

## Is New Jersey facing a new nursing shortage?

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At the start of the new millennium, New Jersey had a serious nursing shortage.

Things got better, but demand is now once again starting to outpace supply.

Judy Schmidt, the CEO of the New Jersey Nurses Association, said from 2008 to 2015, “we actually had nurses that graduated from nursing school that could not find a job.”

Over the past 18 months, however, “we’ve seen periodic shortages in some specialty areas. Two of the prime areas are operating rooms and our labor and delivery suites.”

Schmidt says this is happening because nurses in the baby boomer generation are starting to retire or go part-time “now that the economy is better.”

She noted there is a prediction we could see an even bigger shortage over the next five years, however, “educators say they’ll be able to fill those open positions when they do come about.”

According to Schmidt, most but not all nurses are women.

“There is about 92 percent women in the nursing profession, but this year we actually elected our first male president of the New Jersey State Nurses Association,” she said

Schmidt says not everyone is cut out to be a nurse.

“Those candidates for nursing school are persons who are truly interested in giving back. You need to have a very caring personality. It’s truly very rewarding but it’s also very hard work,” she said.

She pointed out new nursing graduates can count on an additional 12 months of training before they’re able to work in an operating room, while labor and delivery nurses usually get an extra three to six months of training.

To become a nurse, Schmidt said there are several options.

“There’s our licensed practical nursing programs, which are usually out of a vocational school, or possibly out of a community college setting, and their programs last about 12 months,” she said.

Then there's the registered nurse program.

"They can be done at an associate degree level at a community college, or our bachelor degree programs at a university setting. Nurses can also go on to get a master's degree."

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