

Nursing Profession Resource Guide



for

School Counselors

Acknowledgments

As part of a national movement to encourage youth to consider a career in nursing, *The Resource Guide* provides a variety of current information about the nursing profession in Washington State. It is intended to be a resource for middle school and high school counselors, student and parents. The Washington Center for Nursing thanks the Nursing New York State Action Coalition and the Center for Nursing at the Foundation of NYS Nurses for providing a model template for this publication.

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WHY NURSING?

A nursing career offers many wonderful opportunities

Nursing is a career filled with endless personal and professional rewards. Nurses save lives, provide comfort and reassurance to patients and their families during the most frightening and tragic situations, and share in the joys of birth, recovery and survival. Nurses make a difference in all that they do - it is no wonder they are time and time again considered the **most trusted profession** as cited by the annual Gallup poll on a regular basis. When young men and women choose a career in nursing they are choosing to spend their lives helping others, using skills that blend scientific knowledge with compassion and caring. There are few professions that offer such a rewarding combination of high tech and high touch.



Nursing is a blend of science and technology with the art of caring and compassion. Nursing professionals provide preventative and restorative health care to patients in a variety of settings. Every day on the job nurses use the science they learned in nursing school and take continuing education courses throughout their careers to keep up with the latest in the medical and nursing sciences. Nurses work to promote health, prevent disease, and help patients cope with illnesses. Nursing is a science that requires in-depth knowledge, skills and understanding. Nursing deals not only with a person's biological needs, but their psychosocial, societal and cultural needs as well. Nurses work closely with doctors and other health care professionals, and serve as the advocates for patients and families.

- Registered nurses constitute the **largest health care occupation**, with almost 3 million RNs nationwide.
- There are approximately 69,000 registered nurses (RNs) and 10,000 licensed practical nurses (LPNs) licensed to practice in WA.
- About 50 % of nursing jobs are in the acute care setting (hospitals), while the rest of the jobs are spread out among numerous settings including schools, outpatient and ambulatory care centers, home care, organizations, government, etc.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Nursing is one of the top five professions projected to experience a **19% increase in job growth** through the year 2022. Additionally, as baby boomers retire, [the US BLS predicts a need for at least 525,000 nurses to replace the existing nursing workforce.](#)

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS

School Counselors can be very influential when helping college-bound students select a program of study. Counselors bring a wide range of knowledge and skills to the conversation and can help students identify their own areas of interest, their academic and personal strengths and potential areas of study where they may excel. Suggestions for what Counselors can do to introduce the option of nursing to their students are:

- Suggest nursing as a career option to students who excel or have an aptitude for science and math studies;
- Invite a local nurse or nursing student to speak at a career day; (Please contact the Washington Center for Nursing at info@wcnursing.org to invite a Washington nursing expert.)
- Offer a nursing scholarship or award at graduation;
- Place a display in the school about the variety of employment opportunities with a nursing career;
- Encourage students to apply for nurse camps. Some examples: [University of Washington School of Nursing's week-long day camp](#), the [MultiCare Nurse Camp and](#) the annual [Na-ha-shnee Health Sciences Institute](#), hosted by Washington State University and Eastern Washington University
- Arrange for a high school student to spend a day on a college/university campus with a nursing student;
- Arrange for a high school student to spend a day shadowing a nurse at his or her place of employment;
- Encourage interested students to talk with the school nurse about his/her nursing education and nursing career experience;
- Invite families to career fairs where nursing careers are highlighted
- Provide the resources enclosed in this tool kit to interested or prospective students.

TALKING TO MIDDLE and HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ABOUT CAREERS

Students who are most likely to think about their future careers, and believe that they have a variety of career options, have high self-esteem and are able to understand and evaluate complex career information. They have families that help them learn about career choices and support their efforts, in school and outside, to prepare for a career.

But some adolescents have difficulty seeing a connection between what they learn in school, and how they behave there, and their future careers. Students who are not able to meet with a guidance counselor may not know what they need to do, and which courses they should take, in order to make their plans for the future a reality. As a result, some students who expect to go to college do not take the courses necessary for college enrollment. Unfortunately, poor students are least likely to think about how their middle and high school course choices can limit their career plans later. They may also have less family support because of all the stresses created by poverty.

Unfortunately, many students have already limited their career aspirations by the time they reach middle school, based on false information and beliefs. For example, many boys may have sex-stereotyped views of occupations by the time they reach adolescence. Girls also acquire these views, but at a slightly older age.

