

Alternative Careers For Nurses

Communications

This rapidly expanding area has several components. Some public relations firms offer communication services solely to the health care industry. Their products include press packages, corporate brochures and videos, patient education materials, and special events planning. Other firms provide science information services such as databases, indexing, and abstracting. Also in this category are publishers of medical and scientific textbooks. This is a great area for people with both science and English/Communication backgrounds.

Recent positions taken by nursing graduates:

Editor and Corporate Director

Job Titles:

Marketing and sales representative; production or program assistant; editor; talk show host; health care columnist; health researcher in radio/television; medical illustrator; technical writer/illustrator

Requirements:

Excellent presentation, writing, editing and analytical skills; demonstration of abilities through samples of work; experience as an unpaid intern and paid work in an area of specialty

Library Resources:

- Literary Market Place (Communications/Journalism Section)
- O'Dwyers Directory of Public Relations Firms (Communications/Journalism Section)
- Opportunities in Television, Cable, Video and Multimedia (Communications/Journalism Section)

Web Resources:

- **American Association of Advertising Agencies**
(<http://www.aaaa.org/eweb/startpage.aspx>)
- **O'Dwyers PR Daily** (<http://www.odwyerpr.com/>)
- Riley Guide Communication Links (<http://www.rileyguide.com/sales.html#adv>)
- The Biomedical Writer's Association (www.amwa.org)

Education

There are teaching and administrative positions available in elementary, secondary and higher education. Requirements vary depending on the position and the setting. Please see job titles and requirements below for further information.

Positions taken by recent nursing graduates:

Lecturer; Teaching Assistant; Assistant Professor; Clinical Instructor; Research Assistant Professor

Job Titles:

School of nursing faculty member; nursing school administrator; secondary school science/math teacher; preschool/elementary teacher; coach or trainer; special health programs teacher; counselor; drug and alcohol counselor; special programs administrator; science museum educator; school teen hotline facilitator

Requirements:

Certification is required for public school teachers. Non-certified graduates can teach in independent schools and charter schools, as well as some public schools with alternative certification programs (such as Philadelphia and New York City). Programs such as Teach for America, Urban Teaching Fellows Program, and Teach Philadelphia provide structured one - two year teaching programs for those without certification. The Peace Corps and many other programs offer international volunteer teaching assignments. Schools of nursing sometimes hire Master's prepared nurses with clinical or teaching experience as faculty members. Many administrative positions within higher education require a master's degree.

Library Resources:

- Alternative Teacher Certification: A State by State Analysis (Education Section)
- Private Independent Schools (Bluebook) US & Abroad (Education Section) Teach for America Materials (Education Section)
- The Peace Corps and More (International/Foreign Section)

Web Resources:

- The Academic Employment Network/Certification Information by State (www.academply.com/certif.cfm)
- Alpha List of Independent Boarding School Web Sites(www.schools.com/directory/alpha.html)
- American School Directory (www.asd.com)
- Chronicle of Higher Education (www.chronicle.edu)
- Independent School Placement Agencies (http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/college/placement_agencies.html)
- National Association of Independent Schools (www.nais.org)
- Riley Guide Education Links (<http://www.rileyguide.com/educate.html#ed>)
- Teaching Without Certification (http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/college/teaching_college.html)
- U.S. Charter Schools (http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/index.htm)

Entrepreneurial

According to *Entrepreneurship: A Nurse's Guide to Starting A Business*, five major trends have had a positive impact on nurse entrepreneurs: 1) empowerment of nursing, 2) technology, 3) movement of patients with high acuity needs to nontraditional settings, 4) increased consumer awareness and 5) restructuring of health-care provider organizations.

Job Titles:

Geriatric program designer; vice president; owner; founder;consultant; create your own title

Requirements:

Creative ideas to meet specific marketable needs; able to identify funding sources; ability to dream, identify a marketable product, and implement a plan; experience in business development, finance and personnel management; willingness to assume risks

Library Resources:

- Entrepreneurship: A Nurse's Guide to Starting A Business (Medical/Health/Nursing Section)

Web Resources:

- Vault Guide to Starting Your Own Business (<http://www.vpuls.upenn.edu/careerservices/internetmenu.html>)

Government

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management groups nursing and other health care opportunities into the Medical, Dental, Public Health job category. While there are many opportunities at the federal level, more opportunities exist at the state and local levels. Competition is fierce for many positions. To increase opportunities for new employees, the government has created several internship programs such as the Emerging Leaders Program referenced below.

