

Realities of the Current Job Market— *Good News is on the Way!*



The National League for Nursing and the National Student Nurses' Association are aware that in some areas of the country, entry-level positions for new graduates are harder to find than in other locations. We are providing this resource to help you prepare for a competitive job market.

What are the facts?

- Although there is a shortage of experienced registered nurses (most positions require 2 years of experience), an oversupply of new graduates is making the job market very competitive for new graduate RNs.*
- Employers prefer new graduates with baccalaureate degrees; new grads with associate degrees and diplomas are having more difficulty finding entry-level employment.
- RN positions are being created outside of acute care settings in ambulatory, home health, outpatient surgery, long-term care, and sub-acute care settings. Many of these settings prefer RNs with experience due to the independent nature of the nursing practice.
- Graduations from nursing school are at an all-time high.
- New graduates are expensive to onboard and many move on to other employers after only 1-2 years, which adds to the cost of recruiting and orienting new employees.
- Many RNs who are at retirement age are now beginning to retire and if the economy continues to improve many Baby Boomers will retire in 2016.
- The Affordable Care Act is changing the way health care is delivered and reimbursed.

What can you do?

- As a nursing student, work as a certified home health aide or certified nursing assistant (CNA) this will get your “foot in the door” and you will gain valuable experience. Be sure to make a good impression and get to know your coworkers and managers. Introduce yourself to the nurse recruiter so that your application will be noticed.
- This is a great time to continue your education—if you have a diploma or associate degree, explore RN to BSN and RN to MSN programs; if you have a BSN, explore master's degree in nursing programs. Many programs are available online.
- Before you graduate: Meet with your college/university career services department (submit your name and résumé to their data base) at least one semester or quarter prior to graduation and follow-up 3 weeks prior to commencement. Introduce yourself to the alumni chapter members of your educational institution; attend meetings and ask them to help you find your first job.
- Always include a cover letter when you submit your résumé and application. When you do get an interview, make a great impression through your professional appearance and interviewing skills.

- Practice interviewing skills and get an interview coach/mentor. This can be any seasoned nurse who can practice with you.
- Network at every opportunity available to you. Get to know the nurses at health care agencies in the area where you want to work. They can let you know when positions for new grads open up on their units.
- Smile! When you do land an interview, show that you are excited about the position and express your enthusiasm about working at the agency.
- Highlight your involvement with NSNA. Many healthcare agencies value RNs who have leadership experience in shared governance and are ready and eager to participate in committee work and governance councils. This is especially important for agencies with Magnet® status and those seeking Magnet® Recognition.
- Keep in contact with your mentor. If you don't have a mentor, seek one out. All of the suggestions addressed here can be executed more easily with the assistance of a mentor.
- Take the licensure exam as soon as possible after graduation. Most hiring agencies will not consider your application unless you have passed NCLEX-RN®.
- Check with the state board of nursing in your state to learn the rules and regulations for RNs to work in other roles (i.e. CNA). Note that if there are Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse positions available you may want to check with the state board of nursing to see if it is feasible for you to be licensed for this role (until RN positions open up). Remember that if you are licensed as an RN and working in a different role, you will be held to the higher standard (that of an RN)—so you must be careful to practice in the role and job description that you are hired for.
- Join a professional nurses association (i.e., the American Nurses Association and/or state nurses' association; specialty nursing organizations) and network with members—let them know you are seeking employment. Finding a job may rely on who knows you and what you can do, more than anything else.
- Register for ANA's Welcome to the Profession Kit, free to NSNA members. See information under Resources below.
- Be open and flexible—you may not get the position you want and it may be per diem; but finding an entry-level position that will give you experience and professional-growth opportunities as well as health insurance benefits, is essential.
- Look outside of the acute-care setting for entry-level positions such as long-term care; rehabilitation setting; community health; camp and school nursing; veteran administration hospitals and facilities;

