

Private Duty Nursing providers have been struggling with providing nursing coverage to frail, medically needy individuals in their homes. Most of these individuals are children.

The association sent out a survey to providers to share with their patients in an effort to collect data to support this finding. We wanted to hear from the family members of these individuals that are directly impacted and gather their feedback. The survey was conducted from October 1, 2024, to October 30, 2024. The survey asked the following questions:

1. How many nursing hours are you or your family members authorized for weekly?
2. How many hours per week are not covered due to there not being a nurse available?
3. Which best describes the challenges your family faces due to not having nursing during authorized hours.
4. Please describe nursing care needs – select all that apply.
5. How many times has the person receiving services been hospitalized in the past year?
6. How many agencies do you receive private duty nursing services from?
7. How many nurses have you lost in the past year?
8. If your child is receiving private duty nursing services post-hospitalization, was discharged delayed due to lack of nursing coverage and, if so, how long was their stay in hospital extended?

We received 71 survey responses. The results of the survey were not surprising and only confirmed what providers have been concerned about. These include significant gaps in service hours due to lack of nursing staff, rehospitalizations, and the emotional and physical strain families endure due to poor nursing coverage. What was surprising is the number of days an individual had to wait to be discharged from a hospital stay for a lack of nursing coverage.

According to the Health Forum, an affiliate of the American Hospital Association, hospital adjusted expenses per inpatient day in New Jersey were \$3,232 in 2020. This cost is not for ICU care, or does it include any pediatric specialized care, therefore, the cost would be much greater today. The Medicaid in-home cost for nursing care for a 24-hour period is only \$1,488 with no adjustment. Using the average adjusted daily cost for non-specialized care in a hospital from 2020 compared to current 2024 private duty nursing rate, that is a cost saving of \$1,165 per day. When you multiply this cost by 25.6, the average days an individual must wait to go home, the savings are significant at \$29,824 per person.

Private Duty Nursing providers continue to struggle with recruiting nurses with the skills to provide pediatric specialized care which includes ventilator and trach care, infusion

therapy, medication administration and the special nurturing and energy needed when caring for children. PDN providers are unable to compete with hospital salaries which have exploded during and after the COVID pandemic. Some per-diem hospital rates are even higher than the current PDN Medicaid reimbursement rate. Unfortunately, providers experienced a significant shift of nurses moving back into hospitals for these better salaries.

For these reasons, the association is advocating for its PDN providers in asking the state to consider reinstating a specialized PDN modifier. Having a specialized rate would provide a little leverage when recruiting and retaining nurses.

Highlights of the study:

Average number of hours per week equaled	88.5
Average number of hours per week uncovered	34% Hours uncovered on average!
Challenges due to uncovered shifts	34% Not able to sleep 24% Missed work hours 17% Unable to care for loved ones 9 % Missed school hours
Nursing Care Needs	57% Feeding Tubes 28% Tracheostomy 21 % Ventilators 52% Other (can include seizure precautions, suctioning, etc.)
Hospitalizations	21% Hospitalized at least once / year 13% Hospitalized 2 times per year 11% Hospitalized 3 or more times per year
Number of Agencies Providing Nursing	6% Unable to be staffed at all 40% One agency 19% Two agencies 6% Three or more agencies
Number of nurses lost in a year	3 Nurses on average lost per year
Number of days in hospital	25.6 Average days delayed due to no nursing coverage after hospitalization