

Nursing Workforce Safe Practices

Developed for The Leapfrog Group by Castlight Health®



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2014 Leapfrog Hospital Survey Results

Every year, The Leapfrog Group and its membership (employers and other organizations that purchase health insurance coverage for employees and their families, as well as business coalitions on health) ask every adult general acute care and freestanding pediatric hospital in the U.S. to voluntarily complete the Leapfrog Hospital Survey. Leapfrog uses the survey data to publicly report on issues that matter to health care purchasers and consumers, including high-risk surgeries, maternity care, hospital-acquired infections, and more. Measures included on the Leapfrog Hospital Survey are endorsed by the National Quality Forum and/or aligned with those of other significant data-collection entities, including the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Joint Commission. Leapfrog partners with the Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality at Johns Hopkins Medicine to review survey measures and standards, and updates them annually to reflect the latest science. Additionally, panels of experts volunteer to meet regularly to review the survey measures and recommend performance standards for each subject area covered on the Leapfrog Hospital Survey.

This is the fourth in a series of reports Castlight Health is preparing on the results of the 2014 Leapfrog Hospital Survey. To read the first three reports on Maternity Care, High-Risk Procedures, and Computerized Physician Order Entry, [click here](#).

Adequate and skilled nursing workforce

Contrary to depictions in popular media, nurses—not physicians—provide most of the clinical care in hospitals. As such, they are critical to ensuring that hospitals provide safe, high-quality care. Registered nurses constitute the largest group of health care professionals and nearly 58%¹ of them are employed by hospitals. Despite this, there are few measures available that focus on the nursing workforce in hospitals.

An adequate workforce of well-trained nurses and a strong, hospital-wide influence of nursing leaders can directly impact patient mortality, complications, adverse events, the length of hospital stays and level of resource usage.



Hospitals perform well, but more progress is needed to maintain Leapfrog's standard

Leapfrog's recommended nursing workforce safe practices ensure that nursing staff are included at all levels of leadership, and units are adequately staffed with skilled nurses to provide safe care.

¹ <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/media-relations/fact-sheets/nursing-fact-sheet>

Leapfrog's standard for nursing workforce:

Ensure that nursing staff services and nursing leadership at all levels—including senior administrative and unit levels—are competent and adequate to provide safe care. This includes an adequately resourced nurse staffing plan, senior administrative nursing leaders made part of the hospital senior management team, and adequate funding for nursing services including support in maintaining professional knowledge and skills.

Hospitals can meet this standard by either:

- Attesting that they fully comply with the 21 Leapfrog nursing workforce safe practices
- **or**
- Achieving Magnet® Status recognition from the American Nursing Credentials Center

The 2014 Leapfrog Hospital Survey shows continued progress in the adoption of critical nursing workforce safe practices, but there's much more to be done. Key findings include:

- The percentage of reporting hospitals that received full credit for the Leapfrog nursing workforce safe practice grew from 52% to 60% in 2014. While this is encouraging, two in five reporting hospitals are still not fully meeting Leapfrog standards.
- Leapfrog-reporting hospitals achieving Magnet® Status increased slightly from 15.5% in 2013 to 16% in 2014. The American Nurses Credentialing Center's Magnet program recognizes health care organizations for quality patient care, nursing excellence and innovations in professional nursing practice.

