition, books, fees, and supplies. To

further support workforce development, the DOL allocated a \$4 million grant to the North Carolina Community College System to enhance ApprenticeshipNC, which has been under the system's administration since 2017 (Thomas, 2024).

A key benefit of the apprenticeship program is its ability to accelerate the RN pathway, reducing the program duration from 36 months to 24 months. Unlike non-apprentice students, who must complete 3,328 hours of LPN-specific work to qualify for the LPN-to-ADN transition program, apprentices are exempt from this requirement due to their structured on-the-job training and mentorship-based work experience (Thomas, 2024).

Washington: The Washington Health Care Licensed Practical Nurse Apprenticeship

The program launched its pilot in fall 2024 with an initial cohort of 10 students. Designed for current certified nursing assistants (CNAs) enrolled in the LPN program at Edmonds College, the apprenticeship integrates academic coursework with hands-on training.

The program features a hybrid learning model, with virtual lectures and weekly in-person lab sessions at Edmonds College in Lynnwood, WA. Apprentices are required to complete 300 hours of clinical work, approximately 150 hours at their employer's facility, and an additional 2,000+ hours of paid on-the-job training in long-term care settings (Washington Healthcare Association, 2025).

Compensation & Benefits

- Paid on-the-job training with wages ranging from \$23.75 to \$29.45 per hour (exact compensation and benefits determined by the employing skilled nursing facility).
- 50% tuition cost coverage.
- Practical nursing technician license fee coverage.
- NCLEX preparation materials and exam fee coverage.
- Upon completion, apprentices receive compensation at or above the rate of an LPN with 1.5 years of experience at their employing facility.

These initiatives demonstrate a growing national commitment to nursing apprenticeship models, offering structured pathways that integrate paid, hands-on experience with formal education to address workforce shortages and improve retention.

Exemplar Apprenticeship Programs: Alabama, North Dakota, Texas

Alabama

The Alabama Board of Nursing worked with the state legislature to design [statutory changes](#) to create a new Nursing Apprenticeship License under the law. The Board of Nursing ensured the new license fit into the state's existing nursing education and licensure requirements. This program is registered through the Alabama State Apprenticeship Agency.

In Alabama, Governor Ivy empowered the Office of Apprenticeship to act by convening all necessary players into a conversation about nursing Apprenticeships. The convening acted as a gathering place and clearinghouse for new ideas and approaches and led Alabama to become the first in the nation with a nursing apprenticeship program.

Apprenticeship Prior to Graduation and Initial Licensure

The [law](#) allows hospitals to “employ student nurse apprentices to perform nursing skills, tasks, and activities, as submitted by Alabama Industry Recognized and Registered Apprenticeship Program and approved by the Board, provided such training, tasks, skills, and activities are performed under supervision by licensed nurses.” graduation to get a temporary license to practice nursing in healthcare fields under the supervision of a licensed nurse or doctor.

[Under Alabama law](#), “The supervising licensed nurse is responsible for validating an apprentice's competency to perform nursing skills or activities assigned to the apprentice in the clinical setting.”

Alabama's nursing apprenticeship model is explicitly designed to remove the barriers to entry for nursing candidates. Nursing apprentices work an average of 24 paid hours per week on a progressive wage scale that increases along with their competencies and scope of work. Employers serve as the “last-dollar scholarship” for apprentices to ensure that no apprentice incurs debt for their training. In cases where an employer may not have all the specialty areas needed for clinical rotations, they pay to send their nurse apprentices to other sites to gain relevant experience.

Alabama has more than 600 registered nursing apprentices. Research is underway to compare the traditional clinical model/approach with the Apprenticeship model. Participating employers and nursing faculty report vastly superior training outcomes with lower ratios in Apprenticeship. Initial reports find that nursing apprentices have much higher confidence levels upon program completion. The nursing apprentices in Alabama have a 100% N-CLEX pass rate.

North Dakota

In fall 2022, North Dakota launched its RN apprenticeship program as a pilot initiative led by Lake Region State College (LRSC) in collaboration with three employer partners. This program serves as the capstone of a structured Registered Apprenticeship pathway, which enables students to progress from CNA in year one to LPN in year two, and ultimately to RN in year three, with the flexibility for students to enter at various points along the pathway (American Institutes for Research, 2023).

