

Nursing and Advanced Practice Nursing Fields

Overview:

Nursing is a field long recognized for its social usefulness, wide range of career options, and job security. Nurses enable patients to survive not only physically, but emotionally, as they work to protect patients from the risks created by illness and vulnerability. Nurses also assist patients and their family members with recovery, coping, healing, and dying. Options in nursing include direct care, independent practice, specialization, research, public policy, administration, the military, and education. Nursing can also be combined with degrees in public health, administration, and law. The demand for nurses, while always high, will see an increase in the next decade with a million positions to fill.

Academic Requirements:

To become a nurse, a college graduate with a degree in a major other than nursing is best served by pursuing one of two options: an accelerated baccalaureate BSN (12-18 months) or master's degree (2 to 3 years) in nursing. Both degrees enable successful completion of the national registered nurse (RN) licensing examination.

A master's degree in nursing prepares an advanced practice nurse to work as a nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist, certified nurse anesthetist, or certified nurse midwife. (The first master's program for non-nurse college graduates was initiated by Yale University in 1974.)

Descriptions of these four advanced practice nursing fields follow. By 2015 all advanced practice nurses must be prepared at the clinical doctorate, not masters, level.

Beginning Salary:

The average beginning offer for recent BSN graduates was \$51,600.

Advanced Practice Nursing Fields:

- ◇ Clinical Nurse Specialist
- ◇ Nurse Practitioner
- ◇ Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist
- ◇ Certified Nurse Midwife

◇ Clinical Nurse Specialist

Career Description:

Clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) are registered nurses who specialize in a specific field of clinical practice such as community health, critical care, neonatal health, oncology, psychiatric-mental health, and several others. Their primary roles include being a patient advocate, as well as, clinical resource, educator, and consultant for generalist nurses.

Graduation prepares one to take a national examination for certification as a CNS. Clinical nurse specialists work in a variety of settings, such as hospitals, doctors' offices, schools, occupational settings, and independent practices. Certain specialties are more suited to specific locations such as nursing homes, rehabilitative facilities, and maternity centers.

Salary:

Median \$73,350

Resources:

American Nurses Association
National League for Nursing
Peterson's Nursing Programs
Discovernursing.com

◇ Nurse Practitioner

Career Description:

Nurse practitioners (NPs) are registered nurses who provide patient health services to maintain health, prevent illness, or deal with acute or chronic health problems. NPs order and interpret x-rays and laboratory data, prescribe medications, and function without physician collaboration in eighteen states. Like clinical nurse specialists, nurse practitioners also specialize, but by patient category rather than clinical setting. NPs may specialize in areas such as adult health, family health, school health, pediatric health, gerontological health, and women's health. Within each category, responsibilities are similar, but the patients may differ.

NPs take a national exam, which varies by specialty. The most common work settings for nurse practitioners are in hospitals and doctors' offices. Other possibilities include community centers, public health departments, managed-care organizations, schools of nursing, women's health centers, clinics, and government agencies. Frequently they work in underserved urban and rural settings.

Salary:

Median \$74,270

Resources:

American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
American Health Care Association
American Association of Colleges of Nursing

◇ Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist

Career Description:

This specialty, begun in the late 1800s, was the first clinical nursing specialty established. Certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs) administer more than 65% of the anesthetics given to patients each year in the United States. CRNAs are the sole anesthesia provider in nearly 50% of the hospitals where they are employed. Similar to anesthesiologists, CRNAs administer anesthetic agents, provide pre- and post-anesthesia care, acute and chronic pain management, and perform emergency resuscitation.

Graduates of a CRNA program take a national exam to qualify for certification and complete biannual continuing education credits for recertification. Certified registered nurse anesthetists work in every setting in which anesthesia is delivered: traditional hospital surgical suites and obstetrical delivery rooms; dental and medical offices; ambulatory surgical centers; managed-care organizations; and U.S. Military, Public Health Service, and Veterans Administration medical facilities.

Salary:

Median \$127,210

Resources:

American Association of Nurse Anesthetists

◇ Certified Nurse Midwife

Career Description:

Certified nurse midwives (CNMs) are registered nurses with advanced training in midwifery that allows them to provide a range of clinical services for women, including prenatal care, labor and delivery care, neonatal care, family planning, and well-woman care. CNM's collaborate with obstetricians in managing high-risk patients. Other duties include preventive health care, counseling, prescribing medication (most states), conducting clinical research, and teaching.

The established high rate of successful births handled by CNMs has also led to their growing credibility and popularity. American College of Nurse Midwives conducts a national licensing exam in all 50 states. Certified nurse midwives may choose to have a private practice or may be employed in hospitals, independent birthing centers, or clinics. Hours will vary as to place of employment, although CNMs are usually on call and must be available to expectant mothers at all times.

Salary:

Median \$81,530

Resources:

American College of Nurse Midwives
Maternity Center Association

Sources: National Health Council, Nursing Against the Odds, Careers in Nursing,
Your Career in Nursing, salary.com, NACE Salary Survey

Health Careers Program
Cornell Career Services
103 Barnes Hall
career.cornell.edu

career.cornell.edu

University • 103 & 203 Barnes
Agriculture & Life Sciences • 177 Roberts
Architecture, Art, & Planning • B1 W. Sibley

Arts & Sciences • G55 Goldwin Smith
Engineering • 201 Carpenter
Graduate School • 350 Caldwell

Hotel • 180 Statler
Human Ecology • 172 MVR
Industrial & Labor Relations • 201 Ives