Yearly Review of Salaries in Home Health Agencies and Community Health Services — 1981

Report of the Annual Study Conducted by NLN's Council of Home Health Agencies and Community Health Services

The 1981 yearly review of salaries in home health and community health agencies reveals both a continuation of trends observed over the years and some slightly different findings from earlier data. Continued trends noted were that salaries for all positions and in all types of agencies increased and that salaries in official agencies were somewhat higher than in non-official agencies. Different this year was the annual rate of increase reported by nurse executive directors in non-official agencies, compared with the rate of increase for the same position in official agencies and the rate of increase reported for supervisors and staff nurses in both official and non-official agencies, as contrasted with 1980 data.

Salary data were obtained from 644 questionnaires returned by 216 city and county health units, 241 non-official agencies, 16 combination agencies, 134 boards of education, and 37 state health departments. These returns represent approximately 51 percent of the 1,267 questionnaires sent in April 1981 by the National League for Nursing to a sample of agencies, which included members and non-members of NLN.

Salaries are reported for full-time personnel only, among which were included over 17,800 registered nurses, of whom more than 14,000 were staff nurses.

The median salary for the nurse executive director in official agencies was $28,450 and, in non-official agencies, $26,325, a difference of $2,125, about 8 percent (Table 1). This observed difference in median salaries was considerably less than in 1980, when the dollar difference was $3,500 (15.7 percent). The range of the middle 50 percent of salaries in non-official agencies, $8,837, covered a wider spread than in official agencies, $7,050.

Table 1. Median Annual Salaries and Middle 50 Percent for Registered Nurses by Type of Agency and Position — 1981

Type of Agency and Position	Median	Middle 50 Percent
Local Official Health Agency		
Nurse executive director	$28,450	$24,525–31,575
Supervising nurse	21,043	18,693–24,077
Staff nurse	16,822	14,656–19,061
PHN fully-qualified	17,706	15,253–19,971
Other registered nurse	15,456	13,873–17,661
	N = 216	
Nonofficial Agency		
Nurse executive director	26,325	22,888–31,725
Supervising nurse	19,041	17,075–21,656
Staff nurse	15,861	14,141–17,684
PHN fully-qualified	16,618	14,720–18,147
Other registered nurse	15,228	13,803–17,150
	N = 241	
Board of Education		
Supervising nurse	23,300	19,050–28,650
Staff nurse	17,088	14,358–19,768
	N = 134	

N = Number of agencies responding.

Whereas a 13 percent difference had been noted between supervisors' salaries in boards of education and official agencies last year, this year the difference amounted to 10.7 percent, with median salaries for the supervisory position being $23,300 and $21,043, respec-

tively. The median supervisor's salary in non-official agencies was $19,041, about a 10 percent difference from official agencies and similar to the proportional difference noted in 1980.

Median salaries paid to staff nurses ranged from $17,088 in boards of education to $15,861 in non-official agencies. The difference between staff nurses' median salaries in boards of education and official agencies amounted to only $266, but the difference between staff nurses' salaries in official and non-official agencies was greater, $961. The middle 50 percent of staff nurses' salaries in non-official agencies covered a range of about $3,500 and in official agencies about $4,400, but in boards of education the range was greater, $5,400.

For staff nurses, salaries are obtained for fully qualified public health nurses, those who have completed an NLN-accredited collegiate or university program in nursing (including preparation in public health nursing) and other registered nurses. About 56 percent of all the staff nurses in this survey were classified as fully qualified, but proportions differed by type of agency. Official agencies had 60 percent and non-official, 54 percent fully qualified public health nurses. As had been noted in previous years, salaries paid to fully qualified public health nurses in both types of agencies are higher, $17,706 (official) and $16,618 (non-official), than those of other registered nurses, which are $15,456 and $15,228. As for differences by type of agency, the median salary of fully qualified staff nurses in official agencies differed by 6.5 percent from non-official agencies, but the difference in salaries of other registered nurses only amounted to 1.4 percent.

Salary and Position

As would be expected, nurse executive directors earned the highest salaries, which in official agencies was 35 percent higher than supervisory position salaries (39 percent in 1980). In non-official agencies, the nurse director earned 38 percent more than supervisors (32 percent in 1980). Differences between supervisors and staff nurses' salaries and differences between those of fully qualified public health nurses and other nurses were quite similar to those reported in last year's survey. In official agencies, supervisors' earnings were about 25 percent more than staff nurses (26 percent in 1980), with the differential in median salaries of fully qualified nurses and other nurses the same for both years, 14 percent.

