

# Certified Nurse Aide as an Occupational Pathway to Licensed and Professional Nursing in Indiana

## INTRODUCTION

### Mean Hourly Wage for CNAs



51,132

number of active CNA certifications as of August 2016

### What's the issue?

Ensuring Indiana has a workforce with the right skills mix to meet demand in the health sector is critical to achieving economic goals and securing maximum health of the population. Diversity, career pathways, advancement opportunities, and retention of talent are top workforce priorities among health sector employers. Identifying occupational pathways in the health sector and determining their impact on workforce diversity and talent retention is critical to the development and/or strengthening of targeted initiatives for Indiana.

### What is a Certified Nurse Aide?

CNA is a high demand, entry level health sector occupation. **As of August 2016, there were 51,132 CNAs with an active certification in Indiana.**<sup>1</sup> A large proportion of Indiana's CNAs are employed by Long Term Care (LTC) facilities, where their duties generally include assisting residents with daily living activities such as bathing, eating, and cleaning.<sup>2</sup> **The mean hourly wage for CNAs, reported by the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, in Indiana is \$12.02<sup>3</sup> and \$12.78<sup>4</sup> nationally.**

### What are the training requirements?

Certification requirements for the CNA in Indiana includes successful completion of 1) 105 hour state approved nurse aid training program and 2) pass scores on a written test and skills test in nurse aide competencies both of which are conducted through Ivy Tech Community College.<sup>5</sup> Following successful completion of these requirements an individual is able to apply for certification through the Indiana State Department of Health in conjunction with the Indiana Professional Licensing Agency.

### Is CNA a pathway to licensed nursing?

As compared to other nursing occupations, CNA has minimal entry requirements. As such, CNA is a more accessible occupation for individuals who face barriers to higher education, including those from underrepresented minority groups. Data from other states suggest that the CNA workforce is more racially and ethnically diverse than the workforce of licensed and professional nurses. In 2016, the Indiana Governor's Health Workforce Council requested information on the extent to which CNA serves as an occupational pathway to licensed and professional nursing in Indiana. Prior to the development of this report, no identified source of information on this topic existed for Indiana or any other state.

### What is in this report?

This report presents information on CNA as a pathway to licensed and professional nursing in Indiana. Included are the 1) count of CNAs that obtained Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and/or Registered Nurse (RN) licenses, 2) time periods between obtaining licenses, and 3) demographic characteristics associated with the various pathways. The information in this report was prepared for the Governor's Health Workforce Council and the Indiana Department of Workforce Development in collaboration with the Indiana Professional Licensing Agency.

1. Indiana Professional Licensing Agency (2016). Active CNA Listing 8/1/2016.
2. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Nursing Assistants and Orderlies. 2016.
3. Bureau of Labor Statistics Nurse Aide wage for Indiana: [www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_in.htm#29-0000](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_in.htm#29-0000)
4. Bureau of Labor Statistics Nurse Aide National mean hourly wage: [www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_n.htm#29-0000](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_n.htm#29-0000)
5. Indiana State Department of Health. Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) Registration Program. 2017.
6. Career Ladders Project. A Definition of Career Pathways. 2013: [www.careerladdersproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Pathways\\_def\\_CLP.pdf](http://www.careerladdersproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Pathways_def_CLP.pdf)
7. Information on Indiana's population was obtained through the U.S. Census Bureau. 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## METHODS

### What data were used?

The Indiana Professional Licensing Agency (PLA) administers certifications and licenses and maintains data on numerous health occupations/professions, including CNA, LPN, and RN. Matching on social security number, the PLA generated an individual-level file of CNAs who matched to any license overseen by the Indiana State Board of Nursing. This file was matched to RN and LPN licensure survey data from 2015 and 2016 containing demographic characteristics for survey respondents.

