



Veterans Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Veteran Nurses in Primary Care Evaluation

Academic Years 2016-2021

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is the primary federal agency for improving health care for people who are geographically isolated or economically or medically underserved. HRSA programs help those in need of high-quality primary health care by supporting the training of health professionals – focusing on the geographical distribution of providers to areas where they are needed most.

HRSA's Bureau of Health Workforce supported the training of military veteran health professionals through the Nurse Education, Practice, Quality and Retention-Veterans' Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing (NEPQR-VBSN) program and the NEPQR-Veteran Nurses in Primary Care (VNPC) program. The NEPQR-VBSN program focused on the transition of veteran nursing students into civilian nursing careers through targeted recruitment, innovative educational models, career ladder programs, and awarding academic credit for relevant military training. The NEPQR-VNPC program focused on recruiting and training veteran nursing students to practice in community-based primary care teams in medically underserved communities and improving the distribution of the primary care nursing workforce.

This report summarizes the retrospective mixed methods evaluation of the NEPQR-VBSN and NEPQR-VNPC programs' key activities and accomplishments from Academic Years (AY) 2016-2017 through AY 2020-2021.

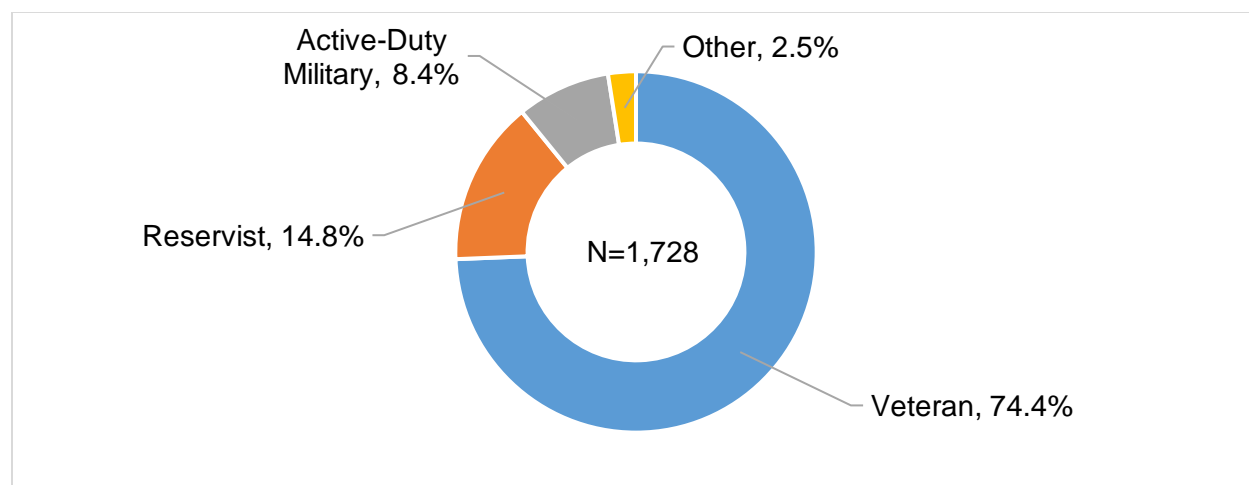
Key Findings

- Between AY 2016-2017 and AY 2020-2021, the NEPQR-VBSN and NEPQR-VNPC programs graduated 835 veteran and military-affiliated nurses, all of which earned Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees.
- Seventy-three percent of the AY 2016-2021 NEPQR-VBSN and NEPQR-VNPC veteran student trainees graduated with a bachelor's degree within four years, compared to only 47% of bachelor's degree students nationwide.
- Between AY 2016-2017 and AY 2020-2021, the percentage of national male graduates with a BSN remained steady at 13%. The rate of male graduates with a BSN in the NEPQR-VBSN and NEPQR-VNPC programs ranged between 46% and 61%, over four times the national rate.
- The NEPQR-VBSN and NEPQR-VNPC programs successfully encouraged graduates to work in medically underserved communities. Across the study period, NEPQR-VBSN and NEPQR-VNPC graduates who trained in medically underserved communities were over ten times more likely to intend to work in medically underserved communities than graduates who did not train in medically underserved communities. In fact, only graduates that trained in medically underserved communities intended to work in medically underserved communities after graduation.