- Explore with students how they can successfully live and work in a culturally diverse world.
- Help students recognize their interests, aptitudes, and abilities, and understand adult roles.
- Help students understand the broad scope of work and career possibilities available currently and in the future.
- Help students broaden their aspirations beyond the stereotypes of gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. Encourage students from diverse backgrounds to consider registered nursing.
- Integrate vocational and academic education to promote intellectual development, and the acquisition of higher level think and problem-solving skills.
- Assist with students' development of social skills, personal values, and self-esteem.
- Work with families to support their children's career aspirations.

WHERE DO NURSES WORK?

Nurses practice in a variety of settings and all over the world, including:

- Hospitals
- Clinics
- Schools
- Community Health Centers
- Long-term care for the elderly and/or people with disabilities

- Home health
- Colleges and universities
- The military
- Jails and prisons
- Businesses
- The government

WHAT DO NURSES DO?

Nurses have many responsibilities, such as:

- Performing physical exams and health histories
- Providing health promotion, counseling and education
- Administering medications, wound care, and numerous other personalized interventions
- Interpreting patient information and make critical decisions about needed actions
- Coordinating care, in collaboration with a wide array of healthcare professionals
- Directing and supervising care delivered by other healthcare personnel like LPNs and nurse aides
- Conducting research in support of improved practice and patient outcomes

TYPES OF NURSING PROFESSIONS IN WA

This guide focuses on the following three (3) types of nursing professions in WA State

1. **Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN)**
2. **Registered Professional Nurses (RN)**
3. **Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners (ARNPs)**

LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSING (LPN)

Under the supervision of a registered nurse (RN), advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP), physician (MD), or physician's assistant, LPNs provide some aspects of direct nursing care such as wound care and administering medication. They work in a variety of settings including long term care, outpatient clinics, and hospitals. When delivering some aspects of nursing care, LPNs administer medication and perform treatment. An LPN must pass the NCLEX-PN exam to become licensed in the state of Washington.



Registered Nurse (RN):

A registered nurse manages and provides complex care, promotes health and wellness, educates patients and families, provides care coordination, and collaborates with other members of the health care team in planning, delivering and evaluating care. An RN may supervise other staff including LPNs, nursing assistants, medical assistants, and others. A registered nurse has many career options, including working in a hospital, a family practice clinic, public health, community health and a variety of health-related businesses. Registered nurses must complete an Associate's Degree at a Community College, a Bachelor's Degree, or Master's entry program, and pass the NCLEX-RN exam to be licensed in the state of Washington.



RNs who earn a Master's or a Doctoral degree have roles like:

Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner

RNs with a Master's or Doctoral degree may become Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners (ARNP), which includes any of the following: Nurse Practitioner (NP), Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM), Certified Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA), or Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS). In Washington State, most ARNPs are family nurse practitioners working in a hospital system or health care organization or privately own their practice. Washington is one of 22 states in the US where nurse practitioners can practice independently and without physician oversight. ARNPs make diagnoses and prescribe treatments and medications, and manage their own practice of patients.



Nurse Educator:

Nurses with a Master's or Doctoral degree teach nursing students in community and technical colleges, four year colleges, and universities, conduct research, informatics, health policy, as well as practice nursing.

WHAT NURSES EARN IN WASHINGTON STATE

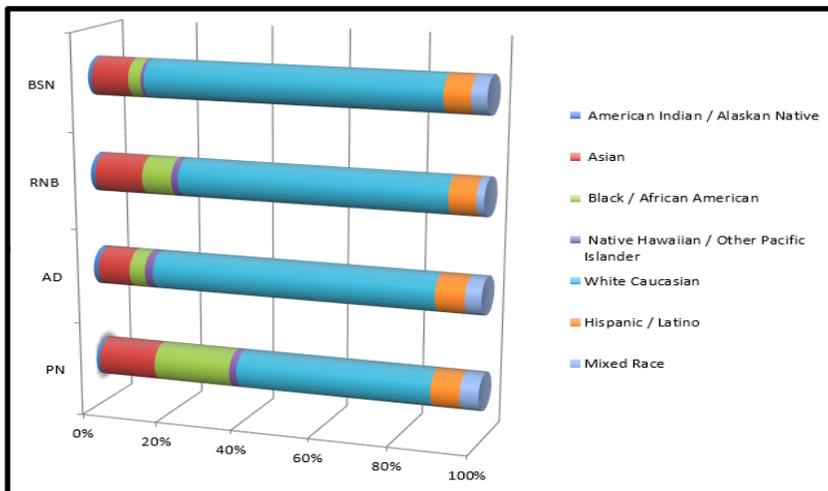
An average RN salary in Washington State is \$67,000. Depending upon the region of the state and the setting in which one works, salaries for RNs can range from \$55,000 to \$92,000.

