



get on the path to nursing

Is this the job for me?

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

1 Do you want a health care career with lots of options?

YES NO

2 Do you enjoy helping people?

YES NO

3 Do you like to multi-task?

YES NO

4 Are you a good communicator?

YES NO

5 Are math and science your favorite subjects?

YES NO

6 Do you work well under pressure?

YES NO

7 Do you want to get into a career in as little as two to three years?

YES NO

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

What's it all about?

Registered nurses (RNs) have some of the most varied career choices within the health care field. In general, RNs care for people who are ill or injured, and work to promote patients' physical, mental and social well-being. However, they can do this in all kinds of nursing specialties — from emergency care to home health care to administration — and in a wide variety of settings, including hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, nursing homes and patients' homes. RNs can also work in schools, universities, government agencies, and profit and nonprofit organizations.

What do RNs do?

The responsibilities of an RN vary greatly depending on where they work. For example, a hospital nurse may assist in surgery, while a public health nurse may develop health education plans, and a home health nurse may teach patients how to care for themselves at home. RN activities commonly include:

- Record patients' health histories and symptoms.
- Observe and monitor patient status and progress.
- Assist in performing diagnostic tests and analyzing results.
- Administer treatment and medications.
- Provide care instructions to patients and their families.
- Write and manage patient treatment plans.
- Discuss cases with doctors and other medical staff.

- Supervise certified nurse assistants and aides.
- Prepare patients and assist with exams.
- Perform routine laboratory and office work.
- Prepare rooms, and sterilize instruments, equipment and supplies.
- Draw blood and give injections.
- Develop health care policies and procedures.
- Provide evidence-based practice.

With more advanced training, RNs can also give anesthesia, prescribe medication and other treatments, order and interpret tests, be involved in policy-making at local and state levels, actively pursue nursing research, provide care to pregnant women and even deliver babies!

How much money can I make?

In Alaska, RNs earn an average hourly wage of \$30.41, and have an average annual salary of \$63,260.

How do I become an RN? How long does it take?

To become an RN, you must:

- Have a high school diploma.
- Complete an approved nursing program, which includes supervised clinical work experience, typically in hospitals or other medical settings.

- Pass the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX).

Most nurses either earn an associate's degree, which takes two to three years, or a bachelor's degree, which takes four to five years. RNs can also pursue graduate studies in specialty areas, such as community health, mental health, health care administration, surgical nursing, pediatrics and maternal health.

Learn more about RN educational 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 an RN, 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
- Certified nursing assisting
- Safety and first aid

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?

Studies estimate that at least one million new nurses will be needed nationwide by the year 2010! This is because the U.S. population is aging, and many current nurses are planning to retire soon.

In Alaska, there are currently many job opportunities for RNs – approximately 256 openings a year – and this occupation is expected to continue to grow rapidly (31.2 percent growth compared to 14.8 percent for all occupations).

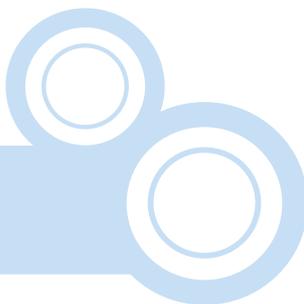
Where are the jobs?

There are diverse RN job openings across the state in community clinics, hospitals, public schools, colleges, universities and many other places. In addition, many nurses travel throughout the state, the country or even the world doing fieldwork or working as temporary staff members in hospitals.

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 critical care nurse – other health care "hot jobs" in Alaska!





andrea moses

FUTURE REGISTERED NURSE

Andrea Moses entered the nursing program at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) after receiving encouragement from a close friend, who was also in the program. Now, she is ready to graduate and begin her career as a registered nurse.

"I have always wanted to be in the medical field as it interests me very much. I have always been a caring person and am happy to help others when I can. Knowing this about myself, and information from a friend, encouraged me to work toward getting my B.S. in nursing – and I am almost finished!" said Andrea, who will graduate with a bachelor of science in nursing and a minor in psychology in August 2008.

Since beginning the five-semester baccalaureate nursing program, Andrea has attended lecture classes, as well as clinical rotations at health care facilities, including Providence Alaska Medical Center, the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) and the Alaska Literacy Program.

"At clinical, we learn the hands-on aspects of nursing, including medication administration, daily care, recording patients' health status, patient teaching and communication skills," Andrea said.

After graduating, Andrea will take the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX), and hopes to get a position at ANMC, where she will most likely work on a medical-surgical floor. She said she is also considering pursuing her master's degree in the future.

Andrea said her favorite aspect of nursing is "knowing how I may be helping someone who may not be able to help themselves, even in the smallest ways. It really shines the light on how much the everyday activities are taken for granted, and one may not realize that until they see it for themselves."

Andrea, who graduated from East Anchorage High School in 2003, said she now finds herself encouraging others to enter the nursing field, just like a friend encouraged her.

"Your hard work will pay off in the end," Andrea advised other potential nursing students. "Don't let anything hold you back from doing what you do!"

