



get on the path to nursing

Is this the job for me?

Take this quick quiz to find out if certified nurse assistant is a good direction for you:

- 1 **Would you like to help people with everyday living activities?**
 YES NO
- 2 **Do you like staying busy and doing a variety of tasks?**
 YES NO
- 3 **Are you good at communicating with others?**
 YES NO
- 4 **Are science classes your favorite?**
 YES NO
- 5 **Do you follow instructions well?**
 YES NO
- 6 **Can you work fast in an emergency?**
 YES NO
- 7 **Want to get into a career in less than a year?**
 YES NO

If you answered yes to several of these questions, you may be on the right track!

What's it all about?

Certified nurse assistants (CNAs) work under the direction of nurses and doctors in hospitals, clinics, home health, assisted living, private homes and doctors' offices. CNAs give personal care to patients, assisting them with everyday activities, like bathing, changing dressings and eating. By helping patients with these important activities, CNAs are improving the quality of life for their patients by making sure they are comfortable and well-treated.

What do CNAs do?

While tasks vary depending on where they work, here's a sampling of the tasks a CNA might be responsible for in a typical day:

- Answer call bells and greet patients.
- Help patients with walking, bathing, dressing, eating, exercising and using the bathroom.
- Prepare food trays and serve meals.
- Record patients' food intake, liquid output and vital signs.
- Give medicines, as directed by supervising nurse or physician.
- Set up and monitor equipment.
- Clean rooms and change beds.
- Meet with nursing staff and read chart notes.
- Observe and report changes in patients' emotions or alertness.
- Speak with family members and other visitors.

- Transport patients by wheelchair or gurney.
- Stock supplies and sterilize equipment.
- Deliver messages, gifts and flowers.
- Explain basic medical instructions to patients and family members.
- Assist with clerical duties, such as filing and making appointments.
- Give encouragement to patients who feel sad or lonely.

How much money can I make?

In Alaska, CNAs earn an average hourly wage of \$14.36, and have an average annual salary of \$29,870.

How do I become a CNA? How long does it take?

To become a CNA, you must:

- Have a high school diploma or GED.
- Complete a training program.
- Complete a certification exam, depending on where you want to work. (Certification is required to work in long-term care and home health settings, and many hospitals and clinics also prefer to hire CNAs who hold certifications.)

CNA training programs, which include a minimum of 60 hours of classroom instruction and 80 hours of supervised clinical practice, are available throughout Alaska at vocational schools, community colleges, some high schools, and at hospitals and other facilities that

employ nursing assistants. Some branches of the military also train people to become CNAs.

Learn more about CNA programs in Alaska by reviewing the “training providers” section later in this publication.

Attention high school students!

Think you want to become a CNA? Well, the time to start planning is now. Review this list of recommended courses to take in high school, then discuss your plans with your parents or school counselor.

- Math and science classes that meet the state’s graduation requirements
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Communication
- Health education
- Introduction to health care
- Medical office
- Certified nursing assisting

Also, check with a teacher or counselor to see what work-based learning opportunities, such as field trips, job shadowing and internships, are available in your community.

Are there jobs available?