Nurses who work in hospitals and nursing care facilities usually work in rotating shifts, covering all 24 hours. They may work nights, weekends, and holidays. They may be on call, which means they are on duty and must be available to work on short notice. Nurses who work in offices, schools, and other places that do not provide 24-hour care are more likely to work regular business hours.

Many nurses choose to work part time so they can raise their families or continue for further education.

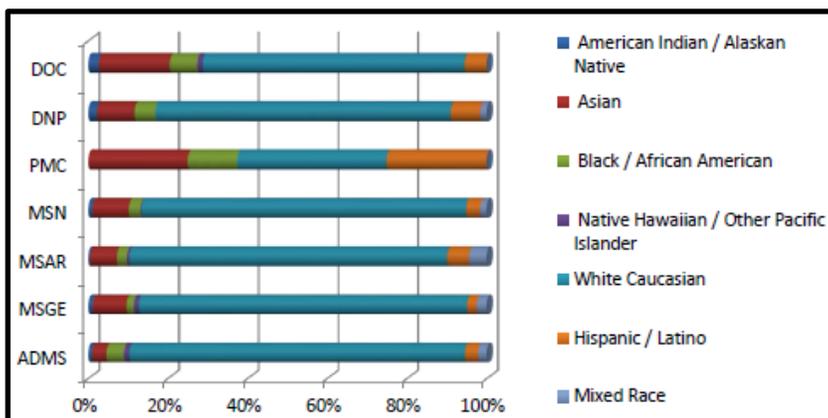
THERE IS A NEED TO INCREASE UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS, INCLUDING MEN, IN NURSING

Washington Undergraduate Nursing Student Race/Ethnicity by Program



Source: Washington State Department of Health Nursing Education Programs 2014 - 2015 Annual School Report

Washington Graduate Nursing Student Race/Ethnicity by Program

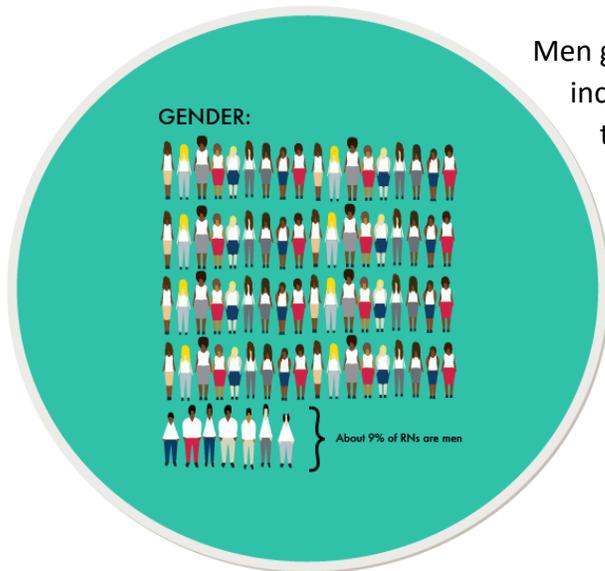


Source: Washington State Department of Health Nursing Education Programs 2014 - 2015 Annual School Report

Students in Washington's practical nurse (LPN) programs were more diverse when compared to other undergraduate nursing programs. Thirty-two percent of students in RN-to-BSN programs and 25% of students

in Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs identified with a community of color. Students in graduate programs are the least diverse group in nursing education.

In WA State, about 11.5% of active nurses are men, which is higher than the national average of 10 %. (The number of men in nursing has steadily increased over the last decade.



Men generally report that their reasons for choosing nursing as a career include helping people, the ability to make meaningful contributions to society, upward career mobility, financial security and flexible scheduling. (<http://aamn.org>)

Many men have chosen nursing as a second career, following military training, or as a response to the recession. Some of the key benefits of choosing nursing as a career include having a stable career with many options for career paths, flexibility in scheduling, excellent benefits, and good salaries.