The apprenticeship utilizes LRSC's standard RN coursework while integrating existing clinical practicum requirements. However, registered apprentices receive compensation for practicum hours and engage in an additional 8 to 16 hours per week of mentor-guided work experience. The program also leverages North Dakota's “rules of delegation,” which allow nurses to delegate specific tasks to CNAs and LPNs who have demonstrated competency. This structure enables apprentices to progressively learn, apply, and refine their clinical skills in a real-world setting.

Texas

In July 2023, Texas was the first state to register a nursing apprenticeship federally, in collaboration with South Texas College and the Texas Workforce Commission. Apprentices receive an associate degree in nursing. In addition to their classroom work, these apprentices will complete 2,000 paid clinical hours. Traditional nursing students spend a fraction of their time in a hospital and are unpaid for clinical hours.

Key Benefits of Nursing Apprenticeships

Nursing apprenticeships deliver several critical advantages to the healthcare workforce, including:

- Expanding access to nursing education for individuals who, without financial and social support, would otherwise lack a viable pathway into the profession
- Increasing diversity within the nursing workforce by opening doors for underrepresented populations
- Creating clear career pathways that enable unlicensed healthcare personnel to advance into professional nursing roles
- Driving upskilling within the existing healthcare workforce, strengthening overall capacity and capability
- Supporting the successful completion of nursing programs by providing structured mentorship and workplace integration
- Enhancing licensure outcomes, with apprentices required to take the NCLEX within six weeks of graduation, boosting first-time pass rates
- Producing practice-ready nurses who transition smoothly from apprentice roles into full nursing practice
- Improving retention and reducing turnover, as apprenticeship models have been shown to foster long-term commitment and workforce stability within healthcare organizations

Enhancing Nursing Workforce Development through Apprenticeship Programs: A Cost-Benefit Analysis

Traditionally, nursing education has followed a conventional academic pathway to prepare nurses for the healthcare workforce. In contrast, the apprenticeship model presents an innovative approach, providing students with financial support while equipping them with the necessary clinical and technical skills for a seamless transition into professional nursing practice. A critical factor in the success of nurse apprenticeship programs is the establishment of strong partnerships with healthcare organizations. Despite the numerous benefits of apprenticeships, assessing their return on investment (ROI) is essential to ensure their viability and sustainability for healthcare institutions.

Apprenticeship Structure and Investment Considerations

An apprenticeship is 2,000 hours. The nurse apprentice receives compensation for 2,000 hours over a designated time period. This encompasses classroom instruction, technical education, clinical training, and at least two 8-hour shifts per week of productive work within a healthcare organization. The program includes a structured promotion from Apprentice I to Apprentice II at the start of the final semester of the student's program, accompanied by a pay increase. While the apprenticeship model requires upfront financial investment, it also integrates productive work hours, reducing the overall cost burden on the organization.

Apprentice labor costs consist of three key components:

- Clinical work time that directly supports patient care operations
- Classroom instruction and technical training
- Clinical rotation time

Within the apprenticeship model, students are compensated for the clinical rotation hours required for program completion. The Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing fully endorses this payment structure.

Challenges in the Nursing Workforce

Several workforce challenges underscore the need for innovative solutions such as nurse apprenticeship programs:

- The average hospital experiences 100% nurse turnover over a five-year period (Mustafa, 2024).
- Annual nurse turnover rates currently stand at approximately 20% (Zheng, 2024).
- The average recruitment time for a nurse in 2024 ranged from 73 to 94 days, with a mean of 83 days per position (NSI Nursing Solutions, 2024).
- Travel nurses earn an average annual salary of \$212,846, contributing to significant cost implications for healthcare facilities (NSI Nursing Solutions, 2024).

Economic Impact of Nurse Turnover

Nurse turnover presents substantial financial burdens for healthcare organizations:

- The estimated cost per nurse turnover is \$56,300, amounting to annual losses of \$3.9 to \$5.8 million per hospital (Zheng, 2024).
- A single percentage reduction in turnover can yield savings of \$262,300 per year (Mustafa, 2024).
- The cost of orienting and educating a new graduate nurse ranges from \$8,000 to \$15,000, depending on the salary and benefits structure.
- Sign-on bonuses for new nurses range from \$2,000 to \$15,000 per nurse, with some exceeding this amount (Koivisto, 2025).