Who do the VBSN/VNPC programs support?

- Between AY 2016-2017 and AY 2020-2021, the NEPQR-VBSN and NEPQR-VNPC (VBSN/VNPC) programs trained 1,728 veteran and military-affiliated nursing students and graduated 835 nurses, all of which earned Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees. When the VBSN/VNPC programs concluded, 677 nursing students remained actively enrolled in their degree programs and 216 students had left their programs.
- Thirty-three percent of the AY 2016-2021 VBSN/VNPC students identified as underrepresented minorities, 28% came from disadvantaged backgrounds, and 20% came from rural backgrounds.

Figure 1. VBSN/VNPC Veteran Student Trainee Military Affiliation, AY 2016-2021



- Between AY 2016-2017 and AY 2020-2021, 74% of VBSN/VNPC students were retired or discharged veterans.
- Fifteen percent of AY 2016-2021 VBSN/VNPC students were in a military reserve force and 8% were active-duty military.

How are veteran students supported in their academic careers?

- The 38 VBSN/VNPC awardees designed and implemented unique programs, providing support to their veteran students in multiple ways.
- The support offered by the VBSN/VNPC programs allowed veteran students to graduate much faster than the national average. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 47% of students in the United States complete bachelor's degrees within four years and 61% complete within five years¹. Comparatively, 73% of the AY 2016-2021 VBSN/VNPC graduates completed a bachelor's degree within four years.

¹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2021). Digest of Education Statistics. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_326.10.asp.

Table 1. Types of Veteran Student Support offered by VBSN/VNPC Awardees, AY 2016-2021

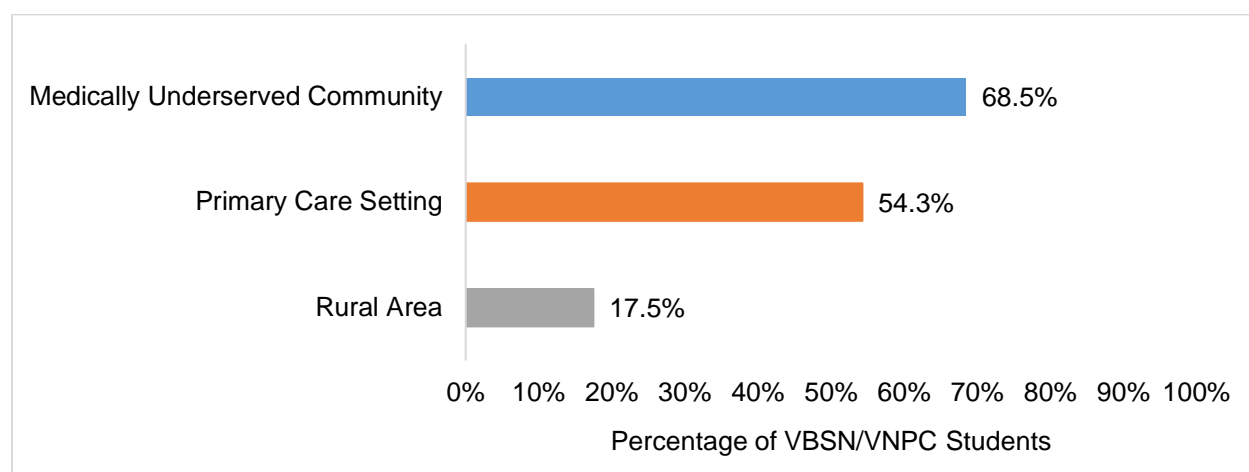
Type of Veteran Student Support	Number of Awardees (N=38)
Academic and Social Support:	35 (92.1%)
Tutoring and mentorship programs	30 (78.9%)
Mental health counseling and social support for transitioning to civilian nursing	21 (55.3%)
Targeted National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) preparation support	13 (34.2%)
Prior Experience Credits:	26 (68.4%)
Military transcript review for prior experience credits	17 (44.7%)
Competency and skills assessment for academic credit	15 (39.5%)
Admissions and Financial Support:	14 (36.8%)
Admissions advocacy and veterans' preference points	8 (21.1%)
Recruiters partnering with Department of Defense and Department of Veterans' Affairs	5 (13.2%)
Tuition discounts and financial stipends	4 (10.5%)