Sources
1. The US Nursing Workforce: Trends in Supply and Education, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions, National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, April 2013
2. The Registered Nurse Population: Findings from the 2008 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses, US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, September 2010

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traditionally female

of interest for high school boys considering nursing as a career may include detailed information about admissions requirements, internships, scholarships and mentoring programs for men. Key themes to include when discussing nursing as a career for men include: inclusive, non-gender specific details about the work nurses do, stable employment opportunities, high technical and hands on skills, autonomy.

As Washington’s population becomes increasingly diverse, there is a high need for nurses who represent all ethnic groups and other underrepresented populations among registered nurses, advanced registered nurse practitioners, nurse educators, and other nurse leaders.

DISPELLING MYTHS ABOUT NURSING

Nursing school is for people who can’t get into medical school: Certainly not true! While pathways to each profession are similar in relation to the courses taken at the undergraduate level, choosing a career in nursing or medicine is a personal decision. Acceptance to nursing school and medical school are both competitive and require certain aptitudes and academic achievements to be successful.

I am not smart enough to get into nursing school: Nursing school is rigorous and requires many hours of study and discipline to be successful. However, with the proper preparation and course selections during middle and high school, most students can become qualified candidates for acceptance into nursing school.

Nursing is for women only: There are approximately 3 million RNs and 700,000 LPNs in the US, and nearly 10% (370,000) are men.

Male nurses are predominantly homosexual: A person's sexual orientation is irrelevant to being a competent professional nurse and providing quality care. Men should not be dissuaded from considering a career in nursing for fear of being stereotyped in any way.

Female nurses are sex objects, promiscuous, "handmaidens" to physicians, "bedpan pushers", drug addicts or "hell-raisers". Most female (and male) nurses are upstanding, educated professionals who take the privilege of their nursing license seriously. The entertainment industry and media have portrayed nurses in negative ways which has led to a gross misrepresentation of the profession and a misunderstanding by the public.

Can I go directly into a bachelor of science in nursing? Yes. While you can obtain the necessary basic training to apply for licensure as an RN through an accredited associate degree nursing program, the additional knowledge and skills learned at the baccalaureate level better prepares individuals to meet the challenges and requirements of a changing health care delivery system. Recent research has found that better patient outcomes, such as reduced infection rates, shorter hospital stays, and fewer patient falls, are achieved when patients are cared for by nurses with bachelor's degrees. The courses offered at the Bachelor of Science in Nursing level include research & statistics, community health and leadership, to name a few, that enable the new nurse to gain the confidence and attributes needed for competent practice once licensed. All RNs, regardless of their area or setting of practice, lead teams and manage the care of patients and need to work collaborative and collegially with all members of the health care team.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE PROFESSIONAL NURSE

Being licensed as a nurse is a privilege and nurses are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times and abide by the rules and regulations that govern their practice. All nursing practice is performed in accordance with established standards, policies and procedures.

Ethics: Nurses are confronted with ethical issues in their everyday practice and have a code that guides their decision making. The Code of Ethics can be found on the American Nurses Association Website <http://www.nursingworld.org/codeofethics>

Hours of work: This is dependent on the nurse's place of employment. In places where there is 24-hour nursing care, nurses are often assigned to work a shift for a set number of hours, such as an 8-hour shift, 10-hour shift or 12-hour shift. These shifts can involve day, evening or night hours. Some settings also require that nurses work weekends and holidays.

TRENDS TOWARD A BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NURSING

Although there are several pathways to becoming a registered nurse, there is a growing number of employers who seek to hire baccalaureate prepared nurses. BSN prepared nurses are additionally prepared to work in an everchanging health care environment and have broadened career opportunities.

There are also several pathways to the bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) as well.

- One way is to complete a BSN as part of a four- year program at a college or university.
- Another is through the Associate in Nursing Direct Transfer agreement between community and technical colleges and 4 year colleges and universities. In this pathway, students spend three years at a community or technical college completing general education requirements in the first year followed by two years of pre-licensure associate degree nursing education. Graduates with a DTA are then eligible to take the NCLEX-RN exam for licensure and can apply for a fourth year in an RN to BSN completion program. Passing the NCLEX-RN exam would allow RNs to work while completing their RN-to-BSN.
- Some community colleges now offer RN-to-BSN programs in addition to colleges and universities.

Beginning in September of 2017, LPN courses are transferrable to a college or university for students who begin their nursing education as an LPN and want to go on to earn a bachelor's degree in nursing.

