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Jobseeking 101:

A **Nurse's** How-To Guide



It's a great time to make your move

There's already a shortage of nurses in the US and between now and 2024 the demand for RNs will expand dramatically. The health needs of aging Baby Boomers are exploding. Legions of Baby Boomer nurses are retiring. Job growth in hospitals and ambulatory services continues to grow. Affordable Care Act mandates are pushing American health care into its so-called "second curve" – from volume-based to value-based – and creating fascinating nursing careers that never existed before. More than half the country's nurses are looking for a new job or other advancement opportunities.¹ So get started. Turn the page and open the next chapter of your life.



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Jobs of the future... right now ²



Population Health Analyst:

Help individuals and families live healthier lives, and educate communities about health-related issues.³



Community Health Navigator:

Work in hospitals and health systems, public health agencies, and community organizations to identify and address local health needs.⁴



Transition Coach:

Assess, plan, monitor and evaluate the transition of patients from more acute to lower levels of care to assure continuity and reduce re-admissions.⁵



Care Coordinator:

Manage patient transitions along the care continuum and aim to increase patient satisfaction and avoid hospital readmissions.⁶



Nursing Informatics:

Implement technology to improve care and manage all information related to delivery of care and nursing processes.⁷

What color is your uniform?

Do a personal work up

With apologies to Dick Bolles, the author of “What Color is Your Parachute,” the most popular job-seeking manual of all-time, your job search starts with you. Who are you? What do you love to do?

» **How can the upheaval in health care lead to a job that enriches the skills you most value in yourself?**

The point is not to land a job, but to sail out toward a new adventure. And only you have the map.⁸

Rank the attributes you like most in yourself

How do you work most effectively and enjoyably? How do your answers fit with the parts of nursing you most enjoy?⁹

CHECK OUT OTHER [RESOURCES](#) AT THE BACK OF THIS BOOKLET FOR MORE GUIDANCE AND TIPS.



Getting more education & training

And paying for it

The focus on education/training:

During the Recession highly experienced travel and part-time nurses moved to full-time in such great numbers that the need for nurse residencies and internships in hospitals dropped and in many hospitals disappeared.¹⁰ That time has passed.

Now those mature nurses are retiring, often replaced by RNs with 1-3 years of experience. Hospital-based training and hospital-subsidized formal education is back.¹¹



In 2010 the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released its landmark report, “The Future of Nursing.”¹² In it, the IOM recommended that nurses “achieve higher levels of education and training” and a “seamless academic progression.”¹² As a result of that recommendation and to maintain competitive advantage²⁷, hospitals are investing, sometimes heavily, in nursing residency and mentoring programs, providing grants for nursing education, and even negotiating tuition discounts with local colleges.¹⁰

Masters of Science in Nursing

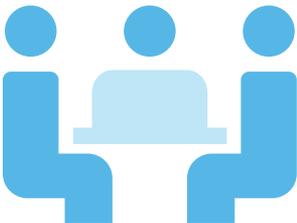
Cost of an MSN: Among the top MSN nursing school programs ranked by U.S. News & World Report in 2016, the per-credit costs ranged from \$1495 per credit at one private school to \$476 per credit at an in-state public school.¹³

The highest-ranked MSN online nursing schools range from \$1568 per credit to only \$50.¹⁴ Usually these programs combine online classes with on-campus intensives and allow you to continue working at your medical facility while matriculating elsewhere.

Paying for it: If you’re already employed by a hospital, hospital system, or other healthcare facility, your employer will often help you pay for your advanced degree while you work. Loan repayment and tuition reimbursement programs work that way.

With “Grow Your Own Nursing Programs” healthcare facilities pay for almost all of your academic expenses at a local nursing school if you sign a contract to work at the facility for a specified number of years.¹⁵

Finally, if you like working at your hospital, make sure it will have an acceptable slot for you once you spend the money and time to qualify for your preferred specialty area.



Where hospitals are hiring... And what nursing skills they need.