Nursing workforce safe practices

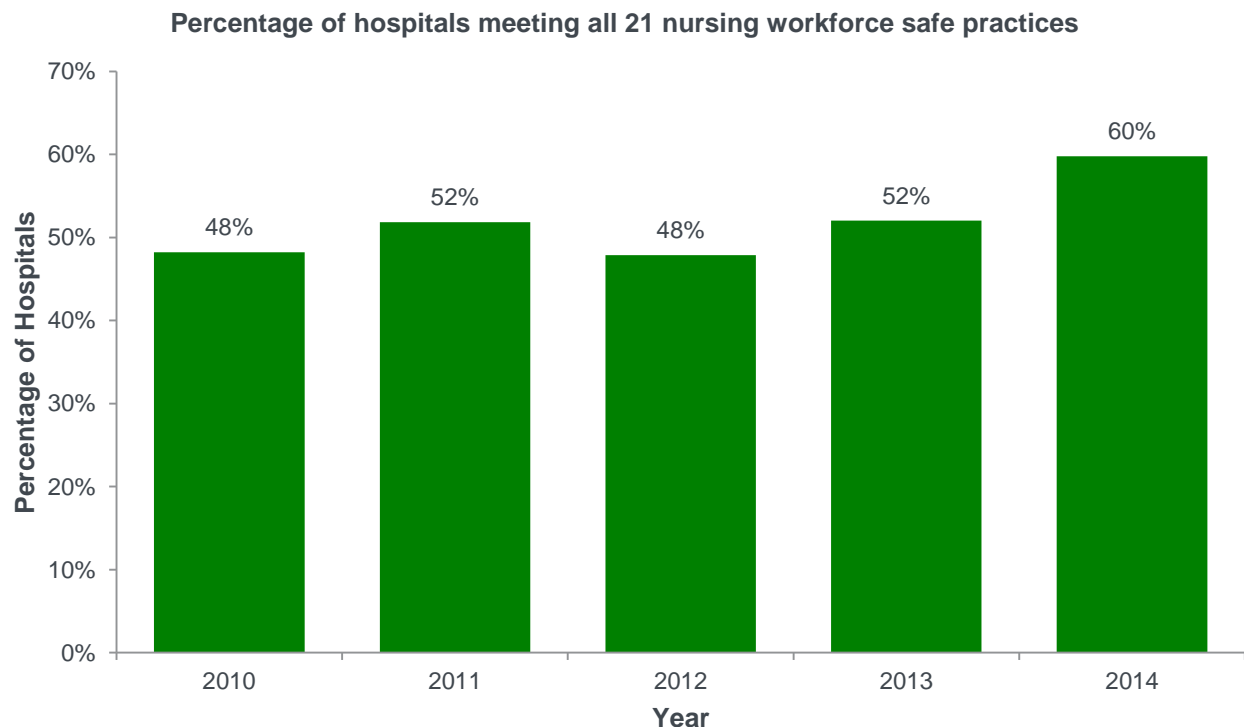
Because of the direct link between nursing workforce and safe care, Leapfrog believes the public deserves to know which hospitals have strong nursing workforces. The Leapfrog survey results provide the only transparent tool for consumers and health care purchasers to compare nursing workforces at different hospitals across the country.

The survey results detailed in this report focus on hospital practices involving the nursing workforce and are derived from Safe Practice 9 – Nursing Workforce, from the National Quality Forum (NQF). This measure examines how hospitals apply key components of a well-designed nursing workforce to reinforce patient safeguards. In it, health care organization leaders and governance boards are explicitly called upon to proactively assess the safety of their organizations and to take action that continually improves the safety, and thus, the quality of the care they provide.² Per the NQF, Leapfrog divides its nursing workforce safe practice questions into four areas:

- **Awareness** — Does the hospital perform a risk assessment and evaluation of patient-safety events related to nurse staffing, and provide feedback to all levels of leadership?
- **Accountability** — Does the hospital include senior nursing leadership as part of its management team, report performance metrics related to nursing workforce safe practices to the board, and hold all levels of leadership accountable through performance reviews or compensation structures?
- **Ability** — Does the hospital conduct staff training and provide the budget needed to ensure adequate and competent nursing staff?
- **Action** — Does the hospital implement policies and procedures to ensure adequate staffing is achieved and provide an annual report on progress to the public?

While Leapfrog does not measure nurse-to-patient ratios, the nursing workforce safe practices reflect processes and policies for ensuring hospitals have enough skilled nurses, that patient safety issues related to having enough skilled nurses are constantly being reviewed, that nursing leadership is represented throughout the hospital, and that hospital leadership is held accountable for improvements (see Appendix A for list of practices). The systematic, universal implementation of NQF-endorsed safe practices can lead to sizable and long-lasting improvements in health care safety.

