

Licensed Practical Nurse

Professional Activities

Licensed practical nurses (LPNs), or licensed vocational nurses (LVNs), care for people who are sick, injured, convalescent, or disabled under the direction of physicians and registered nurses. LPNs care for patients in many ways. Often, they provide basic bedside care. Many LPNs measure and record patients' vital signs such as height, weight, temperature, blood pressure, pulse, and respiration. They also prepare and give injections and enemas, monitor catheters, dress wounds, and give alcohol rubs and massages.

As part of their work, LPNs collect samples for testing, perform routine laboratory tests, and record food and fluid intake and output. They clean and monitor medical equipment. Sometimes, they help physicians and registered nurses perform tests and procedures. Some LPNs help to deliver, care for, and feed infants.

LPNs also monitor their patients and report adverse reactions to medications or treatments. LPNs gather information from patients, including their health history and how they are currently feeling. They may use this information to complete insurance forms, pre-authorizations, and referrals, and they share information with registered nurses and doctors to help determine the best course of care for a patient. LPNs often teach family members how to care for a relative or teach patients about good health habits.

Most LPNs are generalists and will work in any area of healthcare. However, some work in a specialized setting, such as a nursing home, a doctor's office, or in home healthcare. LPNs in nursing care facilities help to evaluate residents' needs, develop care plans, and supervise the care provided by nursing aides. In doctors' offices and clinics, they may be responsible for making appointments, keeping records, and performing other clerical duties. LPNs who work in home healthcare may prepare meals and teach family members simple nursing tasks.

Most licensed practical nurses in hospitals and nursing homes work a 40-hour week, but because patients need around-the-clock care, some work nights, weekends, and holidays. They often stand for long periods and help patients move in bed, stand, or walk.

LPNs may face hazards from caustic chemicals, radiation, and infectious diseases such as hepatitis. They are subject to back injuries when moving patients and shock from electrical equipment. They often must deal with the stress of heavy workloads. In addition, the patients they care for may be confused, irrational, agitated, or uncooperative.

Educational Requirements

Most practical nursing programs last about 1 year and include both classroom study and supervised clinical practice (patient care). Classroom study covers basic nursing concepts and patient care-related subjects, including anatomy, physiology, medical-surgical nursing, pediatrics, obstetrics, psychiatric nursing, the administration of drugs, nutrition, and first aid. Clinical practice usually is in a hospital, but sometimes includes other settings.

All States and the District of Columbia require LPNs to pass a licensing examination after completing a State-approved practical nursing program. The National Council Licensure Examination, or NCLEX-PN, is required in order to obtain licensure as an LPN. The exam is developed and administered by the National Council of State

Boards of Nursing. A high school diploma or its equivalent usually is required for entry, although some programs accept candidates without a diploma.

In some employment settings, such as nursing homes, LPNs can advance to become charge nurses who oversee the work of other LPNs and of nursing aides. Some LPNs also choose to become registered nurses through numerous LPN-to-RN training programs.

Academic Programs

[Black Hawk College](#)

[Carl Sandburg College](#)

[College of DuPage](#)

[Danville Area Community College](#)

[Elgin Community College](#)

[Harper College](#)

[Heartland Community College](#)

[Illinois Central College](#)

[Illinois Valley Community College](#)

[John A. Logan College](#)

[John Wood Community College](#)

[Joliet Junior College](#)

[Kankakee Community College](#)

[Lake Land College](#)

[Lincoln Land Community College](#)

[Morton College](#)

[Olney Central College](#)

[Parkland College](#)

[Rend Lake College](#)

[Richland Community College](#)

[Rock Valley College](#)

[Sauk Valley Community College](#)

[Shawnee Community College](#)

[South Suburban College](#)

[Southeastern Illinois College](#)

[Spoon River College](#)

[Triton College](#)

[Wilbur Wright College](#)

Employment/Salary Outlook

Projected job growth, job openings will result from replacement needs, as many workers leave the occupation permanently. Very good job opportunities are expected. Rapid employment growth is projected in most healthcare industries, with the best job opportunities occurring in nursing care facilities and in home healthcare services. There is a perceived inadequacy of available healthcare in many rural areas, so LPNs willing to locate in rural areas should have good job prospects.

State and National Wages

Location	Pay Period	2021		
		Low	Median	High
United States	Hourly	\$17.86	\$23.11	\$30.67
	Annual	\$37,150	\$48,070	\$63,790
Illinois	Hourly	\$21.73	\$25.34	\$29.70
	Annual	\$45,200	\$52,700	\$61,770

State and National Trends

United States	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2020	2030		
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	688,100	751,900	9%	60,700
Illinois	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2018	2028		
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	20,720	20,520	-1%	1,550

¹Job Openings refers to the average annual job openings due to growth and net replacement.

Professional Organizations

National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses (nflpn.org)

National League for Nursing (nlcn.org)

National Association for Practical Nurse Education and Service (napnes.org)

References

Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

(<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/licensed-practical-and-licensed-vocational-nurses.htm>)

O*NET OnLine (<http://online.onetcenter.org/link/summary/29-2061.00>)

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