Offsetting Costs through Apprenticeship Programs

While nurse apprenticeship programs require an initial investment, several cost-saving mechanisms mitigate these expenses:

1. **Integration of Orientation:** Apprenticeship programs incorporate structured orientation at a lower apprenticeship pay scale rather than at an RN or LPN wage, reducing salary-related expenditures. Additionally, apprentices are classified as non-benefited employees, generating approximately 26% in cost savings.
2. **Expedited Transition to Practice:** By embedding orientation into the apprenticeship model, newly graduated nurses can transition into full-time roles more efficiently, reducing the period of non-productive, non-benefited time.

3. **Reduced Reliance on Sign-On Bonuses:** Since apprentices receive financial support throughout their training, the need for sign-on bonuses is significantly diminished. The paid apprenticeship period is an alternative incentive, lowering recruitment costs.
4. **Improved Retention Rates:** Apprenticeship programs demonstrate a strong positive impact on workforce retention. Apprentices report higher job satisfaction and are less likely to leave their organizations, with an average retention rate of 92% (Hughes, 2023; One Flow, 2023). This contributes to lower vacancy rates, improved productivity, and decreased reliance on costly contract labor (National Center for Apprenticeship Degrees, 2024).
5. **Grants and Funding:** Federal and state grants and private organizations have historically supported the costs of supporting new or expanding apprenticeships. Other programs, like Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Pell Grants, and the GI Bill, have supported the cost of Registered Apprenticeship Programs.
6. **Tax credits:** The Registered Apprentice Tax Credit provides employers with a state tax credit of 50% of an apprentice's wages, up to \$4,800 per apprentice, with a maximum of \$100,000 per year, claimable for up to two consecutive years per apprentice, and any excess credit can be refunded in full (Mass.gov - Registered Apprentice Tax Credit).
7. **Case Studies:** Alabama allocates \$2 million annually to support expanding apprenticeship programs. These funds reimburse employers for 50% of wage costs for up to 480 hours and offer incentives of up to \$10,000 to assist in establishing employer-based training programs. Many healthcare organizations have leveraged these funds to mitigate the initial costs associated with developing apprenticeship initiatives (Alabama Department of Revenue, 2025).

Dayton Children's Hospital has experienced a strong ROI through its Rise program. The hospital invests between \$16,000 and \$40,000 per nursing candidate over a two-year program. In contrast, the financial impact of losing a nurse within the first year of employment is approximately three times the nurse's annual salary. By reducing turnover costs, the Rise program proves to be a strategic and cost-effective investment for the hospital (Dayton Children's, 2023).

Cost-Benefit Comparison of Nurse Apprenticeship vs. Traditional Hiring

Cost Factors	Traditional Hiring	Apprenticeship Program	Potential Savings
Nurse Turnover Cost per RN	\$56,300	Reduced due to retention	Estimated \$262,300 per 1% reduction in turnover
Orientation & Training Cost	\$8,000-\$15,000	Lower due to early integration	Significant reduction
Recruitment Time (Avg Days)	83 days	Reduced due to internal pipeline	Faster onboarding
Sign-On Bonuses	\$2,000 - \$15,000	Eliminated or reduced	Direct cost savings
Apprentice Productivity	N/A	16 hours per week	Offsets program costs

Beyond Economic Benefits: Organizational and Patient Care Advantages

In addition to financial savings, apprenticeships offer qualitative benefits that enhance healthcare organizations and patient outcomes:

- **Enhanced Patient Safety and Quality of Care:** A well-trained nursing workforce contributes to improved clinical outcomes and reduces the likelihood of medical errors.
- **Strengthened Organizational Culture:** Apprenticeships foster a culture of mentorship and professional growth, reinforcing workforce stability and employee satisfaction.
- **Sustainable Talent Pipeline:** Apprenticeships create a structured and reliable pathway for recruiting and developing nursing talent, ensuring a steady influx of skilled professionals into the workforce (National Center for Apprenticeship Degrees, 2024).
- **Case Study:** A three-year study at UW Health across five registered apprenticeship programs found 95% program retention, 96% post-graduate employee rate, and a 99% first-time credential pass rate (i.e., NCLEX). Additionally, participants felt increased employee loyalty and engagement. The apprenticeship programs also produced diverse representations reflecting the populations served. There was notable diverse representation across operations, reflecting our increasingly diverse patients.