Where the jobs are:

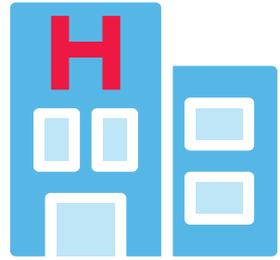
Hospitals in these states need RNs the most:¹

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. Nevada | 6. Washington |
| 2. Arizona | 7. New Mexico |
| 3. Alaska | 8. Georgia |
| 4. Colorado | 9. Texas |
| 5. Oklahoma | 10. Virginia |



RN skills hospitals need:

Top Ten RN specialities most in demand:²



1. Pediatrics



6. Emergency Room



2. Critical Care



7. Quality Assurance (QA)



3. Geriatrics



8. Bilingual



4. Patient Electronic
Medical Record (EMR)



9. Labor and Delivery



5. Behavioral Health

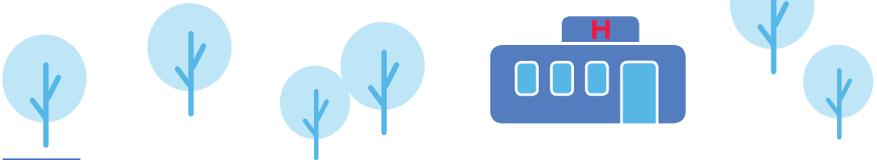


10. Hemodialysis

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Where hospitals are hiring...And what nursing skills they need. CONTINUED

Urban v. Rural

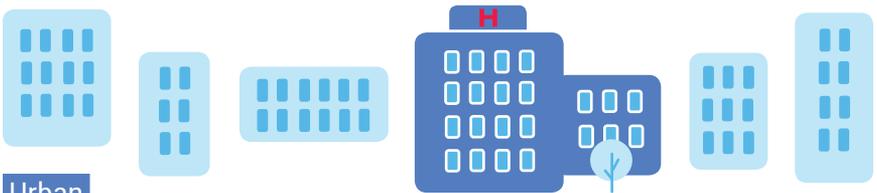


Rural

Nurses in rural areas develop a broad base of skills because smaller hospitals need them to take on several roles. You learn much about many specialties but often not enough to specialize. You may not have proper support if other nurses retire or resign and can't be replaced. It may be difficult to move to another career path within nursing without moving your residence. But due to the upsurge in quality online education, access to education is no longer an issue.²⁷ You can expect lower salaries than in urban areas and fewer opportunities to further your education, though shrinking Title VIII funding can provide tuition reimbursement for new grads working in rural communities.

What is Title VIII Funding?

Title VIII expands funding for nurse education to prepare RNs to provide care in rural areas and other vulnerable populations across the country.¹⁶



Urban

Urban nursing offers many and varied work and lifestyle opportunities, and that's why it can be highly competitive. National data shows that an average of 14 nurses apply for every open position.¹⁷ Working at teaching hospitals may have great cache but you may have to get in line behind medical students, residents, and fellows to gain practical experience.¹⁰



Where to Begin

Using your personal network:



Nearly half of all nurses use the connections of family and friends to find a new job.¹⁸ Nearly three in ten found that the most effective route to new opportunities is maintaining contact with your former colleagues.¹⁸ Other effective face-to-face job search strategies include membership in professional associations and making new contacts at conferences and seminars. Consider joining a professional association or society that aligns with your specialty. Employers seek out these associations to find high quality skills and top talent in varying specialties.

LinkedIn:



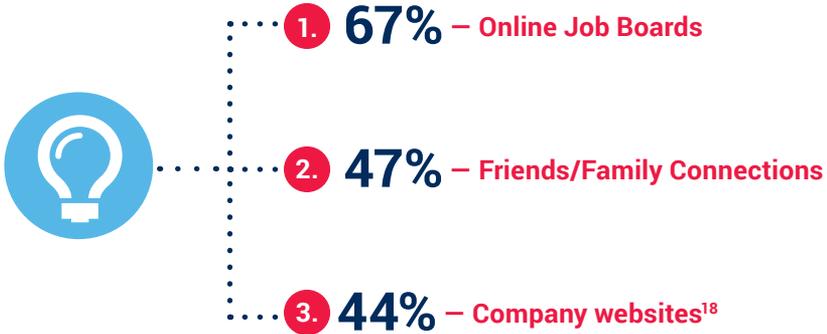
Social media tries to lure customers with friends, pins, and tweets, but by far nurses have put their money on LinkedIn. Surveys show that it is the most effective and most used by all health care job seekers.¹⁹ At the same time, 30% of those searching for work in health care report that “leveraging social media” to find a job is their biggest challenge.¹⁹

The Premium LinkedIn accounts, which cost \$30 a month, allow you to send an InMail message to anyone in the LinkedIn community.²⁰ You can also see who has viewed your profile, how they got there, and get back to them to see if they’re interested in you.