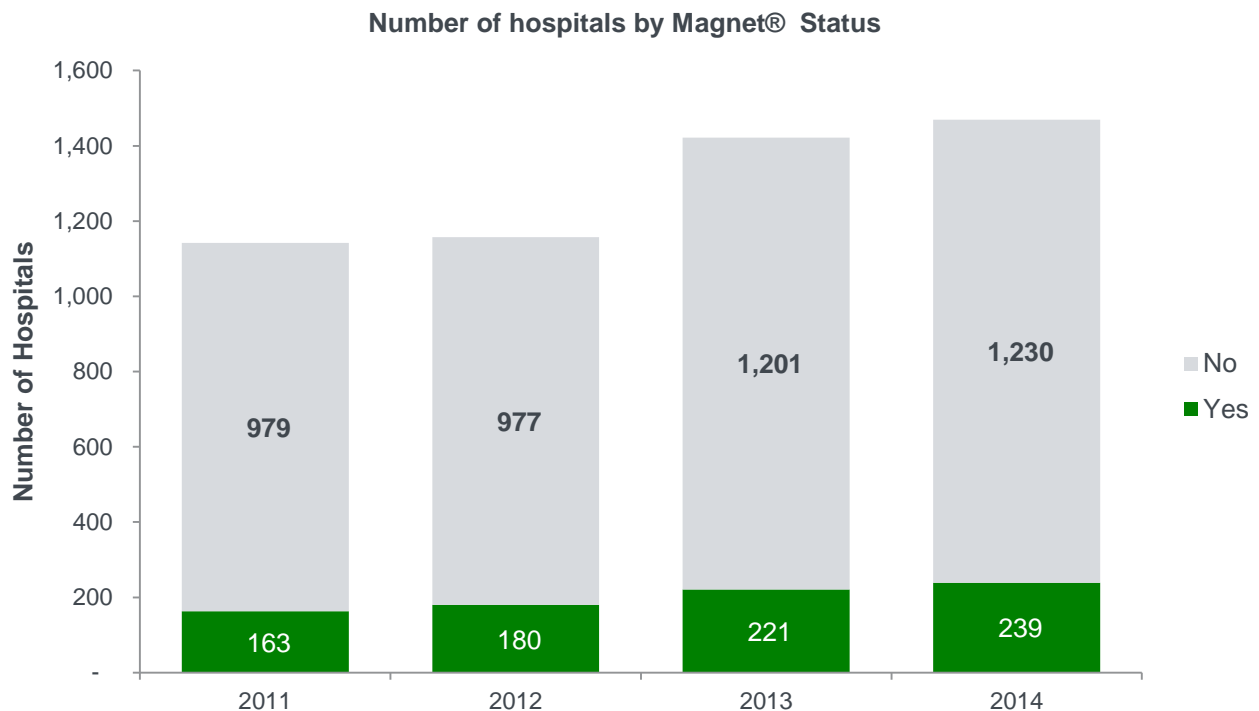
The percentage of hospitals meeting all 21 nursing workforce safe practices continues to increase, with 60% of reporting hospitals earning all possible points, up from 52% in 2013.



Magnet Status

Leapfrog is the only hospital ratings provider that tracks and rewards Magnet® Status—an elite designation for nursing excellence—and credits hospitals with this designation. The American Nurses Credentialing Center’s elite Magnet Recognition Program® singles out health care organizations for quality patient care, nursing excellence, and innovations in professional nursing practice, and requires those applying for Magnet® Status to also demonstrate important safety outcomes. Magnet® is the leading source of successful nursing practices and strategies worldwide.³ Leapfrog experts recognize Magnet® hospitals for their improved work environments, more highly educated nursing workforces, superior nurse-to-patient staffing ratios, and greater nurse satisfaction.⁴ Hospitals that have achieved Magnet® Status fully meet Leapfrog’s standard for nursing workforce safe practices.

Approximately 7% of all hospitals nationwide have achieved Magnet® Status.⁵ The number of Leapfrog-reporting hospitals that earned a Magnet® Status designation has increased slightly over the past four years, with 239 hospitals, or slightly more than 16% of hospitals, reporting this designation in 2014.



³ <http://www.nursecredentialing.org/magnet.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.nursecredentialing.org/JONA-PressRelease-103111>

⁵ <http://www.nursecredentialing.org/Magnet/ProgramOverview/HistoryoftheMagnetProgram/GrowthoftheProgram>

Conclusion and call to action

Nurses provide the majority of patient care in hospitals and are critical to the safety and quality of any hospital. However, about 40% of hospitals have not ensured that all 21 Leapfrog safe practices are implemented at their hospital. Many hospitals have already taken steps to ensure that they have enough qualified nurses to provide their patients with a safer hospital experience. Below are additional steps that hospitals, patients and other stakeholders can take to ensure they receive the best care.

- **Hospitals** that haven't implemented nursing workforce safe practices are encouraged to continue working toward a safer environment for patients and learning from other hospitals that have achieved high standards of care.
- **Employers** should urge hospitals to complete the Leapfrog Hospital Survey and should encourage their employees to choose hospitals that are implementing practices related to their nursing workforce that help support safer care.
- **Patients and families** that need hospital care are encouraged to consult the Leapfrog Hospital Survey results before choosing a hospital, and to choose a hospital that has implemented all of the safe practices related to their nursing workforce and/or attained Magnet® Status.

