

Blue Buzz series
How Nurses Could Help Solve for Texas' Physician Shortage Transcript
Final video: <https://youtu.be/zM49gsU9IAE>

Do you know someone who's a nurse? Perhaps a few people come to mind, maybe a friend, a family member, or even an old classmate? Texas has thousands of nurses devoted to the welfare of their patients. The ongoing shortage of doctors in our state is concerning, but there's a special kind of nurse that just might be part of the solution.

So, what do we know about nurses? Well, we know there's lots of different types and most of them have really big hearts. Since the arrival of COVID-19, we become even more aware of the impact on hospital and hospice nurses. We've also seen them embraced by society, from schools to camps and well, even cruise ships. Your employer might have a nurse dedicated to support yourself, and even your colleagues. Nurses also work within the health insurance industry, reviewing policies and offering their expertise. There are also different levels of licensed nurses.

You may have heard of an LVN or an RN, but did you know there's another level? APRNs have additional training and education, which qualifies them to perform more comprehensive tasks like ordering and evaluating test results and referring patients to specialists. Some may even hold a masters or a doctorate degree, and while they're not physicians, they can help take the workload off of physicians.

Still, there's oversight though, Texas law requires that APRN activities are overseen by a doctor. For example, when under the supervision of a licensed physician, APRNs can identify symptoms, recommend treatment and work collaboratively for managing care. APRNs could even have their own practice provided that they have a practice agreement with the physician and pay that physician to supervise their practice. You might be thinking, well, why would we want nurses to have their own practice? I'm glad you asked. Access the quality cost effective health care is a major issue here in Texas, and we're facing a critical shortage of primary care providers in all areas of the state.

In fact, the Texas Department of State Health Services did some investigating. They reported that the problem is not just bad, it's becoming critical. Looking ahead to the year 2030, they estimate that our shortage of primary care physicians will increase 67%.

Does it matter where you live? Yup, sure does. Texas is a big state and health care is delivered locally. For example, the Rio Grande Valley is expected to only have two thirds of the primary care docs that they need for the population there. But are more doctors coming? Not anytime soon. The projected medical school enrollment and resident positions aren't sufficient for the population growth ahead, so what do we do?

Well, remember those APRNs I mentioned? They might just be part of the solution with their level of training. They can help expand access to quality cost-effective health care here in Texas. As licensed APR ends up in their own practices, they can even give people more avenues to receive health care. This could be an especially great option for rural Texans or even underserved pockets in urban cities.

These are the areas that need more access to preventative care. Now, maybe you're thinking, ah, I still want to see a doctor with a medical degree. Well, you still could, but at the end of the day, Texas would just have more options for healthcare. Thanks to nurses, we have brave health care professionals filling in gaps in care.

So, share this video to create awareness and encourage those in a nursing field. Let's continue to embrace them in our communities and support them as they operate to the full extent of their professional license.