In non-official agencies, a difference in the median salary between supervisors and staff nurses of 19.5 percent had been observed in 1980; this shifted to 20 percent in this year's survey, while the difference between fully qualified public health nurses and other nurses also increased somewhat, from 7 percent to 9 percent.

Trend in Salaries

A comparison of salary trends and rate of salary increase for nurse executive directors, supervisors, and staff nurses by type of agency is presented in Table 2. The uneven pace of salary increases is obvious in the data from 1976 through 1981. The largest increase evidenced in the current data was for the median salary of nurse executive directors in non-official agencies, 16.7 percent. (Knowledgeable observers have offered the interpretation that, when turnover occurs in the nurse executive director position, a new director is often engaged at a salary higher than the previous director was earning. This conjecture would also explain the fact that the 75 percent point for nurse executive directors in non-official agencies was higher than in official agencies, a situation that has not often occurred.)

Salary increases higher than had been observed last year in non-official agencies were also demonstrated by the increase in supervisors' salaries, 11.3 percent, and staff nurses', 10.8 percent. However, looking at the rate of increase from 1976-1981, proportional increases for all three positions in non-official agencies are strikingly similar: 46.2 percent for nurse executive directors, 41.4 percent for supervisors, and 45.1 percent for staff nurses.

In official agencies, the rate of salary increase for supervisors and staff nurses was higher than for any time in the past five years, being 12 percent and 12.8

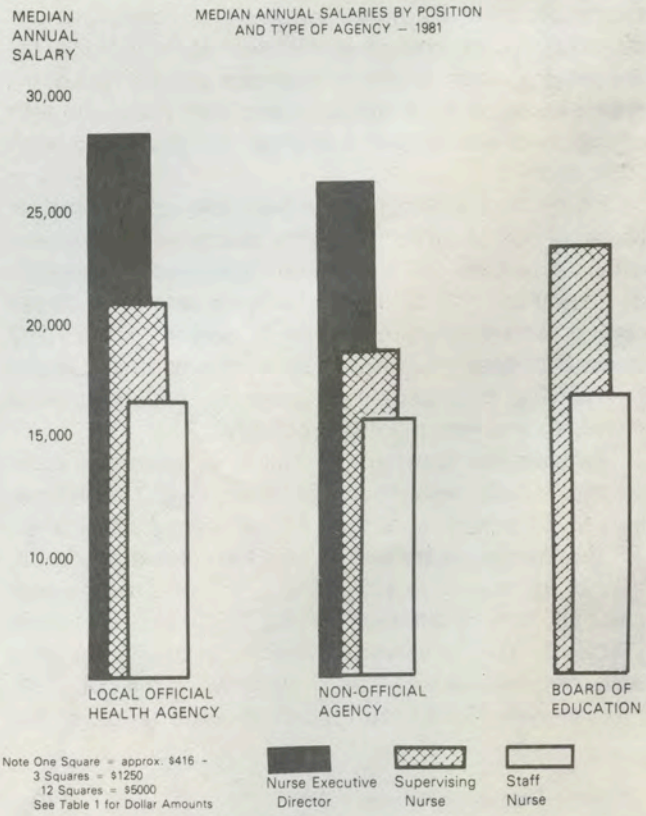

Table 2. Median Annual Salaries of Registered Nurses by Type of Agency and Position — 1976–1981

Type of Agency and Position	Median Annual Salary						Annual Percent Increase					Percent Increase
	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	76–77	77–78	78–79	79–80	80–81	1976–1981
Local Official Health Agency												
Nurse executive director	$18,100	$19,675	$21,450	$23,200	$26,100	$28,450	8.7	9.0	8.2	12.5	9.0	57.2
Supervising nurse	15,260	16,531	17,156	18,091	18,788	21,043	8.3	3.8	5.4	3.9	12.0	37.9
Staff nurse	12,160	13,104	13,584	14,342	14,913	16,822	7.8	3.7	5.6	4.0	12.8	38.3
Nonofficial Agency												
Nurse executive director	18,007	18,060	18,950	20,658	22,563	26,325	0.3	4.9	9.0	9.2	16.7	46.2
Supervising nurse	13,463	14,588	14,918	16,222	17,103	19,041	8.4	2.2	8.7	5.4	11.3	41.4
Staff nurse	10,932	11,645	12,071	13,287	14,314	15,861	6.5	3.7	10.1	7.7	10.8	45.1
Board of Education												
Supervising nurse	17,600	18,375	18,350	20,150	21,150	23,300	4.4	−0.1	9.8	5.0	10.1	32.3
Staff nurse	12,901	13,998	14,789	15,436	16,482	17,088	8.5	5.7	4.4	6.8	3.7	32.5

