



Human development
PROGRAM

NURSE PRACTITIONER/SPECIALIST

JOB DESCRIPTION

RNs who choose to become advanced practice nurses are often considered primary health care practitioners and work independently or in collaboration with physicians. For example, *clinical nurse specialists* provide direct patient care and expert consultations in one of many nursing specialties. *Nurse anesthetists* administer anesthesia, monitor patient's vital signs during surgery, and provide post-anesthesia care. *Nurse midwives* provide primary care to women, including gynecological exams, family planning advice, prenatal care, assistance in labor and delivery, and neonatal care. *Nurse practitioners* provide basic preventive health care to patients, and increasingly serve as primary and specialty care providers in mainly medically underserved areas. The most common areas of specialty for nurse practitioners are family practice, adult practice, women's health, pediatrics, acute care, and gerontology; however, there are many other specialties. In most States, advanced practice nurses can prescribe medications.

EXPERIENCE & SKILLS

Nurses should be caring, sympathetic, responsible, and detail oriented. They must be able to direct or supervise others, correctly assess patients' conditions, and determine when consultation is required. They need emotional stability to cope with human suffering, emergencies, and other stresses.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

All four advanced practice nursing specialties require at least a master's degree. Most programs last about 2 years and require a BSN degree and some programs require at least 1 to 2 years of clinical experience as an RN for admission. In 2004, there were 329 master's and post-master's programs offered for nurse practitioners, 218 master's and post-master's programs for clinical nurse specialists, 92 programs for nurse anesthetists, and 45 programs for nurse midwives. Upon completion of a program, most advanced practice nurses become nationally certified in their area of specialty. In some States, certification in a specialty is required in order to practice that specialty.

SALARIES

Entry level: \$43, 370
Average: \$52,330
Experienced: \$74, 760

Employment services: \$63,170
Hospitals: \$53, 450

Home health care, nursing homes,
and physician's offices: \$48, 500

EMPLOYMENT & ADVANCEMENT PROSPECTS

Job opportunities for RNs in all specialties are expected to be excellent. Employment of registered nurses is expected to grow much faster than average for all occupations through 2014, and, because the occupation is very large, many new jobs will result. In fact, registered nurses are projected to create the second largest number of new jobs among all occupations. Thousands of job openings also will result from the need to replace experienced nurses who leave the occupation, especially as the median age of the registered nurse continues to rise. All four advanced practice specialties—clinical nurse specialists, nurse practitioners, midwives, and anesthetists—will be in high demand, particularly in medically underserved areas such as inner cities and rural areas. Relative to physicians, these RNs increasingly serve as lower-cost primary care providers.

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

- Licensed Practical & Vocational Nurses
- Physicians & Surgeons
- Physician Assistants
- Nutritionists
- Health Aides
- Occupational & Physical Therapy
- Medical Technicians
- Health Services Management

REFERENCES

National League for Nursing, 61 Broadway, New York, NY 10006. Internet: <http://www.nln.org>

American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 1 Dupont Circle NW., Suite 530, Washington, DC 20036. Internet: <http://www.aacn.nche.edu>