- During AY 2016-2021, approximately 92% of the VBSN/VNPC awardees reported offering academic and social support to their veteran students, including tutoring and mentorship programs (79%), mental health services and support transitioning to civilian nursing (55%), and targeted National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX)-RN preparation support (34%).
- Sixty-eight percent of the VBSN/VNPC awardees reported developing innovative models of awarding academic credit for prior military experience. Models ranged from military transcript review for credit equivalencies (45%) to assessing clinical competencies using simulations (40%).
- During AY 2016-2021, all VBSN/VNPC awardees reported conducting targeted recruitment of veterans into their nursing programs, but approximately 37% also provided additional admissions or financial support to their veteran students, including admissions advocacy and preference for veteran applicants (21%), partnering with Department of Defense and Department of Veterans' Affairs (13%), and tuition discounts and/or stipend support (11%).

How do the VBSN/VNPC programs prepare students to practice in primary care and underserved settings?

- To prepare veteran students to provide quality care upon graduation, VBSN/VNPC awardees provided training on key healthcare topics.
- During AY 2017-2021, the percentage of VBSN/VNPC students receiving training in telehealth more than tripled, from 13% in AY 2017-2018 to 43% in AY 2020-2021.
- The percentage of VBSN/VNPC students receiving training in opioid use disorder treatment grew from 23% in AY 2017-2018 to 44% in AY 2020-2021.
- In addition, VBSN/VNPC awardees partnered with 590 health care delivery sites to provide clinical training experiences in diverse, underserved settings.

Figure 2. Percentage of VBSN/VNPC Students Trained by Setting (N=1,728), AY 2016-2021

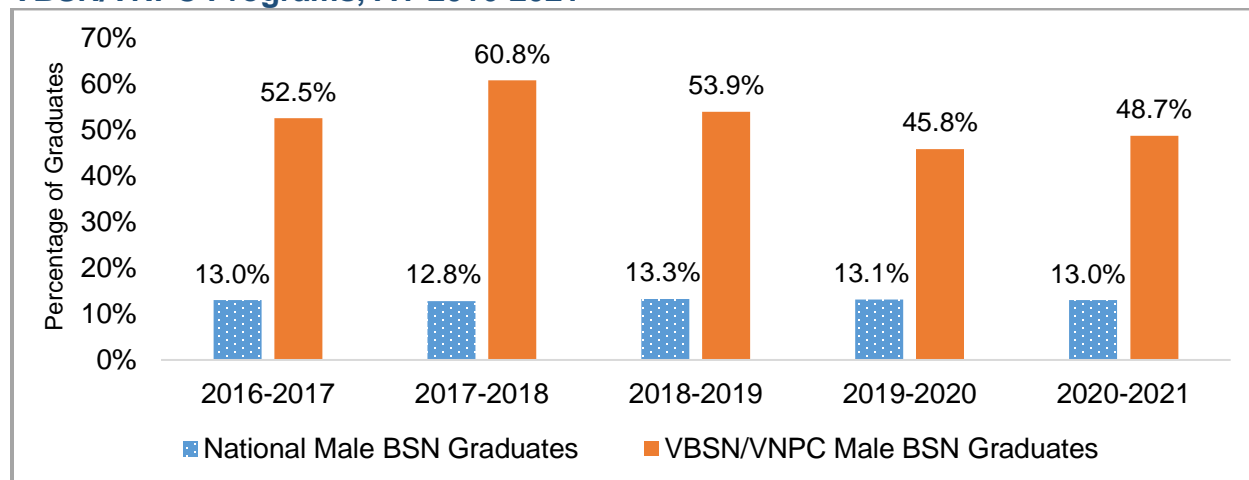


Note: Settings are not mutually exclusive

- During AY 2016-2021, nearly 69% of VBSN/VNPC students trained in a medically underserved community.
- Fifty-four percent of AY 2016-2021 VBSN/VNPC students trained in a primary care setting, and nearly 18% trained in a rural area.