Table 3. Median Annual Salaries and Middle 50 Percent for Registered Nurse by Type of Agency and Population of Area Served — 1981

Type of Agency and Population of Area Served	Nurse Executive Director		Supervising Nurse		Staff Nurse	
	Median	Middle 50 Percent	Median	Middle 50 Percent	Median	Middle 50 Percent
Local Official Health Agency						
All population groups	$28,450	$24,525–$31,575	$21,043	$18,693–$24,077	$16,822	$14,656–$19,061
Under 50,000	23,950	20,775– 29,325	16,575	14,975– 20,413	14,699	13,205– 16,475
50,000–249,999	26,250	22,475– 29,325	19,150	16,900– 21,400	15,284	13,636– 17,659
250,000–499,999	29,050	25,475– 31,525	20,260	18,050– 21,700	16,038	14,571– 18,309
500,000 and over	30,600	28,400– 36,700	23,016	20,463– 26,064	17,927	16,021– 20,062
Nonofficial Agency						
All population groups	26,325	22,888– 31,725	19,041	17,075– 21,656	15,861	14,141– 17,684
Under 50,000	21,025	18,475– 23,925	16,800	14,900– 19,025	13,550	12,097– 14,562
50,000–249,999	25,400	22,400– 27,700	18,010	16,192– 19,625	14,550	13,530– 15,950
250,000–499,999	30,650	27,375– 33,057	18,510	13,369– 20,042	15,172	14,034– 15,782
500,000 and over	32,250	28,025– 39,375	22,107	19,540– 23,578	17,604	16,523– 18,725
Board of Education						
All population groups	(a)	(a)	23,300	19,050– 28,650	17,088	14,358– 19,768
Under 50,000			20,025	14,875– 21,925	14,150	12,033– 17,300
50,000–249,999			23,000	19,025– 25,775	15,420	12,760– 19,143
250,000–499,999			25,100	21,300– 26,700	17,009	15,013– 18,867
500,000 and over			29,394	29,334– 34,525	19,089	15,900– 22,125

[a]The nurse director classification is rarely used in boards of education.

percent, respectively. Salaries for executive directors, which had the highest rate of increase in 1979-80, 12.5 percent, dropped to 9 percent. Regardless of this finding, since 1976 the nurse executive director position had the highest rate of increase of any position in any type of agency, 57.2 percent.

Salaries of nurses in boards of education did not increase in as high proportions as salaries of nurses in other agencies; the rate of increase was slightly over 10 percent for supervisors and almost 4 percent for staff nurses. Some boards of education had noted on the returned questionnaire that school nurses' salaries were on the same scale as teachers' salaries. It is possible that in some communities constraints in raises for

teachers may have influenced this finding. Nevertheless, during the past five years, nurses in boards of education experienced salary increases amounting to somewhat over 32 percent.

Community Size and Location

Table 3 describes distribution of salaries for nurse executive director, supervising nurse, and staff nurse by the size of the population served by the agency, and Table 4 gives median salaries of staff nurses by geographic location. Both tables continue the patterns discernable in previous years. The larger the population served (and, by implication, the larger the agency), the higher the median salary can be expected to be for all levels of nurse positions.

The differences in staff nurses' salaries in communities serving over 500,000 people and those in the lowest population group for both official and non-official agencies were quite similar to differences noted in last year's data. Staff nurses in official agencies in the largest population group earned a median salary that was about 22 percent higher than the salaries earned by their counterparts in the lowest population group (23 percent in 1980). In non-official agencies, the salary differential between largest and smallest population groups was 30 percent and had been 31 percent in 1980. Among nurses in boards of education, the difference of 33 percent noted last year had increased to almost 35 percent this year.

Salaries for staff nurses are usually highest in the western part of the nation (Table 4). The ratio of fully qualified public health nurses to other registered nurses is higher in the West and, since fully qualified staff nurses have higher earnings than other nurses, this finding is consistent with data presented in previous tables.

Regional differences show that, for official agencies, staff nurses in the West were earning about 29 percent more than staff nurses in the South. Lowest staff nurse median salaries in non-official agencies and boards of education were in the combined New England-Mid Atlantic region. Staff nurses in the West in these two types of agencies were earning 31 percent and 26 percent more, respectively, than those in the New England-Mid Atlantic region.

