Tackling the Nursing Shortage Veterans Affairs Secretary Unveils Education Initiative at Eisenhower

In May, Thomas Johnson, Secretary, California Department of Veterans Affairs, briefed a group of area health and education leaders at Eisenhower Medical Center on the Governor's Nurse Education Initiative.The initiative is part of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's plan to provide $90 million over five years through a public-private partnership to reduce the severe nursing shortage in California.

"Nurses are people of compassion and courage. Their profession is a labor of love, and without them, we simply could not deliver quality care for patients," the Governor has said. Currently, in California, there are 14,000 vacancies for registered nurses in hospitals.

Currently, in California, there are 14,000 vacancies for registered nurses in hospitals. Meanwhile, the state's nursing schools are filled to capacity and have long waiting lists.There are acute faculty shortages, as well. Forty percent of nursing school applicants are turned away each year due to lack of program capacity. In addition, more than 50 percent of the state's registered nurses are over age 50 and could be retiring in the next 10 years. "The Governor has recognized the challenges in nursing in California." - Louise White Chief Nursing Officer Eisenhower Medical Center

"This creates a mega-challenge.We don't have enough people being trained to fill the vacancies," explains Louise White, Chief Nursing Officer, Eisenhower Medical Center.

Governor Schwarzenegger's Five-Point Plan includes providing $90 million funding, in partnership with schools and health facilities, to build more nurse education programs, recruit more qualified instructors, develop new avenues to nursing careers with high school and college nursing academies and apprenticeships, and seek additional funding for nurse education from federal and other funding sources. "The Governor has recognized the challenges in nursing in California,"White says. "He has established a way to address it through legislative funding to increase the capacity to train more nurses."

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