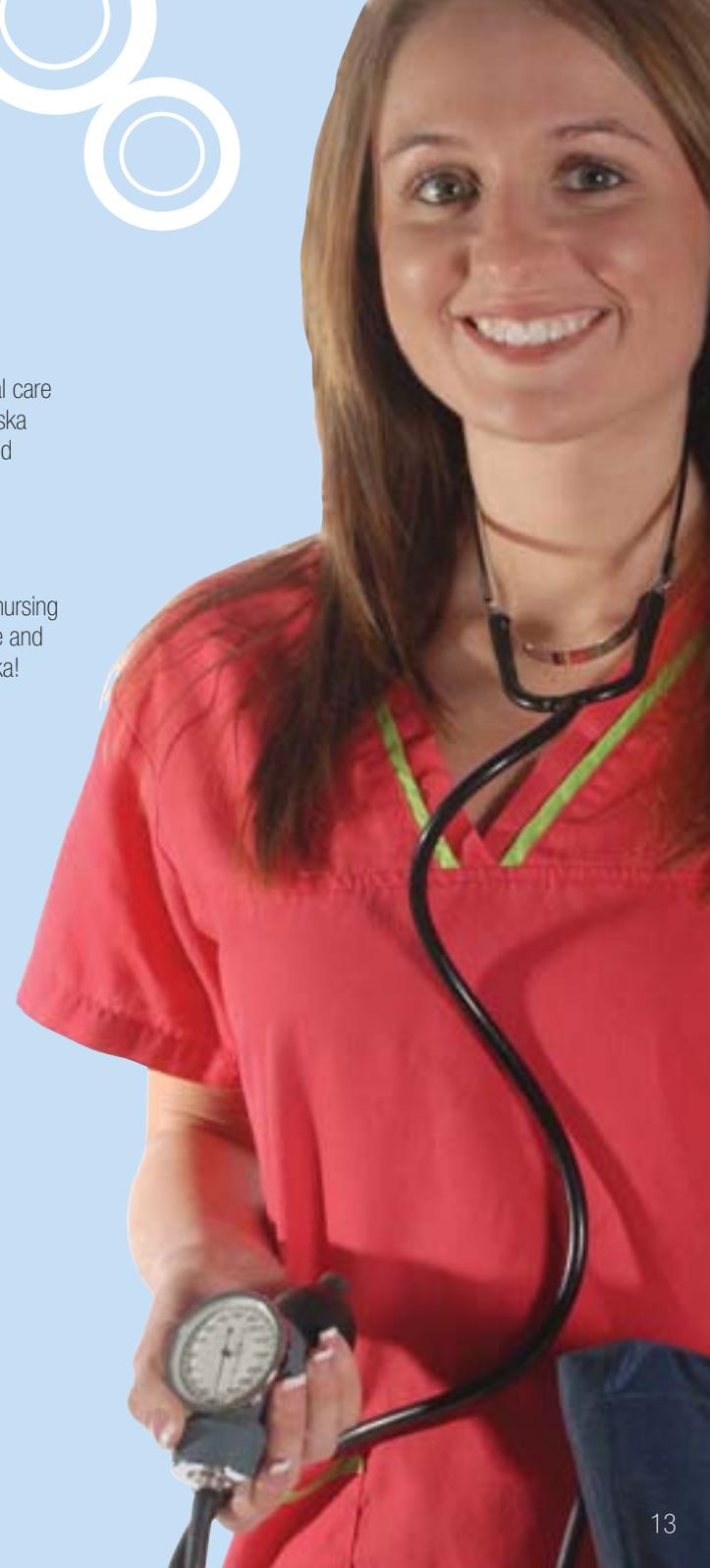
There are currently many jobs for CNAs in Alaska – approximately 80 openings a year – and this occupation is expected to continue to grow quickly (30 percent growth compared to 14.8 percent for all occupations).

Where are the jobs?

In Alaska, major employers include nursing and personal care facilities, hospitals and residential care homes. Rural Alaska employers include regional hospitals, specialty clinics and community-based health care programs.

What else is on this pathway?

Want to learn about other possible opportunities in the nursing career pathway? Be sure to read about registered nurse and critical care nurse – other health care “hot jobs” in Alaska!





rae cunningham

CERTIFIED NURSE ASSISTANT

When Rae Cunningham was in elementary school, her favorite person was the school nurse. So it's no surprise that Rae is now working in the nursing field.

"I've had asthma my entire life and I would have to go see the school nurse almost every day," she said. "Aside from just making me feel better, she listened, gave advice and sincerely cared about me."

Rae, who graduated from Palmer High School in 2004, is currently working as a certified nurse assistant (CNA) at the Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home in Palmer, where she administers medications, helps residents bathe and dress, involves residents in activities, and does anything from helping someone operate their TV to making their bed.

"The most enjoyable part of my job is getting involved in resident activities and holiday celebrations, or just being there to speak up for people," she said. "As someone who works primarily with people, I've noticed an imbalance between direct care staff and those making most of the decisions. I've learned that the best thing I can do is involve myself as much as possible in the decisions that are made every day. I realized that my opinion is valid, as well as valued, and that's when I transitioned from just doing my job to actually making a difference."

Rae originally took a semester-long CNA course during high school. After graduating, she investigated some other career options before deciding to work as a CNA. Since then, Rae decided she wants to become a registered nurse, and is currently taking classes part-time.

"I recently decided that I want to work in geriatrics for a long time. Once I made up my mind, I couldn't wait to get started with classes," she said.

Rae also encourages others to look into the field. "I always like to encourage people to consider nursing as a career – mostly because we will face such an extreme shortage in the future,"

she said. **"If I can inspire people to attain their goals the same way the nurses I've known have inspired me, then I've already become the sort of person I've looked up to."**