Whether you use the free LinkedIn version or one of its premium accounts, you can join up to 50 groups. If you’re unsure of which groups to join, consider more than 300 top professional associations and societies that are part of the [National Healthcare Career Network](#).²¹ Once you’ve joined your groups, use them to make contacts and question your new digital pals about job prospects. Then reach out to the hospitals.

Some hospital recruiters may even contact you. They’re scouring LinkedIn too and some use it to fill staff slots.

Where we search for jobs



» There's a trick to using job boards most effectively. You will get a much better response to your resume and profile if you fill in your entire profile, include job-specific keywords, and provide contact information. Find more tips in the [Jobseeker Resource section of our site](#).



With **2 out of 3** healthcare professionals using an online job board to find jobs, you should too. Create an account on [HealthCareerCenter.com](#) to access thousands of job opportunities from high-quality employers.





Assessing the job opportunity

HOW TO BIOPSY AN EMPLOYER

Salary:



Check the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for average nursing salaries by state. Salary.com or PayScale.com offer up-to-date average salaries for each nursing specialty and city. Salaries vary widely based on specialty, experience, location and hospital. If you don't have friends at your target hospital, check Glassdoor.com for salary information and search LinkedIn to find nurses in your specialty who once worked at your target hospital and ask them for the salary range. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the average RN earned \$66,640 annually in 2014.²² The average nurse practitioner earned \$95,350.²³

Benefits



Health insurance, vacation, sick days, retirement: Use the investigative techniques noted above. Check Salary.com to find elements of average benefit packages and their share of your total compensation package by city or zip code.²⁴

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Assessing the job opportunity CONTINUED

Training: New nursing grads considering a medical/surgical position should look for initial training programs of at least three months. That's the hallmark of a good program.¹⁰ More tenured nurses searching for specialty jobs should look for an extensive orientation program and mentoring packages.²⁷ Work your contacts to determine if your target hospital has a real commitment to training. Sometimes training programs can shrink as a result of filled employment quotas or tightened budgets.¹⁰



Flexible hours: One of the great benefits of nursing is that “full time” can mean three 12-hour shifts a week. The traditional work week of five eight-hour shifts is going the way of paper charts, except for OR nurses.¹⁰ You'll want your prospective employer to offer three 12s in a row to maximize your free time. And if the only grouped 12s available include weekends, expect a financial incentive.¹⁰ Also, discover if or how often your schedule will change. Nurses want and need predictability.¹⁰



The Culture: For some employers “weekend casual” is a sweatshirt. For others it's dress slacks and a collared blouse or shirt. Some employers really want to hear your suggestions. Others may consider your suggestions a distraction. The biggest issue for you may not be whether you can do the job, but whether you fit into the culture.²⁸



Use your network to take the pulse of your prospective hospital. Does its beat match yours?



Contacting your prospective employer

THE RESUME:

If it's relevant, put it down:

If you managed a Walmart store before getting your nursing degree, that's management experience. Put it down. If you waited tables for four years to pay for your degree you know about hospitality and the customer experience – an increasingly important trait for recruiters. Put it down. If you are in the military reserves you likely are dependable, ethical, and honorable. Put it down. Language skills are golden in this age of increasing diversity; if you speak any languages other than English, absolutely put it down.

Make each word count. Nursing recruiters will give your resume as little as 30 seconds before deciding if it makes the first cut.²⁷

But not everything:

Travel nurses shouldn't fill their resume with a log of their tasks and assignments. Instead, note the agency you worked for, the number of years, and your general experience. Focus on what you achieved.

THE COVER LETTER:

Write a cover letter:

Recent studies have shown that nearly a third of job-seeking nurses submit their resumes without a cover letter. That's a sentinel event in a nurse's job search. The cover letter is essential because it allows you another opportunity to connect your strengths with the employer's needs.

Study the hospital's mission statement:

Explain how it resonates with you and how it merges with your own vision of a new health care world.

