



get on the behavioral health path

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 use your past experiences to help others?

YES NO

2 Would you describe yourself as patient, understanding and caring?

YES NO

3 Are you a good listener?

YES NO

4 Are you able to deal with conflict?

YES NO

5 Are you a problem solver?

YES NO

6 Do you like to plan programs or events?

YES NO

7 Want to get into a career in two to four years?

YES NO

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

What's it all about?

"Human service worker" is a generic term for people who work with individuals, families and entire communities to meet physical, mental and emotional needs, and help people function as effectively as possible. In other words, human services workers help people in need get back on track.

Depending on your level of education, you can hold a diverse range of jobs, including case worker, family support worker, life skills instructor, probation officer, group home worker, drug abuse counselor, youth worker, mental health aide, community outreach worker, residential manager or care coordinator.

Human services workers are employed in a wide range of settings, such as group homes and halfway houses, correctional centers, schools, social service agencies, community assistance programs, nonprofit agencies, mental health and development disability centers, elder, family, child and youth service agencies, and programs dealing with drug abuse, alcoholism, family violence and aging.

What do human services workers do?

The responsibilities of a human services worker vary greatly depending on where they work. Here are a few basic responsibilities performed by human services workers:

- Interview clients and family members to assess their needs.
- Help clients fill out forms, such as tax or rent forms.
- Monitor and maintain case records on clients.
- Review progress with supervisors or medical support personnel.
- Deliver meals or provide transportation.
- Provide job training.
- Advise clients on a variety of topics, such as food stamps, budgeting, housing, communication and conflict resolution.
- Provide information and referrals to community services.
- Assist clients with locating housing, child care and other services.
- Provide emotional support and counseling.
- Work closely with social workers, psychologists and providers of medical care.
- Organize or lead support groups or discussion groups.

How much money can I make?

Wages vary based on the particular job, setting and level of education. To give you an idea of what you can earn, entry-level social and human services assistants in Alaska earn an average hourly wage of \$14.88, and have an average annual salary of \$30,950.

How do I become a human services worker? How long does it take?

The wide range of jobs that fall under the title “human services worker” mean there is a wide range of training options and education requirements. In general, to become a human services worker, you must:

- Have a high school diploma or GED.
- Complete a two-year associate’s degree (to be a paraprofessional) or a four-year bachelor’s degree (to be a professional).

You may also continue your education and advance your career by pursuing a graduate degree.

Learn more about educational programs in Alaska that can prepare you for a job in human services by reviewing the “training providers” section later in this publication.

Attention high school students!

If you think you might want to become a human services worker, 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:

- Computer applications
- Ethnic and gender studies
- Keyboarding
- Legal system
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Advanced English composition
- Advanced U.S. history
- Political science
- Economics

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?

In Alaska, there are currently many job opportunities for human services workers. For example, there are approximately 48 openings a year for social and human service assistants, which is just one of many human services jobs available, and this occupation is expected to continue to grow quickly (34.6 percent growth compared to 14.8 percent for all occupations). When you look at all the jobs categorized under “human services worker,” the number of opportunities is even higher!

Where are the jobs?

Human service workers are found in diverse settings such as group homes, correctional facilities, community mental health centers, social services agencies, and job training programs. In rural Alaska, employment opportunities include regional health corporations and federal, state and local governmental agencies.

What else is on this pathway?

Want to learn about other possible opportunities in the behavioral health career pathway? Be sure to read about case managers/care coordinators and social workers – other behavioral health “hot jobs” in Alaska!



CASE MANAGER/CARE COORDINATOR



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Is this the job for me?

Take this quick quiz to find out if case manager/care coordinator is a good direction for you:

- 1 **Want to learn about medical conditions and treatments, as well as health care resources and services?**
 YES NO
- 2 **Do you like to help others solve problems?**
 YES NO
- 3 **Do you like to network with others?**
 YES NO
- 4 **Do you work well with a wide variety of people?**
 YES NO
- 5 **Do you like to collaborate?**
 YES NO
- 6 **Are you a good listener?**
 YES NO
- 7 **Do you want to get into a career in about four years?**
 YES NO

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

What's it all about?

Case managers, who are also often called care coordinators, help patients and their families determine their individual needs, develop a plan to meet those needs, and then gain access to appropriate health care. They also monitor a patient's care to ensure it is safe, effective, cost-efficient and timely.

Case managers/care coordinators often work with a wide variety of patients, including children, youth, seniors, people experiencing disabilities, or those with drug or alcohol addictions. To be successful in their jobs, case managers/care coordinators must have a strong background in medical conditions and treatments, as well as an in-depth understanding of available resources and services.

What do case managers/care coordinators do?

The responsibilities of case managers/care coordinators vary greatly, depending on where they work. For example, in an insurance company, a case manager/care coordinator may validate a patient's eligibility for benefits, while in a hospital, they may help a patient prepare for discharge. In general, here are some common responsibilities of a case manager/care coordinator:

- Evaluate patients to assess and identify their individual needs.
- Develop and implement a plan of care to meet patients' goals.
- Explore options and available services. Identify service providers.

