

## Legislative Auditor

# OVERVIEW

## EVALUATION OF JOB SHARING FOR NURSES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH Final Report

Honolulu, Hawaii

December 1989

### Summary

In job sharing, two or more employees share a full-time, permanent position by dividing work responsibilities, salary, and fringe benefits in proportion to their shares of the job. The Legislature introduced this concept to the public sector in a pilot project for teachers and one for librarians in the Department of Education. The success of these efforts led the Legislature in 1986 to establish a similar program for nurses in the Department of Health.

Certain work characteristics suggest that the nursing profession might be suitable for job-sharing. Nearly half of all practicing nurses in Hawaii have dependent children. Nurses work

more than 40 hours per week, much of this time on shift work that can interfere with family life. Hospital nurses average 10 hours of overtime in addition to their 40 hours. Fewer people are preparing for nursing careers. The vacancy rates at many public hospitals, especially those on the neighbor islands, have been critical.

The evaluation found support for job sharing but also for other flexible part-time arrangements. A statewide survey showed that nurses strongly favored greater flexibility in setting work hours. The department has more nurses working in permanent part-time positions than job-sharing arrangements.

### FINDINGS

*Participation in the pilot project was low for several reasons. Job sharing often did not fit into hospital shift work. The 50 percent salary reduction was too high. Uncertainty over the form of the job-sharing arrangement may have discouraged some nurses from participating.*

*In spite of low participation, nurses in the program supported job sharing. The program also resulted in cost savings to the State.*

*Flexibility in setting work hours for nursing positions is of key importance in attracting and retaining nurses. What offers promise in providing this flexibility is permanent part-time work.*

### RECOMMENDATIONS

*Job sharing should be included among a flexible package of employment options tailored to meet the special conditions facing nurses.*

*Permanent part-time options, including job sharing, should be instituted permanently for nurses and other employees.*

*When establishing permanent part-time positions for nurses, the Department of Health should consolidate left-over full-time equivalent positions into new permanent part-time positions that have full benefits and collective bargaining representation.*

### RESPONSE

*The Department of Health agrees with the major findings and recommendations for flexibility in setting work hours for nurses, expansion of the use of permanent part-time employment, and consolidation of left-over parts of positions so as to hire more part-time nurses with full benefits and union representation.*