

Concern for Safe Staffing Year-End Report and Findings for 2021



For more than 25 years, nurses of the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) have been collecting information on how short staffing impacts patient care and patient safety. Evidence-based studies demonstrate that it is critical to have adequate staffing because it results in better patient outcomes (Dixon, 2021). Studies illustrate that the number of patients a nurse has at one time affects their ability to safely care for patients and ultimately advance their plan of care through to discharge.

Nurses are astounded that hospital executives continue to ignore their calls for adequate staffing, despite consistent testimony from hospital administrators that they trust their nurses to know what the staffing needs are at the bedside. In addition, hospitals are frequently cited for staffing deficiencies when the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) conducts audits.

Clearly, 2021 was a continuation of extraordinary challenges faced in 2020 with registered nurse staffing.

- Patients continued to present more acutely ill
- Patients presented with high acuity illnesses and symptoms physicians thought we had learned how to treat, only to find out a different variant required different treatment
- Policies on care delivery, capacity, safety, and quarantine changed weekly
- Management response is minimal at best

CFSS Form Evolution Timeline

1990's Concern for Safe Staffing (CFSS) form was created to collect unsafe staffing data related to the nurses' work environment

2010 Amended to gather more patient-centered data and an electronic version of the CFSS form was created

2014 Data points were added regarding substandard care, like delayed care, missed patient care and use of last-minute solutions

2015 MNA began categorizing the data collected by CFSS forms to enhance our analysis of unsafe staffing

2019 Data points were added regarding violence in the workplace and homecare nurse specifics



7,857 CFSS forms were submitted in 2021, marking a 108.46% increase from 2020 and producing the following important data:

Minnesota's registered nurses are expected to deliver high quality, safe, ethical, and therapeutic care despite the poor conditions executives created in our hospitals. Patients have a right to expect safe care and that the hospital will fulfill its commitment to the community to provide high-quality, safe care.

CFSS forms cited multiple categories of staffing concerns which resulted in the total number CFSS forms to be lower in number than the actual number of complaints.

Executives continue to foster conditions in our hospitals where nurses face inadequate staffing levels and insufficient resources to provide the quality care patients deserve. These past two years will leave deep wounds in the profession and scar our nurses for years to come. The anguish nurses feel when they do not have the resources necessary to provide patients with the care they deserve is causing moral suffering and distress.

Word Cloud of 2021 CEFS form submissions

Nurses work in a fast paced, highly stressful, ceaselessly demanding environment. The environment is physically dangerous and emotionally draining. Hospital executives created conditions that are disrespectful, unreasonable, and overwhelming for nurses. Hospital CEOs must take responsibility for reckless under-staffing that started before the pandemic and will not be solved without accountability and action. Nurses only want to provide the best level of care to their patients in their most vulnerable time.

#safestaffingsaveslives