### Who is included?

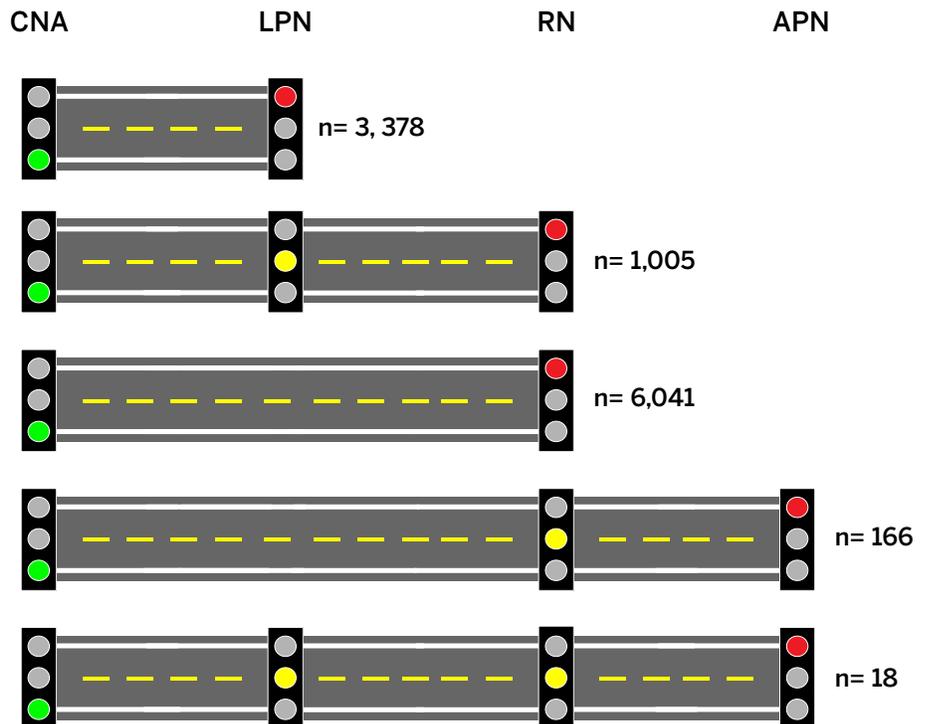
The PLA began administering CNA certifications in January 2008. (Prior to this date the Indiana State Department of Health administered CNA certifications.) **Since 2008, the PLA has administered 210,277 CNA certifications.** Of the 210,277 individuals who held a CNA, **10,608 (5%) matched to nursing licenses**, including 4,383 LPN licenses and 7,230 RN licenses (some individuals held both an LPN and RN license). A file containing CNAs that matched to LPN or RN licenses was then matched to license survey data using unique license number. Descriptive analyses were performed to compare demographic characteristics of RNs and LPNs who held a CNA to those of the overall RN and LPN workforces.

Information on each of these pathways, including number of individuals, average number of years associated with each pathway, and characteristics of the individuals that used these pathways is presented on subsequent pages.

