

## Registered Nurse (RN)

### ■ Job Description

The registered nurse (RN) is an individual who supervises, teaches, and delegates nursing care to members of the health care team and delivers direct nursing care and treatment to clients in a variety of facilities and settings. Clients and families may be at any stage along the wellness/illness continuum. RNs counsel and educate clients and families about their illnesses, preventative health measures, and self care responsibilities. Responsibilities include administering medications and treatments as prescribed by a licensed physician, dentist, or podiatrist; performing skilled technical procedures; and providing personal nursing care. RNs provide education to health care team members, clients, and significant others. Evaluation, assessment, determination, and implementation of a nursing plan of care are responsibilities of the RN.

### ■ Job Settings

About three out of five RNs work in hospitals. RNs also work in clinics, nursing homes, private homes, the military, schools, physician offices, public health centers, and independent practice.

### ■ Projected Need

Nationally, the number of jobs for registered nurses is expected to increase faster than average through 2010. In Illinois, registered nurse is one of the 10 occupations expected to provide the most job openings each year. Growth in this occupation will be due in part to technological advances that allow more medical problems to be treated. In addition, the number of older people is expected to increase rapidly. Older people are more likely to need medical care.

The number of jobs in hospital nursing is expected to grow more slowly than in other settings. This is because patients are being released earlier from hospitals. Rapid growth is expected in home health care and nursing homes.

In Illinois, there were about 105,800 people employed in this very large occupation in 2000.

### ■ Salaries

Nationally, the median wage for registered nurses is \$22.44 per hour. Half of all registered nurses earn between \$18.85 and \$26.88 per hour.

In Illinois, registered nurses earn a median wage of \$22.60 per hour. Wages in selected cities are given below:

City	Median Hourly Wage
Bloomington-Normal	\$17.40
Champaign-Urbana	\$18.55
Chicago	\$24.46
Decatur	\$17.67
Kankakee	\$20.43
Moline-Rock Island	\$16.79
Peoria-Pekin	\$20.35
Rockford	\$20.54
Springfield	\$22.73
St. Louis	\$21.07

### ■ Related Careers

Careers for individuals with similar interests may be found in other areas of medicine and in the rehabilitative therapies. Certain aspects of nursing are similar to the services provided by the health educator and the medical/psychiatric social worker.

### ■ Differences in Training

There are three types of training programs that lead to registered nursing: (1) two-year associate degree programs, (2) three-year diploma programs and (3) four-year baccalaureate programs.

Two-year associate degree programs are typically offered at community colleges. Their educational emphasis is on nursing theory and practice. Approximately half of the credits are in general education, with emphasis on the biological and social sciences. Clinical experiences are provided in hospital and nursing home settings. Graduates are prepared to provide direct nursing care primarily in hospitals and long-term care facilities.

The following associate degree programs are offered in Illinois. Each typically begins in August, but some start two times per year. Some programs are offered part-time and many are offered during the evening.

All require high school graduation and an entrance exam.

Black Hawk College - Moline  
Carl Sandburg College - Galesburg  
College of DuPage - Glen Ellyn  
College of Lake County - Grayslake  
Danville Area Community College - Danville  
Elgin Community College - Elgin  
Harper College - Palatine  
Harry S. Truman College - Chicago  
Heartland Community College - Normal  
Highland Community College - Freeport  
Illinois Central College - East Peoria  
Illinois Valley Community College - Oglesby  
Joliet Junior College - Joliet  
John A. Logan College - Carterville  
John Wood Community College - Quincy  
Kankakee Community College - Kankakee  
Kaskaskia College - Centralia  
Kennedy-King College - Chicago  
Kishwaukee College - Malta  
Lake Land College - Mattoon  
Lewis and Clark Community College - Godfrey  
Lincoln Land Community College - Springfield  
Malcolm X College - Chicago  
Moraine Valley Community College - Palos Hills  
Morton College - Cicero  
Oakton Community College - Des Plaines  
Olive-Harvey College - Chicago  
Olney Central College - Olney  
Parkland College - Champaign  
Prairie State College - Chicago Heights  
Rend Lake College - Ina  
Richland Community College - Decatur  
Richard J. Daley College - Chicago  
Rock Valley College - Rockford  
Sauk Valley Community College - Dixon  
Shawnee Community College - Ullin  
Southeastern Illinois College - Harrisburg  
South Suburban College - South Holland  
Southwestern Illinois College - Belleville  
Spoon River College - Canton  
Trinity College of Nursing - Rock Island  
Triton College - River Grove  
Waubensee Community College - Sugar Grove

Three-year diploma programs are conducted by hospitals. Only a small number of programs offer diploma-level degrees. In Illinois, Graham Hospital

School of Nursing in Canton and Methodist Medical Center of Illinois in Peoria offer diploma-RN programs.