Job Titles:

Prison health nurse; Medicaid/Medicare program adviser; Peace Corps volunteer; political adviser

Requirements:

Patience and persistence in following formal guidelines; every level of government (local, state, federal) has specific procedures for applying; inquire about particular procedures for your area; some jobs require testing

Library Resources:

- The Government Job Finder (Government section)

Web Resources:

- Government Jobs Central (<http://federaljobs.net>)
- Jobs in Government (<http://jobsingovernment.com>)
- Federal Government Job (<http://www.fedworld.gov/jobs/jobsearch.html>)
- Federal Job Search (<http://www.hrsjobs.com/>)
- State Department (www.careers.state.gov)
- USA jobs from the Office of Personnel Management (<http://usajobs.opm.gov>)
- WetFeet Insider's Guide to Careers In NonProfits and Government Agencies (<http://www.wetfeet.com/cb/schools/listguides.asp?dpid=133>)
- Department of Health and Human Services (Emerging Leaders, Federal Career Intern Program) (<http://www.hhs.gov/>)
- Presidential Management Fellowship (<https://www.pmf.opm.gov/Index.aspx>)

Healthcare Consulting

Healthcare organizations (hospitals, drug companies, and labs) may bring in an outside organization to help them solve problems. Consultants address issues such as marketing plans, internal organization, quality assessment, or finance. The typical research associate or analyst collects data (from database and interviews), then analyzes and presents results or recommendations. A healthcare background and good analytical skills are useful. This is a booming field given the rapid changes in health care today.

Positions taken by recent nursing graduates include:

Business Analyst; Staff Consultant; Senior Consultant; Manager

Job Titles:

Research analyst; health care staff consultant; health care analyst; business analyst

Requirements:

Experience in research; analytical abilities; articulate, confident interpersonal style; knowledge of field in which consulting is required; orientation to business objectives

Library Resources:

- WetFeet Insider Guide: Specialized Consulting Careers Health Care, Human Resources & Information Technology (Consulting Section)
- Consultants and Consulting Organizations Directory (Consulting Section)
- Directory of Management Consultants (Consulting Section)
- Harvard Business School Guide-Careers in Management Consulting (Consulting Section)
- Management Consulting: A Complete Guide to the Industry (Consulting Section)

Web Resources:

- Vault Career Guide to Consulting
(<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/internetmenu.html>)
- WetFeet's Insider Guide to Specialized Consulting Careers: HealthCare, Human Resources and Information Technology
(<http://www.wetfeet.com/cb/schools/listguides.asp?dpid=133>)

Human Resources/Personnel

According to Vault.com, human resources refers to anything related to the employer-employee relationship. Opportunities exist in various areas in human resources including recruiting, compensation and benefits, labor relations, training and development. HR generalists work in multiple areas while specialists focus on one specific area such as compensation and benefits. Many nurse recruiters worked previously as staff nurses.

Recent positions taken by nursing graduates:

Staff Development Specialist; Staff Development Coordinator

Job Titles:

Training specialist; employee assistance health educator/nurse; nurse recruiter; benefits administrator

Requirements:

Experience in human resources or special knowledge of area for training or recruiting; knowledge or interest in benefits, compensation, labor relations, or equal employment opportunities

Web Resources:

- American Society for Training and Development (www.astd.org)
- Riley Guide Human Resources Links (<http://www.rileyguide.com/hr.html#hr>)
- Society for Human Resource Management (www.shrm.org)
- Vault Guide to Human Resources Careers (<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/internetmenu.htm>)
- WetFeet Insider's Guide to Careers in Human Resources (also available in library) (<http://www.wetfeet.com/cb/schools/listguides.asp?dpid=133>)

Human/Social Services

People in this field may work in either a direct service role or an administrative role. Counselors fall under the first category and assist clients with personal, family, educational, mental health, and career decisions and problems.

Positions taken by recent nursing graduates:

Sexual Health Counselor; Child and Family Therapist; Assessment Specialist; Family Counselor

Job Titles:

Project developer; community organizer; program director; outreach coordinator; counselor

Requirements:

Strong organizational skills and experience; ability to describe and demonstrate specific abilities and experience that relates to a special project, community or clientele; professional, as well as, volunteer efforts are valued

Library Resources:

- The Non Profit and Education Job Finder (Public Interest/Social Research/Economic Research section)

Web Resources:

The Foundation Center (www.fdncenter.org)

Idealist (www.idealists.org)

Opportunity Nocs (www.opportunitynocs.com)

Riley Guide Social Services Links (<http://www.rileyguide.com/social.html#soc>)

Social Services Positions (<http://www.socialservice.com/>)

Information Technology

According to Vault.com, Information Technology is a broad term that describes all fields that relate to the organization and dissemination of digital information. Information Technology workers come from various backgrounds. Opportunities are available across various industries ranging from government to education. The majority of opportunities are available at non-IT companies.

