

Nurse Educator

Overview

Nurse educators are registered nurses with advanced education who are also teachers. Most work as nurses for a period of time before dedicating their careers (part-time or full-time) to educating future nurses.

Nurse educators serve as faculty members in nursing schools and teaching hospitals, sharing their knowledge and skills to prepare the next generation of nurses for effective practice. They develop lesson plans, teach courses, evaluate educational programs, oversee students' clinical practice and serve as role models for their students. They may teach "general" courses or focus on areas of specialization, such as geriatric nursing, pediatric nursing or nursing informatics.

Most nurse educators have extensive clinical experience, and many continue caring for patients after becoming educators. Even if they no longer practice, nurse educators must stay current with new nursing methods and technologies. This means nurse educators are always on the "leading edge" of clinical practice.

With experience, nurse educators may advance to administrative roles, managing nurse education programs, writing or reviewing textbooks, and developing continuing education programs for working nurses.

No trouble finding a job

This career is in extremely high demand, because the United States is experiencing a serious nursing shortage. One of the key reasons for that shortage is the lack of nurse educators to train future nurses.

The U.S. Department of Labor reports that 1 million new and replacement nurses will be needed by 2016. But, according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, more than 40,000 qualified applicants were turned away from nursing schools last year. Why? Because nursing schools don't have enough nurse educators to educate all the students who want to become nurses.

Many government agencies, professional groups and non-profit organizations have launched campaigns to encourage young people to choose a career in nurse education. One example is the National League for Nursing, which offers [10 reasons to become a nurse educator](#).

Working Conditions

Nurse educators typically work in academic settings at nursing schools, community colleges, and technical schools. Some also work in health care settings as staff development officers or clinical supervisors. They may work a nine-month academic calendar, or all year long. Nurse educators typically do not have to work 12-hour shifts or overnight hours, as clinical nurses often do.

Much of a nurse educator's day is spent in an office or a classroom, preparing for classes, giving lectures, advising students, grading papers, attending faculty meetings, handling administrative work and keeping up with current nursing knowledge. Educators who oversee students in clinical settings may divide their time between campus and a nearby hospital or other health care facility. Many faculty members are also actively engaged in research efforts which add to the scientific base for nursing practice.

Academic life is demanding and can be filled with unexpected pressures, including multiple, competing demands on your time. There are often research and publishing requirements to be met. Nurse educators are often expected to participate in professional organizations, and attend or speak at conferences. They may serve on peer review and other academic committees or be asked to write grant proposals to bring new funding to the school.

Still, most nurse educators are highly satisfied with their work. They find interaction with students rewarding, and

they take pride in the role they play in preparing nurses to care for patients.

Salary and Outlook

The average **salary** for a nurse educator is \$71,297, but compensation depends greatly on how much clinical and teaching experience you have, and where you teach. In addition, educators who work only during the academic year are paid their “annual” salary over those nine months. Summer teaching is often compensated separately.

Salaries rise for nurse educators who complete a doctorate and for those who assume administrative or leadership responsibilities in the school. Many nurse educators also earn extra pay by caring for patients.

In many areas, an experienced nurse can make more money caring for patients than teaching, but nursing schools are moving to offer more competitive salaries to attract nurses into education. The hours and working conditions are also an important factor in choosing this career.

Academic Requirements

Before you can teach nursing, you must become, at minimum, a **registered nurse** with a valid license and several years of work experience. Most nurse educators complete a Master’s degree in nursing, although a doctorate may be required to teach at some universities. You may also want to get a post-master’s certificate or degree in education as well as certification depending on your area of specialty.

In addition to knowledge and clinical experience, nurse educators must be good teachers. That means you need exceptional communication skills, no fear of public speaking, an easy rapport with people, and the ability to clearly explain complex concepts to students.

Professional Associations

- [American Association of Colleges of Nursing](#)
- [National League for Nursing](#)
- [National Nursing Staff Development Organization](#)
- [Professional Nurse Educators Group](#)

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