



## get on the path to nursing

### Is this the job for me?

Take this quick quiz to find out if human services worker is a good direction for you:

- 1 Would you like to help people who are seriously ill or injured?  
 YES    NO
- 2 Want to be an advocate for people?  
 YES    NO
- 3 Do you work well in situations that are stressful or emotional?  
 YES    NO
- 4 Are you a good communicator?  
 YES    NO
- 5 Do you like to multi-task?  
 YES    NO
- 6 Are math and science your favorite subjects?  
 YES    NO
- 7 Do you want to get into a specialty nursing job in three to five years?  
 YES    NO

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

### What's it all about?

Critical care nurses (CCNs) are registered nurses (RNs) who have obtained additional training to provide care to patients with life-threatening illnesses or injuries. To do this, CCNs must have in-depth knowledge and experience in assessing and treating patients. Due to the critical condition of their patients, CCNs must also be vigilant in providing continuous monitoring and care.

In addition to providing care, CCNs also work to create an environment that is healing, humane and caring for patients and their families. One of a CCN's primary roles is to be a patient advocate, which means they respect and support the basic values, rights and beliefs of patients who may not be able to speak up for themselves.

### What do CCNs do?

Common responsibilities of a CCN include:

- Observe and monitor patients continuously.
- Administer treatment and medications.
- Ensure that patients obtain necessary care.
- Monitor and safeguard the quality of patient care.
- Act as a patient advocate.
- Help patients or their families make decisions by providing education and support.
- Support decisions made by patients or their families.

- When appropriate, intercede for patients who cannot speak for themselves.
- Act as a liaison between patients, their families and other health care professionals.
- Supervise certified nurse assistants, aides and other nurses.
- Record patients' health histories and symptoms.
- Assist in performing diagnostic tests and analyzing results.
- Provide care instructions to patients and their families.
- Write and manage patient treatment plans.
- Discuss cases with doctors and other medical staff.
- Prepare patients and assist with exams.
- Draw blood and give injections.
- Develop health care policies and procedures.
- Provide evidence-based practice.

### How much money can I make?

Although specific wage information for CCNs in Alaska is not available, RNs in Alaska earn an average hourly wage of \$30.41, and have an average annual salary of \$63,260.

### How do I become a CCN? How long does it take?

To become a CCN, you must:

- Have a high school diploma or GED.
- Complete an approved nursing program to become a registered nurse (RN).
- Pass the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX).
- Obtain specialty instruction and practice in critical care.

Most RN programs offer either an associate's degree, which takes two to three years to complete, or a bachelor's degree, which takes four to five years. To gain the additional knowledge and experience needed to become a CCN, RNs then complete a critical care training course or receive on-the-job training.

While not required, CCNs may also become certified by passing an exam and meeting continuing education and clinical experience requirements.

Learn more about nursing education programs in Alaska by reviewing the "training providers" section later in this publication.

### Attention high school students!

If you think you might want to become a CCN, the time to start planning is now. In general, you should take four years of English, three years of math, three years of social studies, two years of science and possibly two years of a second language. You should also consider taking college preparatory or advanced placement (AP) courses. Other recommended classes and electives include:

- Anatomy and physiology
- Advanced chemistry
- Advanced biology
- Physics
- Pre-calculus
- Probability and statistics
- Computer applications
- Health education

- Introduction to health care
- Safety and first aid
- Certified nursing assisting

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

### Are there jobs available?

Nurses in general are in high demand in Alaska, and there are many opportunities for CCNs specifically. For example, according to a recent vacancy study, there are currently approximately 60 openings for CCNs across the state.

### Where are the jobs?

CCNs are employed wherever there are critically ill patients. In hospitals, CCNs work in intensive care units (ICUs), pediatric ICUs, neonatal ICUs, cardiac care units, cardiac catheter labs, telemetry units, progressive care units, emergency departments and recovery rooms. CCNs also work in home health, managed care organizations, nursing schools, outpatient surgery centers, clinics and flight units.

### What else is on this pathway?

Want to learn about other possible opportunities in the nursing career pathway? Be sure to read about certified nurse assistant and registered nurse — other health care "hot jobs" in Alaska!