Positions Taken by Recent nursing graduates:

Software product analyst

Job Titles:

Health Information System trainee/trainer or consultant; informatics nurse specialist; information specialist; systems implementation specialist

Requirements:

Skill, experience and interest in health-based technology and computing systems; informatics increasingly requires a highly trained person with a master's or PhD

Web Resources:

American Nursing Informatics Association (www.ania.org)
Health Information Management Systems Society (www.himss.org)
National Association of Health Data Organizations (www.nahdo.org)
Nursing Informatics Information (www.duke.edu/~mclen003/medical.htm#Techno)
Riley Guide Computing and Technology Links (<http://www.rileyguide.com/comp.html>)
WetFeet Insider's Guide to Careers in Information Technology
(<http://www.wetfeet.com/cb/schools/listguides.asp?dpid=133>)

Insurance: Health Maintenance Organizations/Health Insurers

The growth of the health insurance industry offers many opportunities on the "business" side of healthcare. Positions may be in physician relations, customer relations, marketing, strategic planning, or data management.

Positions taken by recent nursing graduates:

Occupational Health and Safety Consultant

Job Titles:

Disability management nurse; claims representative or examiner; underwriter; medical claims preapproval contact; group sales representative

Requirements:

Experience or coursework in case management; attention to detail; analytical and evaluative abilities; strong interpersonal skills; familiarity with insurance industry

Library Resources:

- *Best's Insurance Reports - Life and Health (Insurance Section)*
- *Plunkett's Health Care Industry Almanac (Medical Section)*

Web Resources:

- Insurance Overview (www.careers-in-finance.com/in.htm)
- Riley Guide Insurance Links (<http://www.rileyguide.com/finance.html#ins>)

Law and Law Enforcement

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor & Statistics, lawyers act as both advocates and advisors in our society. As advocates, they represent one of the parties in criminal and civil trials by presenting evidence and arguing in court to support their client. As advisors, lawyers counsel their clients concerning their legal rights and obligations and suggest particular courses of action in business and personal matters.

Job Titles:

Legal nurse consultant; legal researcher; litigation support consultant; forensics nurse; hospital general counsel; medical patent lawyer; regulatory expert.

Requirements:

Experience in research and analysis; interest in assisting attorneys, insurance companies and health care institutions with legal issues related to medical practices; experience or interest in combining clinical practice with law enforcement. For counsel and regulatory positions, a law degree and experience in health care or regulatory environment are essential.

Library Resources:

- Directory of Expert Witnesses and Consultants (Scientific Research Section)
- What You Can Do With A Law Degree (Legal Section)

Web Resources:

- American Forensic Nurse Association (www.amrn.com)
- American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants (www.aalnc.org)
- American Association of Nurse Attorneys (www.taana.org)
- Forensic Nursing Education (www.forensiceducation.com/index1.htm)
- International Association of Forensic Nurses (www.forensicnurse.org)
- Medical-Legal Consulting Institute (www.legalnurse.com)
- Riley Guide Law and Legal Services Links (<http://www.rileyguide.com/law.html>)
- Vault Guide to Litigation and Corporate Law Careers (<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/internetmenu.html>)

Market Research/Health Policy Research

According to a survey of the Creative Group, market research positions are in highest demand in the pharmaceutical, biotech, and health care industries.

Job Titles:

Research assistant/associate; market researcher; health systems analyst; project manager

Requirements:

Interest in analyzing statistical data to determine market conditions; research and data analysis experience; interest and ability in preparation of written and verbal presentation of findings

Library Resources:

- Health Groups in Washington, DC (Medical/Health/Nursing Section)
- NIRA's World Directory of Think Tanks (Public Interest/Social Research/Economic Research Section)

Web Resources:

- Market Research Association (www.mra-net.org)
- Market Research Overview (www.careers-in-marketing.com/mr.htm)
- Think Tanks/Policy Research (<http://www.nira.go.jp/>)
- WetFeet Insider's Guide to Careers in Marketing and Market Research (<http://www.wetfeet.com/cb/schools/listguides.asp?dpid=133>)

Pharmaceutical, Biotech, and Medical Device Companies

Always a good source of research positions, consider these companies for business jobs as well. Sales is a common entry point. These jobs entail a significant education component, as the sales force is now a primary source of information on drugs and devices for clinicians. Other positions include public relations, technical writing, and business analyst.

Positions taken by recent nursing graduates include:

Medical Program Coordinator; Business Team Consultant; Clinical Data Associate; Clinical Research Scientist; Pharmaceutical Sales Representative

Job Titles:

Sales representative; marketing associate; clinical research associate; quality assurance assistant; quality control specialist; product development specialist; medical monitor; director of clinical protocols

Requirements:

Experience in sales; product knowledge or development experience; experience or education in marketing; patient assessment and interviewing skills; research experience (pharmaceutical companies often hire clinical research organizations to perform clinical trials; these organizations also offer potential employment for nurses).