210,277

number of CNA certifications administered by PLA since 2008

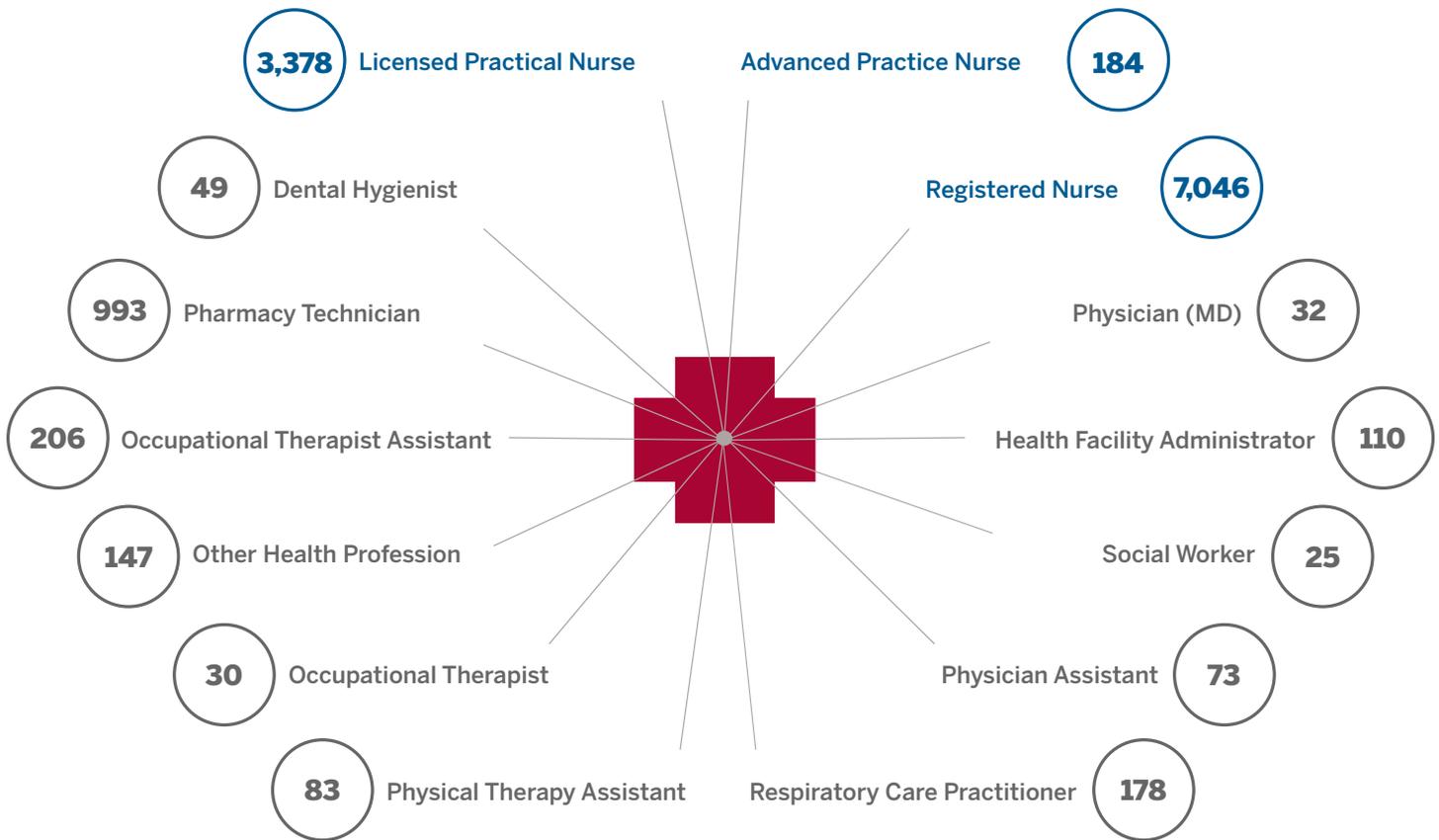
### Defining the Pathways



## What are the common pathways after CNA certification?

The counts of CNAs progressing on to additional nursing license types can be found in the infographic. **Although licenses within the field of nursing were the most common additional licenses held by CNAs, there were a number of CNAs who held other license types.** Of note, there are 110 former CNAs who went on to hold health facility administrator licenses, which is the license type that is required for an individual to become an administrator of a comprehensive care facility, or nursing home.

## RESULTS



## CNA Pathways

**CNA → LPN**  
 individuals who held a CNA directly to LPN license

**CNA → RN**  
 individuals who held a CNA directly to RN license

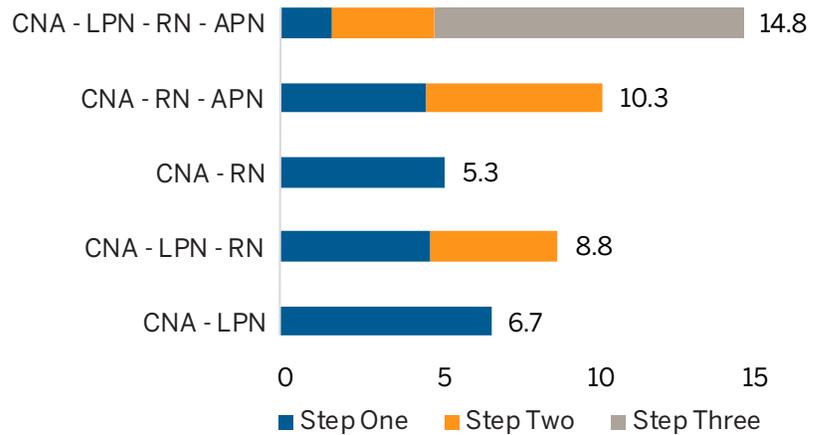
**CNA → LPN → RN**  
 individuals who held a CNA, became an LPN, and advanced to RN license

## What is the time to transition?

The mean time to transition from one license to another was calculated to determine, on average, the overall time to complete each pathway and how long each step in the pathway took. This information can be used to identify the extent to which each occupation served as an intermediary in a given pathway.