Choosing a hospital for care is one of the most important decisions consumers can make. Hospitals, employers and consumers can each play a part in ensuring patients have the greatest possible chance for a positive outcome.

To learn more about the Leapfrog Hospital Survey, go to [The Leapfrog Group](#).

Appendix A: Nursing Workforce Safe Practices

In regard to ensuring adequate and competent nursing staff service and nursing leadership at all levels, our organization has done the following or has had the following in place within the last 12 months:

- a. Held at least one educational meeting for clinicians, senior management, mid-level management, and line management specifically related to the areas of patient safety and adequate nurse staffing effectiveness.
- b. Performed a risk assessment and an evaluation of the frequency and severity of adverse events that can be related to nurse staffing.
- c. Submitted a report to the Board (governance) with recommendations for measurable improvement targets.
- d. Collected and analyzed data of actual unit-specific nurse staffing levels on a quarterly basis to identify and address potential patient safety-related staffing issues.
- e. Provided unit-specific reports of potential patient safety-related staffing issues to senior administrative leadership and the Board (governance) at least quarterly.

In regard to ensuring adequate and competent nursing staff service and nursing leadership at all levels, our organization has done the following or has had the following in place within the last 12 months:

- a. Held departmental/clinical leadership directly accountable for improvements in performance through performance reviews or compensation.
- b. Included senior nursing leadership as part of the hospital senior management team.
- c. Reported performance metrics related to this area to the Board (governance).
- d. Held the Board (governance) and senior administrative leadership accountable for reducing patient safety risks related to nurse staffing decisions.
- e. Held the Board (governance) and senior administrative leadership accountable for the provision of financial resources for nursing services.
- f. Reported to the Board (governance) the results of the measurable improvement targets.

In regard to ensuring adequate and competent nursing staff service and nursing leadership at all levels, our organization has done the following or has had the following in place within the last 12 months:

- a. Conducted staff education on maintaining and improving competencies specific to assigned job duties related to the safety of the patient, with attendance documented.
- b. Allocated dedicated and compensated staff time to reduce adverse events related to staffing levels or competency issues.
- c. Documented actual expenses incurred during the past year tied to this safe practice.
- d. Budgeted financial resources for balancing staffing levels and skill levels to improve performance.
- e. Governance has approved a budget for reaching optimal nurse staffing. (p.155)

In regard to ensuring adequate and competent nursing staff service and nursing leadership at all levels, our

organization has done the following within the last 12 months or has had the following in place during the last 12 months and updates are made regularly:

- a. Implemented policies and procedures, with input from nurses, to ensure that adequate nursing staff-to-patient ratios are achieved.
- b. Developed policies and procedures for effective staffing targets that specify number, competency and skill mix of nursing staff.
- c. Implemented a performance improvement project that minimizes the risk to patients from less than optimal staffing levels.

OR

Monitored a previously implemented hospital-wide performance improvement program that measures, and demonstrates full achievement of, the impact of this specific Safe Practice.

- d. Provided unit-specific reports of potential patient safety-related staffing issues to senior administrative leadership and the Board (governance) at least quarterly.
- e. Provided reports at least annually to the public through the appropriate organizations on your hospital's current status in achieving nurse staffing goals.

About The Leapfrog Group:

Founded in 2000 by large employers and other purchasers, The Leapfrog Group is a national nonprofit organization driving a movement for giant leaps forward in the quality and safety of American health care. The flagship Leapfrog Hospital Survey collects and transparently reports hospital performance, empowering purchasers to find the highest-value care and giving consumers the lifesaving information they need to make informed decisions. The Hospital Safety Score, Leapfrog's other main initiative, assigns letter grades to hospitals based on their record of patient safety, helping consumers protect themselves and their families from errors, injuries, accidents, and infections.

About Castlight Health:

Castlight Health, Inc. (NYSE:CSLT) is a leader in enterprise healthcare management. We believe great healthcare builds great business and U.S. enterprises can gain control over the \$620 billion spent annually on healthcare, transforming a crippling cost into a strategic business advantage. Recognized as [a top 2014 software platform](#) by the HR Technology Conference & Exposition, Castlight's Enterprise Healthcare Cloud enables employers to understand and manage all their healthcare investments while helping employees make the best possible healthcare decisions. Castlight is a great place to work, honored with a [Glassdoor Employees' Choice award](#) and recognized by Rock Health for Diversity in Leadership. For more information visit www.castlighthealth.com. Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and Like us on [Facebook](#).