Table 4. Median Annual Salaries of Staff Nurses By Type of Agency and HHS Region[a] — 1981

Region	Local Official Health Agency	Nonofficial Agency	Board of Education
All Regions	$16,822	$15,861	$17,088
I, II, III	15,707	15,148	15,697
IV, VI	14,913	15,623	15,845
V, VII	17,994	17,410	18,550
VIII, IX, X	19,283	19,900	19,733

[a] I: Conn., Me., Mass., N.H., R.I., Vt.
II: N.Y., N.J.
III: Del., D.C., Md., Pa., Va., W. Va.
IV: Ala., Fla., Ga., Ky., Miss., N. Car., S. Car., Tenn.
V: Ill., Ind., Mich., Minn., Ohio, Wisc.
VI: Ark., La., N. Mex., Okla., Tex.
VII: Iowa, Kans., Mo., Neb.
VIII: Colo., Mont., N. Dak., S. Dak., Utah, Wyo.
IX: Ariz., Calif., Hawaii, Nev.
X: Alaska, Idaho, Ore., Wash.

Other Personnel

Table 5 summarizes data on agency employees with job titles other than nurse executive director, supervisor, or staff nurse. This table, like the others, includes only full-time employees and gives the number of agencies reporting the job title, number of employees within each category, and median salary. For all categories of employees, the median 1981 salary exceeded that of 1980 (see NURSING & HEALTH CARE, December 1980). The data tend to understate the actual use of the workers named in the table, because many agencies use

Table 5. Other Full-Time Health Agency Personnel—Number of Agencies, Number of Employees, and Median Annual Salary—1981[a]

Position	Number of Agencies with Specified Position	Number of Full-Time Employees	Median Annual Salary
Registered Nurse			
Director of professional services[b]	50	49[c]	$23,775
Assistant director	183	262	24,943
Educational director	57	69	20,917
Other administrator	156	401	20,783
Consultant	69	525	21,381
Assistant supervisor	126	498	20,133
Nurse practitioner	88	334	18,941
Nonnurse Health Professional			
Physical therapist	145	421	18,647
Speech therapist	32	53	19,150
Occupational therapist	67	119	17,725
Social worker	127	268	17,517
Nutritionist/dietitian	74	138	16,550
Other health	96	325	17,950
Licensed Practical Nurse	190	978	12,324
Auxiliary Health Personnel			
Public health assistant	39	306	10,900
Home health aide	300	3,917	9,026
Other	135	758	11,013
Nonnurse Executive Director	50	50	37,850
Controller/Business Manager	124	119[c]	20,150
Business Support Staff			
Secretary	341	1,170	10,422
Clerk	353	2,489	10,320

[a]Includes nonofficial agencies, official state and local agencies, and combination services.
[b]In agencies where executive director is a non-nurse.
[c]Agencies list position but title was vacant at time of response.

such personnel on a part-time or contractual basis. Boards of education are excluded from the table, since health personnel other than nurses are seldom employed on a full-time basis.

Fifty agencies reported a non-nurse executive director, and the median salary for this position was $37,850 (a salary that exceeds the 75 percent point for nurse executive directors in official and non-official agencies, as displayed in Table 1). Directors of professional services in agencies where the chief executive was not a nurse earned median salaries of $23,775. Full-time Controller of Business Manager positions were reported by 124 agencies, with 119 of these positions filled at the time that data were gathered; the median salary for this position was $20,150.

The nursing positions of assistant director, educational director, and assistant supervisor are usually only found in larger agencies; here, median salaries were: $24,943; $20,917; and $20,133, respectively.

A total of 401 nurses in 156 agencies were categorized as "other administrator," and this includes such titles as coordinator of various services, director of home care, director of home health aides, etc.; this median salary was $20,783. The title of nurse consultant was found in 69 agencies and comprised 525 individuals, 80 percent of whom were employed by state health departments; their median salary amounted to $21,381.

Nurse practitioner includes the practitioner title as well as clinical specialist, nurse midwife, and practitioners with specialty designations, such as pediatric, family, and geriatric. Eighty-eight agencies employed 334 nurses in this category, with a median salary of $18,941.

The largest group of full-time, non-nurse health professionals were physical therapists, 421, who had a median salary of $18,647. Other professionals serving in community health agencies included social workers, nutritionists, sanitarians, and speech and occupational therapists. Their median salaries ranged from $16,550 for nutritionists to $19,150 for speech therapists.

A median salary of $12,324 was reported for the 978 practical nurses working in 190 agencies; this represents an increase of 9 percent over the 1980 median. The term auxiliary nursing personnel includes titles of public health assistant, home health aide, homemaker, community health representative, interpreter, etc. The median for these positions ranged from $9,026 for home health aides (11 percent over 1980) to $11,013 for other types of workers. Secretarial and clerical workers earned a median salary slightly over $10,000 a year.

The yearly review of home health and community health agencies, including salary data, has been an annual service of NLN for the past 28 years, from 1953 to the present.