The Return on Investment

The apprenticeship model represents a forward-thinking approach to nursing education and workforce development. While it necessitates initial financial investment, the long-term benefits—ranging from reduced turnover costs and decreased recruitment expenditures to improved retention and workforce stability—demonstrate its viability as a cost-effective solution. By integrating apprenticeship programs into their workforce strategies, healthcare organizations can enhance financial sustainability while simultaneously improving patient care outcomes and strengthening their nursing workforce.

Glossary of Terms

Academic Institution — The accredited nursing program where the apprentice is formally enrolled as a student.

Apprenticeship — A structured work-based learning program that integrates paid on-the-job training with related instruction, enabling individuals to develop skills and knowledge in a specific trade or profession.

Clinical Rotation — A structured educational experience in a patient care setting, led by faculty from the academic institution. Students receive academic credit upon successful completion, and these hours fulfill part of the clinical requirements for nursing education.

Faculty — Academic institution staff responsible for overseeing and evaluating student learning in the classroom and clinical rotation environments.

Healthcare Organization — The employer that provides the apprentice's role and assigns workplace mentors to guide on-the-job training.

Mentor — A healthcare organization employee who supervises, guides, and supports the apprentice in their workplace training and job duties.

Nursing Apprenticeship — A specialized apprenticeship model in which the apprentice is employed by a healthcare organization and enrolled in an accredited nursing program. The apprentice works scheduled hours for the employer while completing required nursing coursework and clinical rotations. Apprentices receive full-time pay during the apprenticeship period.

Paid On-the-Job Training (Standard Apprenticeship) — Paid work hours that count directly toward the apprentice's required education and training in the trade or profession.

Paid On-the-Job Training (Nursing Apprenticeship) — Paid work hours provided by the healthcare employer; however, these hours do *not* count toward the apprentice's required clinical education or academic clinical hours.

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Nursing Apprenticeship Talking Points

Massachusetts Nursing Apprenticeships

1. Apprenticeships provide individuals—particularly those who might not otherwise have access—the opportunity to pursue a nursing education and the support needed to succeed.
2. These learning opportunities represent an investment in both the individual and their long-term professional development. This investment is not limited to the individual's physical presence at a healthcare organization; rather, it reflects a broader commitment to sustainability and skill expansion in the healthcare workforce.
3. Apprentices completing clinical experiences as part of a program of study are not included in staffing numbers. During this part of their education, and similar to traditional students, they are clinical students.
 - a. When working outside of the clinical requirements for the healthcare organization sponsoring the apprentice, they are counted in the staffing numbers as working in a nurse apprentice role.
 - b. Because apprentices complete all of the same clinical experiences required of traditional students **AND** work as nurse apprentices, these students receive supplemental training and experiences that enhance their nursing education.
4. Participants are full-time employees and receive pay for hours worked, as well as financial stipends from the sponsoring healthcare organization while not on the job. When performing work shifts as part of their apprenticeship, state and federal requirements include that apprentices must be compensated.
5. Apprenticeship programs are committed to a full and diverse learning experience for students.
 - a. This includes clinical exposure across multiple healthcare settings and organizations, particularly in areas such as mental health, pediatrics, and obstetrics.
 - b. Co-sponsoring organizations collaborate with academic institutions to ensure comprehensive training opportunities across specialties.
6. Throughout the apprenticeship, the educational institution retains full responsibility for ensuring that students meet all program outcomes. The school remains accountable for assessing and evaluating each student's learning in accordance with academic and licensure standards.

7. The work commitment for nursing apprentices does not change in the last semester of nursing school, even with the expanded ability to practice. Rather, the apprenticeship continues to emphasize the development of necessary skills and behaviors to ensure the nurse is successful.
8. Upon graduation, the apprentice progresses through orientation at the healthcare organization and completes the NCLEX exam within the recommended six weeks from graduation.
9. Apprenticeship programs are very similar to some “learn and earn” models currently active in Massachusetts. Our model provides a structure that yields higher rates of graduate success due to the close partnership with the academic institution and the employer.
 - a. The enhanced mentoring during an apprenticeship, along with the program design of apprentices completing 40 hours per week of didactic education, clinical rotations, and work shifts, means that apprentices will complete up to five times as much clinical time compared to traditional nursing students.
 - b. Thus, an apprentice often completes competencies at a faster rate, is far less likely to withdraw or not complete a program and has higher exam passing rates than traditional students—all of which may improve the overall outcomes of the nursing program and enhance the potential success of the student.