NURSING PROGRAMS IN Washington State

The Nursing Commission keeps an updated list of Washington State-approved nursing programs. Visit the website:

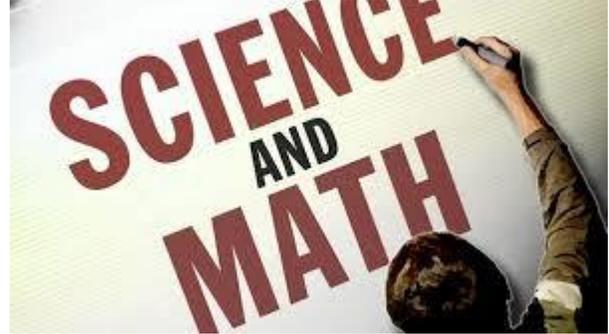
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/NursingCommission/NursingEducation/NursingPrograms/ProgramLists>

TYPICAL COURSEWORK REQUIRED IN A NURSING PROGRAM

Courses taken in nursing school include some general education courses in language arts and math as well as courses in statistics, anatomy/physiology, microbiology, chemistry, psychology, sociology, history, foreign language, humanities, and computer science. In addition, all nursing programs include specialized courses in pharmacology, nutrition, fundamentals of nursing, medical-surgical, pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology, psychiatric/behavioral health. Bachelor level programs provide courses in community health, health policy, nursing theory, and leadership.

NURSING SCHOOL READINESS

When you get to middle school and high school, take math courses, including algebra and geometry. This is important for calculating medication dosages and applying scientific principles. Science classes like biology and chemistry will help you understand how the human body works. Computer classes will teach you to be more comfortable with machines and equipment nurses use.



There are many types of machines. Some dispense medication in the hospital, some help patients breathe when they are unable to do so on their own and some carefully monitor vital organs like the heart and lungs. In addition, there are complex machines and equipment (including robots) that assist the surgical team during delicate procedures. Nurses also use computers every day to communicate with the care team, keep track of how patients are doing and manage a patient's treatment.

Writing and speaking well is important, so potential nursing students should take lots of English and communications classes. These types of classes will give you a head start on your nursing studies in college. Additional classes will focus on the science of nursing, and how to care for families and all types of communities. Nurses learn to work well in a team, so nursing students often work together on assignments. Talk to your counselor about what classes you can start taking now or in the next few years.

Many university nursing programs and large hospitals offer nurse or healthcare camps—look for one in your area. It's a fun experience where you can spend time with nurses and meet lots of other students interested in nursing. You will see firsthand what nurses do every day. It's a great way to explore and imagine yourself as a future nurse.

Look for "Health Explorer" groups in your community, which bring in experts to talk about their profession.

Do you have a relative, family friend or a neighbor who is a nurse? Talk to them about their work. Ask what they enjoy about the job and what they find difficult. They might have some valuable advice! In middle school and high school, talk to your counselor or college advisor about nursing. Together, you can look at a college or university that has a nursing program that works for you.

Go on the Washington Center for Nursing website at www.WCNursing.org to see what you'll be able to do once you become a nurse. Remember, if you're squeamish and don't like blood, that doesn't mean you can't be a nurse. It's such a broad field that you can focus on research or education—and not touch needles—and still make a difference in health care.

For more information about careers in nursing, the Washington Center for Nursing is an excellent resource. If you want to spend your time helping others and making sure people are healthy, nursing should be in your future!

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL COUNCIL LICENSURE EXAM?

A practicing nurse in any state requires you to have license. To obtain a nursing license you need to graduate from an accredited nursing education program and pass an exam called National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX).

What is NCLEX?

The National Council Licensure Examination, also known as the NCLEX exam, is a standardized computerized exam that each state board of nursing uses to determine whether or not a candidate is prepared for entry-level nursing practice. There are two types of National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) – one for registered nurses (RN) and one for practical nurses (PN). These are nationwide examinations for the licensing of nurses in the United States and Canada. Many nursing schools provide preparation classes for the NCLEX and there are also numerous online and hard copy study guides.



What does it do? Why is the NCLEX important to me?

A nursing license gives an individual the permission to practice nursing, granted by the state where he or she met the requirements. To practice as a nurse in any state you must pass the NCLEX examination. You take the NCLEX after you graduate from an accredited nursing program.

For more information about NCLEX visit <https://www.ncsbn.org/index.htm>

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT NURSING VISIT:

Washington State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission:
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/NursingCommission>

Washington Center for Nursing:
www.wcnursing.org

[Check out WCN's video series about becoming a nurse!](#)

Washington State Nurses Association:
www.wsna.org

American Nurses Association
<http://www.nursingworld.org/>