- Determine eligibility for programs.
- Provide referrals, resources and patient education.
- Evaluate plan of care and revise, as needed.
- Work closely with patients, family members and other health care providers.
- Maintain accurate records about treatments, goals and progress.
- Communicate with payers, such as Medicaid or insurance companies.
- Monitor care to avoid duplication of tests and services.
- Arrange visits to health care providers.
- Organize home nursing, therapy services and respite care.
- Handle prescription refills.
- Help patients gain access to transportation, equipment and supplies, financial assistance programs or other appropriate services.
- Provide tools, such as binders or forms, to help patients and their families organize and track medical information.

How much money can I make?

Wages for case managers/care coordinators vary based on the particular job, setting and level of education, and specific wage information for this occupation is not available. To give you an idea of what you can earn, managers in Alaska earn an average hourly wage of \$31.63, and have an average annual salary of \$65,790.40.

How do I become a case manager/care coordinator? How long does it take?

Educational requirements for case managers/care coordinators vary depending on the particular job. In general, you must:

- Have a high school diploma or GED.
- Complete either an associate's degree, bachelor's degree or higher.
- May take an exam to become certified in case management.

Case managers/care coordinators often earn degrees in the areas of counseling or social work, although some have completed registered nursing programs. Length of education depends on the specific degree. Typically, associate's degrees take two years to complete and bachelor's degrees take about four years.

Learn more about education programs in Alaska that can prepare you to become a case manager/care coordinator by reviewing the "training providers" section later in this publication.

Attention high school students!

If you think you might want to become a case manager/care coordinator, 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:

- Computer applications
- Keyboarding
- Ethnic and gender studies
- Legal system
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Political science
- Economics
- Anthropology
- Anatomy and physiology
- Health education
- Introduction to health care
- 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?

A recent vacancy study estimated there are currently more than 160 job openings for case managers/care coordinators in Alaska, making it one of the state's health care "hot jobs."

Where are the jobs?

Case managers/care coordinators work in nearly all areas of health care, including insurance companies, home health agencies, hospitals, nursing homes, schools, social service and public health agencies, or government programs.

What else is on this pathway?

Want to learn about other possible opportunities in the behavioral health career pathway? Be sure to read about human service workers and social workers – other behavioral health "hot jobs" in Alaska!





get on the behavioral health path

Is this the job for me?

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

- 1 Do you like to teach and assist people in finding solutions?
 YES NO
- 2 Do you enjoy planning events or programs?
 YES NO
- 3 Are you able to deal with conflict?
 YES NO
- 4 Are you a good communicator?
 YES NO
- 5 Do you like to figure out problems?
 YES NO
- 6 Do you consider yourself independent?
 YES NO
- 7 Do you want to get into a career in about four years?
 YES NO

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

What's it all about?

Social work is often called the "helping profession." Social workers interact with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities to help them meet their basic needs, deal with emotional, financial, social and health problems, and improve their overall quality of life.

Many times, social workers specialize in working with certain types of clients, such as families, patients, children, the elderly, people with mental illness, or people dealing with drug and alcohol abuse problems.

Social workers can fill a wide variety of roles, such as counselor, child protection worker, case manager, advocate, policy analyst, probation officer or street outreach coordinator. Social workers are found in a wide variety of settings, including schools, hospitals, child welfare agencies, public agencies, clinics, private practice, substance abuse centers, prisons, juvenile correctional homes and mental health clinics.

What do social workers do?

Depending on their area of specialty, social workers have a great variety of tasks and responsibilities. For example, social workers who work with families may teach parenting skills; medical social workers may lead support groups; child welfare social workers may investigate reports of child abuse; and school social workers may help students with problems like misbehavior and teen pregnancy. While there are a variety of tasks, here are some common

responsibilities of a social worker:

- Interview clients and family members to determine needs.
- Collect information from school records, medical tests or employment records.
- Arrange for medical or psychiatric tests.
- Prepare treatment plans for clients.
- Counsel clients and family members.
- Monitor progress toward the goals set in the treatment plans.
- Modify treatment plans, if necessary.
- Refer clients or family members to community services.
- Maintain case records and write reports.
- Lead support groups for clients and family members.
- Manage programs in the community.
- Consult with other health professionals.
- Supervise social and human services assistants.
- Conduct social research.

How much money can I make?

In Alaska, social workers earn an average hourly wage of \$17.53, and have an average annual salary of \$36,460.

How do I become a social worker? How long does it take?

To become a social worker, you need to:

- Have a high school diploma or GED.
- Graduate with at least a bachelor's of social work degree.
- Obtain a license.
- Pass an exam.

A typical bachelor's degree program takes four years to complete. Many social workers go on to earn a master's degree in social work; graduate programs usually take one to three years after you finish your bachelor's degree. It's important to note that your bachelor's degree doesn't need to be in social work to pursue a master's degree in social work. Social workers who want to take their education even further may pursue a doctorate in social work; this allows you to teach at the college level.