Library Resources:

- Biotechnology Directory (Engineering Section)
- CorpTech (Engineering Section)
- Medical Device Register (Engineering Section)
- Research Centers Directory (General Section)

Web Resources:

- Riley Guide Pharmaceutical Links (<http://www.rileyguide.com/health.html#pharm>)
- Riley Guide Biotech Links (<http://www.rileyguide.com/engin.html#biotech>)
- Biotechnology Jobs and Career Resources (<http://www.hirebio.com/>)
- Biotechnology Industry Organization (<http://www.bio.org/>)
- Biotechnology Career Center (<http://www.biocareer.com/index.cfm>)

- Biotechnology Directory (<http://guide.nature.com/resfull.html>)
- Pharmaceutical Jobs (<http://www.hirerx.com/>)
- Medical Device Manufacturers (http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/seas/seas_medicaldevicemanufacturers.html)
- Wetfeet's Guide to Careers In Biotech and Pharmaceuticals (<http://www.wetfeet.com/cb/schools/listguides.asp?dpid=133>)
- Vault Career Guide to Biotech (<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/internetmenu.htm>)
- Pharmaceutical Careers (www.pharmaceuticalcareers.com)
- <http://www.medzilla.com/>

Public Interest/Advocacy Groups, Associations and Foundations

This broad category includes organizations, which provide education, services, advocacy or funding in health-related fields. Examples of such organizations include the American Medical Association, the National Minority AIDS Council, or the National Downs Syndrome Society. Positions may be in development (fundraising), publications, public relations or research.

Job Titles:

Development officer; development associate; research analyst; organizer; advocate

Requirements:

Strong communication skills; commitment to respective issues; strong interpersonal skills;

Library Resources:

- Encyclopedia of Associations (General Section)
- Foundation Directory (Funding Section)
- Health Groups in Washington, DC (Medical Section)

Web Resources:

- The Foundation Center (<http://foundationcenter.org/>)
- **Idealist** (nonprofit site) (www.idealists.org)
- Riley Guide Foundation Links (<http://www.rileyguide.com/nonprof.html>)

Public Relations

Public relations involves communicating an organization's message/philosophy/mission to the media. According to wetfeet.com, PR professionals also may engage in the following activities: represent the organization, help clients overcome bad publicity, arrange for them to appear at events, and develop an overall marketing strategy for the facility.

Positions taken by recent nursing graduates:

Medical Affairs Coordinator

Job Titles:

Hospital public affairs director; public information specialist; press liaison; special events coordinator; community affairs liaison; patient relations director; publications editor

Requirements:

Writing and organizational ability; experience in promoting a favorable image for an institution or organization; experience in developing and implementing programs and activities that create favorable publicity

Library Resources:

- Career Opportunities in Advertising and Public Relations (Marketing/Advertising/Sales Section)
- National Directory of Corporate Public Affairs (Communications/Journalism Section)
- O'Dwyer's Directory of Corporate Communications (Communications/Journalism Section)
- O'Dwyer's Directory of Public Relations Firms (Communications/Journalism Section)

Web Resources:

- Riley Guide Public Relations Links (<http://www.rileyguide.com/sales.html#adv>)
- WetFeet Insider's Guide to Careers in Advertising and Public Relations (<http://www.wetfeet.com/cb/schools/listguides.asp?dpid=133>)

Research: Non-Profit and Government

Laboratory research positions are the most plentiful job in this category. Universities and teaching hospitals usually have many such positions. If you are seeking alternatives, consider research in health care policy, either in academia or policy "think tanks."

Positions taken by recent nursing graduates include:

Clinical Trials Nurse Coordinator; Clinical Coordinator; Clinical Research Coordinator Cardiology Project Coordinator; Clinical Director; Research Coordinator; Project Director; Project Manager Research Assistant

Job Titles:

Clinical coordinator; research assistant; research associate

Requirements:

Strong research and writing skills; attention to details; strong technical skills

Library Resources:

- Federal Yellow Book (Government Section)
- Research Centers Directory (General Directories)
- Think Tank Directory (Public Interest Section)

Web Resources:

- **NIRA's World Directory of Think Tanks** (<http://www.nira.go.jp/>)

* Library Resources are located in the Career Services library. Library hours are 9-6 Monday-Wednesday and 9-5 Thursday- Friday when classes are in session (Library hours are 9-5 Monday through Friday when classes are not in session). While no materials may leave the library, a copy machine is available for your use.

References

Dunne, Genny. The Nursing Job Search Handbook (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).