How are the VBSN/VNPC programs diversifying the nursing workforce?

Figure 4. National Male BSN Graduates² and Male BSN Graduates in the VBSN/VNPC Programs, AY 2016-2021



- Between AY 2016-2017 and AY 2020-2021, the percentage of national male graduates with a BSN remained steady around 13%. The rate of male graduates in the VBSN/VNPC programs ranged between 46% and 61%, over four times the national rate, likely reflecting the demographics of the U.S. military which is 83% male³.

What are VBSN/VNPC graduate intentions and employment outcomes?

The VBSN/VNPC programs successfully encouraged graduates to pursue employment in underserved settings⁴:

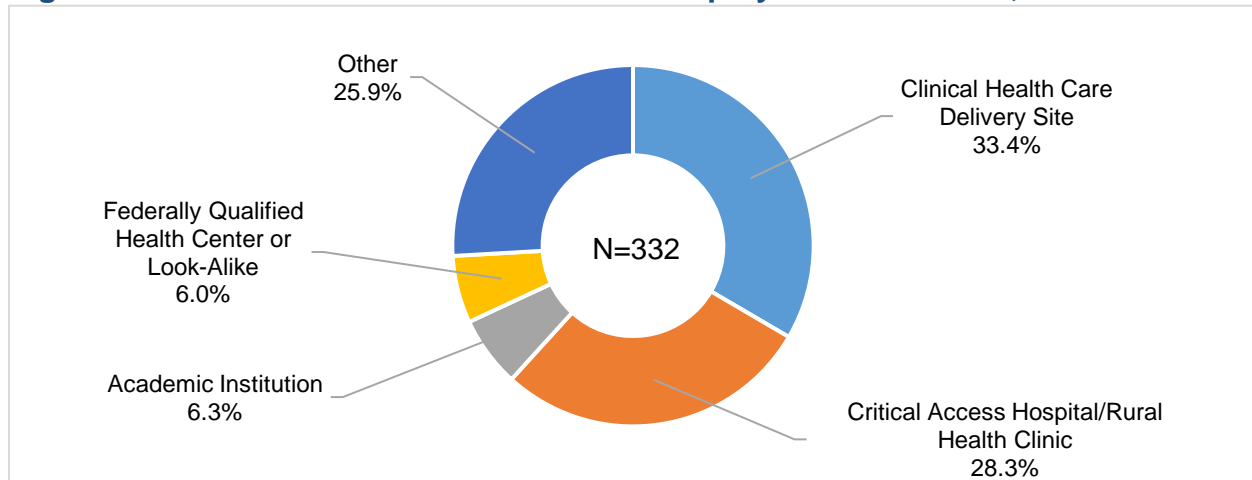
- AY 2016-2021 VBSN/VNPC graduates who trained in a medically underserved setting were over ten times more likely to intend to work in medically underserved communities than graduates who did not train in medically underserved communities. In fact, only graduates that trained in medically underserved communities intended to seek employment in medically underserved communities after graduation.
- AY 2016-2021 VBSN/VNPC graduates who trained in primary care settings were five times more likely to intend to work in primary care settings than graduates who did not train in primary care settings.
- AY 2016-2021 VBSN/VNPC graduates who trained in rural areas were more than twice as likely to intend to work in rural areas than graduates who did not train in rural areas.

² U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016-2021). Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>.

³ U.S. Department of Defense. (2021). 2020 Demographics Profile of the Military Community. Retrieved from <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2020-demographics-report.pdf>.

⁴ All reported odds ratios were significant at $P < 0.05$.

Figure 5. VBSN/VNPC Prior Year Graduate Employment Locations, AY 2016-2021



Note: Other represents graduates who indicated 'None of the Above' for employment location.

- Of the 332 AY 2016-2021 VBSN/VNPC graduates that reported follow-up data one year after graduation, 33% were employed at a clinical health care delivery site. Forty-four percent of those clinical health care delivery sites were in a primary care setting and 40% were in a medically underserved community.
- Twenty-eight percent of the AY 2016-2021 VBSN/VNPC graduates with follow-up data were employed in rural areas in critical access hospitals or rural health clinics.

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