- local and state departments of health; agency work; wellness work-sites or employee or college/university health center.
- Even if a residency or internship is not in your specialty interest area and pays less than other positions, still consider taking the position if it is offered to you. Being employed as a nurse is your highest priority. Note that some residency and internship programs are very competitive. Many of these programs work with specific schools (i.e., schools that do clinical rotations at their facility) and these students receive priority placement (if positions remain available, then they look at other new grads).
 - Consider career enhancing opportunities to gain clinical experience (i.e., mission work; international opportunities; assisting your mentor with research).
 - Cultivate relationships and stay connected to every nurse and healthcare worker that you know and keep them up-to-date about your job search. Networking is the key to awareness of employment opportunities.
 - Stay current through continuing education and consider taking the time to complete certification opportunities. Take the NSNA American Red Cross Certification—Sheltering and Disaster Health for Nursing Students at NSNA meetings.
 - Make your rounds in the NSNA Exhibit Hall and speak to healthcare agency recruiters, college and university representatives—this is a great place to shop for your next degree.
 - If you are not tied to your community, move to where the jobs are. NSNA's research is showing that jobs are available in Texas, Oklahoma and North Dakota. If you are tied to your community, consider asking your family to help you make this next step of relocating temporarily or working away from home and returning at designated times. Use family and friends in other areas of your town, city or state as possible contacts for help in arranging a new temporary or permanent residence to acquire jobs where there is a greater need for new graduates.

- Routinely check websites, newspapers, the NSNA publications, and nursing publications for job availability. Check the hospital or agency web sites daily as this is where job openings are often first announced.
- Make sure that your résumé truly reflects your education, skills and experience. If you are an active NSNA or community leader, this is important to include. Review your résumé and any job applications with your mentor. Highlight non-nursing positions that can contribute to your success as an RN. If you speak foreign languages make sure this is on your résumé.
- Purchase an “interview business suit and shoes” and be sure to look professional when you land an interview.
- Be sure that you know the terms of student loans. Check to see if there is any way you can delay your student loan repayment until you are employed. Also check into loan consolidation and loan forgiveness programs.
- Be very aware of the early signs of burnout and be sure to address them. Develop good relationships with your nurse manager and co-workers and always ask for assistance when you need it.
- Let your school of nursing know about the hiring situation in your area so that they can use this data to strategically plan for the number of enrollments.

We know that there is a need for highly educated, experienced nurses and that this need will increase. Keep your nursing passion alive and take every opportunity to progress in your nursing education and develop your professional identity.

*Preliminary data from NSNA's 2015 New Graduate Survey indicates that more new graduates are finding entry-level RN positions. This is especially true for BSN graduates. The job market will continue to improve for new graduates in 2016 as more Baby Boomers retire.

Resources for further information:

Prepare for the NCLEX-RN® Exam

<http://www.nсна.org/CareerCenter/CareerGateway.aspx>

<https://www.ncsbn.org/index.htm>

View NSNA's video *Nursing—the Career for a Lifetime* online at:

<http://www.nсна.org/CareerCenter/CareerforaLifetime.aspx>

Take Charge of Your Nursing Career by Lois Marshall

Available from Amazon and Barnes and Noble

Your First Year as a Nurse:

Making the Transition from Total Novice to Successful Professional

by Donna Cardillo, RN

<http://donnacardillo.com/articles/yourfirstyear/>

You're Hired! A Nurse's Guide to Success in Today's Job Market

Produced by the California Nursing Students' Association and endorsed by the

Association of California Nurse Leaders by Brenda Brozek, MAOL, RN

<http://www.cnsa.org/you-re-hired---book>

Join the American Nurses Association (ANA) and specialty Nursing Organizations

<http://www.nсна.org/CareerCenter/Associations.aspx>

Request ANA's Welcome to the Profession Kit

<http://www.nursingworld.org/WTPKit>

NSNA Career Center

<http://www.nсна.org/CareerCenter/CareerGateway.aspx>

Advance your Nursing Education

<http://www.nсна.org/CareerCenter/FeaturedNursingSchools.aspx>

National League for Nursing

www.nln.org

Volunteer Abroad (listing of various international opportunities)

<http://www.projects-abroad.org/>

Professional Attire

<http://www.nсна.org/Meetings/Guidelines.aspx>

Résumé resources

HealthStream Professional Portfolio (electronic, web-based professional portfolio)

<http://www.nсна.org/Membership/AlliancePartners/HealthStream.aspx>

(free for NSNA members)

Interviewing and Job Searching

<http://www.nсна.org/CareerCenter/CareerGateway.aspx>

Loan Repayment

<http://www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/repayment/nursing/>

<http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment/>

<http://www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/>

Dean's Notes (report of NSNA's annual survey of new nurse graduates, 2008-2015)

<http://www.aji.com/services/publication-services/deans-notes>

Latest survey results:

<http://www.aji.com/sites/default/files/services/publishing/deansnotes/jan15.pdf>

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