Learn more about social work 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 social worker, 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:

- Anthropology
- Computer applications
- Ethnic and gender studies
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Advanced English composition
- Political science
- Economics

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?

In Alaska, there are job opportunities for social workers – approximately 65 openings a year – and this occupation is expected to continue to grow (26.8 percent growth compared to 14.8 percent for all occupations).

Where are the jobs?

About 40 percent of social workers work for public agencies. In Alaska, social workers find employment at state and local government agencies, social service agencies, schools, colleges, universities, outpatient care centers, child welfare agencies, mental health clinics, family agencies, youth programs, health services agencies and Native corporations.

What else is on this pathway?

Want to learn about other possible opportunities in the behavioral health career pathway? Be sure to read about human services workers and case managers/care coordinators – other behavioral health "hot jobs" in Alaska!



CERTIFIED NURSE ASSISTANT



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?

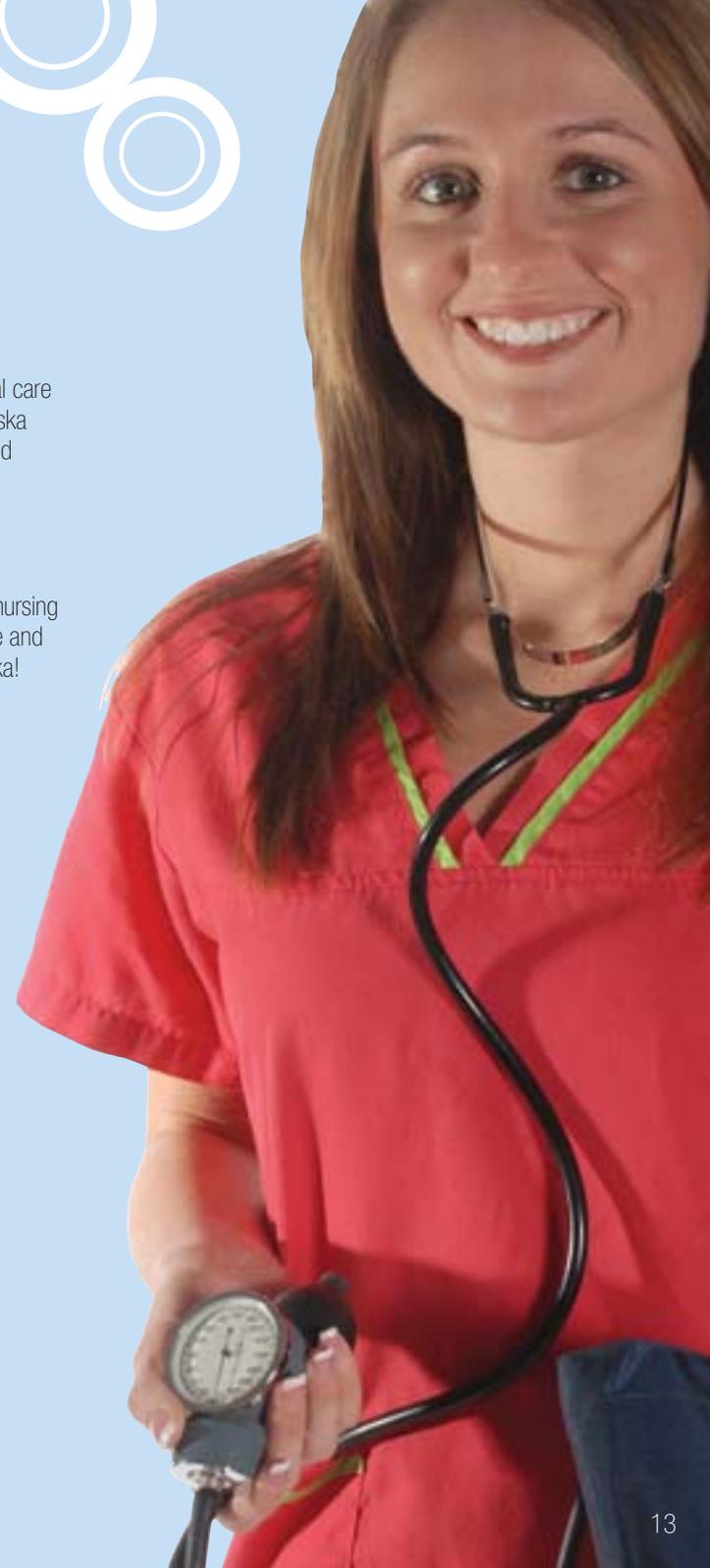
There are currently many jobs for CNAs in Alaska – approximately 80 openings a year – and this occupation is expected to continue to grow quickly (30 percent growth compared to 14.8 percent for all occupations).

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."**





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).

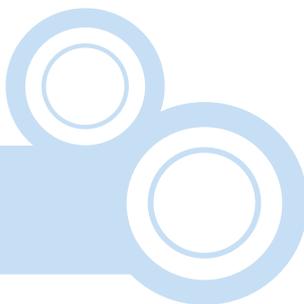
Where are the jobs?

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!"







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
- 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?

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!