Four-year baccalaureate programs are offered at several public and private universities and colleges in Illinois. These programs combine nursing theory and practice courses with electives to provide students with a liberal arts background as well as nursing skills. Clinical experience is provided in acute and long-term care facilities and in public and community health agencies. The baccalaureate degree in nursing is required to work in public health nursing, school nursing, or to enter most graduate nursing programs. The graduate of a baccalaureate program is prepared to give direct patient care, teach patients and their families, supervise other nursing personnel, and deal with a variety of problems that require sound decision-making and leadership skills.

When deciding which program to enter, students should consider their career plans. All three programs prepare individuals to give direct patient care in hospitals and nursing homes. Every new nurse requires orientation to the role of the graduate nurse. For someone interested in community health nursing, school nursing, graduate clinical specialization, administration, nursing education, or research, a baccalaureate degree provides the foundation. Preference is usually given to baccalaureate graduates when promotions are considered and head nurse or supervisory nurse positions are filled.

For information regarding courses needed to transfer from an associate degree program into a baccalaureate degree program in nursing visit the Illinois Articulation Initiative sponsored web site at <[www.iTransfer.org](http://www.iTransfer.org)>. The iTransfer web site highlights the general education curriculum, the specific curriculums for baccalaureate majors and transfer information for students, parents and educators. The iTransfer web site and the Illinois Articulation Initiative are co-sponsored by the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board, the Illinois State Board of Education, and the Transfer Coordinators of Illinois Colleges and Universities.

Accelerated programs in nursing are also available for students with bachelor's degrees in other fields.

Typically, these students must have the same prerequisites as other 2+2 pre-nursing students, but can complete a BSN in twelve months.

In addition, accelerated programs in nursing are also available that allow students to receive both the BSN and the Master's degree in nursing in twenty-four months. Contact the National League for Nursing for a list of schools.

### ■ Related Educational Programs

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

*The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/> You must log into CIS prior to clicking on the links below.*

[Adult Health Nursing](#)

[Maternal and Child Health Nursing](#)

[Maternal and Child Public Health](#)

[Mental Health Nursing](#)

[Nurse Anesthetist](#)

[Nurse Midwifery](#)

[Nurse Practitioner](#)

[Nursing Science](#)

[Pediatric Nursing](#)

[Public Health Nursing](#)

[Registered Nursing](#)

[Surgical Nursing](#)

### ■ Skill Standards

One way to prepare for employment in this occupation is through meeting the standards endorsed by the Illinois Occupational Skill Standards and Credentialing Council (IOSSCC). Through the combined efforts of business, industry and education leaders, skill standards are developed for those occupations critical to the Illinois economy. *Skill standards define what you must know and be able to perform in order to pass a credentialing examination and obtain and keep a job in this field.* For more information regarding skill standards, contact the guidance counselor at your local high school or community college, visit your local Illinois Employment and Training Center (IETC), or access

skill standards information at [www.ioes.org/cte\\_curr/oss/index.html](http://www.ioes.org/cte_curr/oss/index.html).

The IOSSCC has endorsed skill standards for the nursing cluster organized around the following performance areas for registered nurses:

- Safety
- Comfort
- Physical care
- Bedmaking
- Nutrition
- Elimination
- Vital signs
- Body mechanics
- Admission and discharge
- Specimen collection
- Surgical procedures
- Treatments
- Dressings
- Nursing process
- Medications
- Communications

### ■ Credentials

All states require registered nurses to be licensed. In Illinois, registered nurses must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation. To become licensed, applicants must graduate from an accredited nursing education program of not less than two years; pass an exam; and, pay the required fees. Licensure must be renewed every two years.

### ■ Advanced Training

RNs have the following levels of advanced training available to them, depending on their academic degrees:

1. Associate degree and diploma RNs can enter any nursing program to complete a baccalaureate degree in nursing in as little as six quarters.
2. Colleges and universities with baccalaureate nursing completion programs offer advanced placement opportunities to ADN and diploma graduates.

There are education programs for certified specialists in nursing, nurse anesthetist, nurse midwife, and nurse practitioner in Illinois. There are schools offering graduate-level preparation for nurses interested in advanced nursing practice, education, or administration.

## ■ Resources

National League for Nursing  
61 Broadway  
New York, NY 10006  
Phone: 800.669.1656  
<http://www.nln.org>

Illinois Nurses Association  
105 W. Adams Street, Suite 2101  
Chicago, IL 60603  
Phone: 312.419.2900  
E-mail: [info@illinoisnurses.com](mailto:info@illinoisnurses.com)  
<http://www.illinoisnurses.org>

The association awards two to four scholarships of \$1,000 to \$1,500 each to student members of the Student Nurse Association of Illinois.

National Student Nurses Association  
45 Main Street, Suite 606  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Phone: 718.210.0705  
E-mail: [nsna@nsna.org](mailto:nsna@nsna.org)  
<http://www.nsna.org>  
Click on "Career Center" in the left side bar.

The association awards 50 to 100 scholarships of \$1,000 to \$5,000 each to National Student Nurses Association members or students enrolled in nursing programs leading to the RN license.