Don't quote Clara Barton:

This particularly pertains to new grads. Clara is an inspiration to us all, but recruiters want to read statements from YOU.

Write formally:

Your audience is hospital managers. Don't write like you're texting. You are a professional.

Learn to brag:

Nurses lead lives of service. They're not inclined to use the word "I". But don't be bashful about noting your biggest achievements with pride.

Sweat the details:

Nursing recruiters know that you are applying for a job within a highly detail-oriented profession. Your cover letter must reflect your personal attention to detail. Verify the correct spelling of names and hospitals. Double-check grammar and punctuation – recruiters want to see if you can write accurate, understandable charts.²⁸ Use spell check.

THE INTERVIEW:

The interview panel:

When you get to the interview stage you probably won't sit down with a single recruiter but instead a panel of two-to-six nursing managers and staff. The panel includes staff nurses because if they have a role in hiring you they'll have a vested interest in supporting you on the floor. They're your future colleagues and friends.

Questions and answers:

The interview is a conversation. Answer their questions in a way that highlights the research you've done on their institution. Project confidence, energy and interest. Ask the staff nurses how long they've been at the hospital, what keeps them there, and any of your unanswered questions about training and continuing education opportunities.





Guard your digital reputation. Social media allows strangers to see into your personal life. It's possible that some recruiters could dissect that information and factor it into their hiring decisions.²⁹

Negotiating your salary²⁵

Mano a mano with 'the man'

Know your strengths. Be comfortable explaining your skills and achievements. Assess what benefits you bring to your prospective employer.

Back it up. Prove your abilities by pointing to demonstrable results you've achieved.

Know your prospective employer. See "Assessing the job opportunity" on page 9.

Be confident throughout. They want to hear energy and interest when you speak. And be sure your body language also makes a positive statement.

Practice in front of a mirror or role-play with others.

Let the employer introduce the 'S' word.²⁶ You want the employer to make the first salary offer. They won't go lower and they may well go higher. If they push you to make the first offer, give a range.

Weigh the whole compensation package. Salary is one piece of the compensation pie chart. Consider vacation, flex time options and medical benefits when you assess their offer.

If they won't budge, you have two options: **1)** ask for alternatives like a better title or your first "annual" review in six months; or, **2)** take your stethoscope and go elsewhere. When the salary and benefits aren't acceptable, neither is the job.

About this booklet



As part of the American Hospital Association, we have a unique portal into the hiring practices and policies of the nation's hospitals, where most of the country's nurses work. In this, our first how-to guide for nursing jobseekers, we're sharing some of those insights in hopes that they will inspire both veteran nurses and new grads to reach for the career they've always wanted.

Resources

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- American Nurses Association
- National League of Nursing
- National Student Nurses Association
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing
- American Organization of Nurse Executives
- National Healthcare Career Network
- Discover Nursing (Johnson & Johnson)



Interviewees

Theresa Mazzaro, RN, BA, CHCR

Communications Director

National Association of Health Care Recruitment

In addition to her role with the NAHCR, Mazzaro is the nurse recruiter for Adventist Health Care in Gaithersburg, MD. She hires new nursing school graduates and operates its residency program.

Previously, she held the top nurse recruiting position at PeaceHealthCare in the Portland (OR) Metro area. The system includes nearly 16,000 employees at nine rural and urban hospitals.

Lisa Capozzi

Talent Acquisition & Social Media Specialist

Cook County (IL) Health & Hospitals System

Capozzi works with both on- and off-line media to recruit all staff members for one of the largest public health systems in the country. The approximately 6,000 employees at CCHHS annually treat more than 300,000 people in over one million patient visits.

Dana Smith

Senior Recruiter,

Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, FL

For the last six years Smith has served as a recruiter with Mayo Clinic and most recently in a senior recruiter role. She exclusively hires nurses and their support staff. Smith recruits new grads and veterans in all specialties for both ambulatory clinic practices and in-hospital.

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About Us

Health Career Center is brought to you by the American Hospital Association to connect health care employers and top talent in all disciplines through its online job board network.

Employers:

Broaden your job posting reach through a gateway to 2.7 million members of more than 300 prestigious health care professional associations and societies.

Health care professionals:

Access thousands of job opportunities from high-quality employers and benefit from career development tools and resources.

CONTACT US AT careercenter@aha.org or 800.242.4677.