The time to transition represents the average number of years it took individuals within each pathway cohort to advance between licenses. The average number of years was calculated from the issue date of one license to the issue date of the next. A larger time to transition between licenses may be more indicative of a “career pathway,” as it suggests that an individual may be achieving higher levels of training while holding a part-time or full-time job.<sup>6</sup>

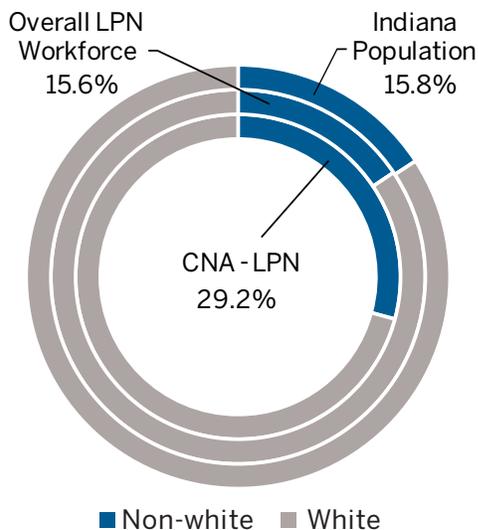
### Time to Transition between License Types (years)



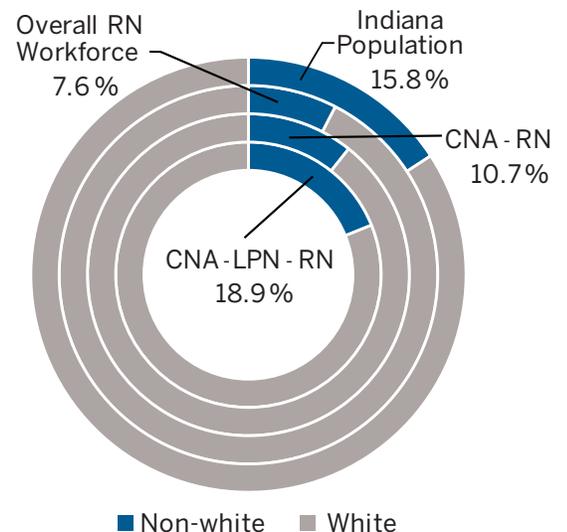
## Who's in the workforce?

Licensure survey data was utilized to describe the demographic characteristics of CNAs that progressed on to additional nursing licenses. (At the time of this report, survey data was unavailable to describe CNAs progressing to additional non-nursing licenses. However, this could be included in future studies). Data is not available on all CNAs who used the various pathways due to the voluntary nature of the licensure survey.

### Diversity: CNA - LPN Pathway<sup>7</sup>



### Diversity: CNA - RN Pathway<sup>7</sup>



**This report demonstrates that CNA certification has served as part of the pathway to licensed and professional nursing for a number of Hoosiers.**

Assessment of the various occupational pathways identified that the length of time associated with the pathway, and each step in the pathway, varied significantly. Additional research is needed to fully understand the factors contributing to the varying lengths of time associated with each pathway. However, it is important to note the duration of time between certification and subsequent licenses was longest in the CNA to LPN and CNA to LPN to RN pathways. Individuals in these pathways spent a greater amount time as a CNA before obtaining a nursing license. This suggests that for individuals in these pathways CNA was a true occupational pathway to nursing, whereas CNA was likely part of the academic pursuit toward a nursing license for individuals with a shorter durations between CNA and nursing licenses.

In addition to varying times, the pathways differed in demographic and practice characteristics. The CNA to LPN and CNA to LPN to RN pathways were proportionately more racially diverse than any other pathways, and most similar to the demographic composition of Indiana's population. Additionally, a larger proportion of individuals within these pathways reported practice in a LTC settings. The finding of greater diversity among within these pathways coupled with the finding of a greater duration between CNA and nursing licenses supports the notion that CNA is an accessible entry point to licensed professional nursing for individuals who may experience barriers, such as cost of higher education, to directly entering these professions.

In summary, CNA has served as a pathway to licensed professional nursing for a number of Hoosiers. As an entry-level occupation with minimal entry requirement, CNA likely serves as an accessible pathway to higher wage nursing occupations for Hoosiers. Additionally, certain CNA pathways contribute to diversity in the nursing workforce, a strategic priority among professional nursing and employers. Supporting and enhancing academic advancement and occupational pathways among CNAs should be considered to advance strategic workforce goals for Indiana.

### Key Takeaways



- CNA certification has served as part of the pathway to licensed and professional nursing for a number of Hoosiers.
- CNA pathways contribute to diversity in the nursing workforce, a strategic priority among professional nursing and employers.

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