

Nursing Assistant

Professional Activities

Nursing aides—also known as nursing assistants, certified nursing assistants, geriatric aides, unlicensed assistive personnel, orderlies, or hospital attendants—perform routine tasks under the supervision of nursing and medical staff. They answer patients' call lights; deliver messages; serve meals; make beds; and help patients to eat, dress, and bathe. Aides also may provide skin care to patients; take their temperature, pulse rate, respiration rate, and blood pressure; and help them to get into and out of bed and walk. They also may escort patients to operating and examining rooms, keep patients' rooms neat, set up equipment, store and move supplies, and assist with some procedures. Aides observe patients' physical, mental, and emotional conditions and report any change to the nursing or medical staff.

Aides employed in nursing care facilities often are the principal caregivers, having far more contact with residents than other staff members. Because some residents may stay in a nursing care facility for months or even years, aides develop ongoing relationships with them and interact with them in a positive, caring way.

Most full-time aides work about 40 hours a week, but, because patients need care 24 hours a day, some aides work evenings, nights, weekends, and holidays. Aides spend many hours standing and walking, and they often face heavy workloads. Aides must guard against back injury because they may have to move patients into and out of bed or help them to stand or walk. Aides also may face hazards from minor infections and major diseases, such as hepatitis, but can avoid infections by following proper procedures. Aides often have unpleasant duties, such as emptying bedpans and changing soiled bed linens. The patients they care for may be disoriented, irritable, or uncooperative.

Educational Requirements

Nursing aides and attendants must earn a postsecondary certificate or award, in which they learn the basic principles of nursing and complete supervised clinical work. When they finish their state-required education, nursing aides and attendants take a competency exam. Passing this exam allows them to use state-specific titles. In some states, a nursing aide or attendant is called a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), but titles vary from state to state. Nursing aides and attendants who have passed the exam are placed on a state registry. In many states, nursing aides and attendants must be on the state registry to work in a nursing home. Some states have other requirements as well, such as continuing education and a criminal background check. Students should check with their state's board of nursing or health, for more information.

In some states, nursing aides and attendants can get additional credentials beyond a CNA, such as becoming a Certified Medication Assistant (CMA). As a CMA, they can give medications.

Academic Programs

[Black Hawk College](#)

[Career Center of Southern Illinois](#)

[City Colleges of Chicago](#)

[College of DuPage](#)

[College of Lake County](#)

[Elgin Community College](#)

[Harper College](#)

[Heartland Community College](#)

[Highland Community College](#)

[Illinois Central College](#)

[Illinois Valley Community College](#)

[John Wood Community College](#)

[Joliet Junior College](#)

[Kankakee Community College](#)

[Kaskaskia College](#)

[Kishwaukee College](#)

[Lake Land College](#)
[Lewis and Clark Community College](#)
[Lincoln Land Community College](#)
[Malcom X College](#)
[McHenry Community College](#)
[Midwest Technical Institute](#)
[Morton College](#)
[Oakton Community College](#)
[Parkland College](#)
[Prairie State College](#)

[Rend Lake College](#)
[Richland Community College](#)
[Rock Valley College](#)
[Sauk Valley Community College](#)
[Shawnee Community College](#)
[South Suburban College](#)
[Southeastern Illinois College](#)
[Southwestern Illinois College](#)
[Triton College](#)
[Waubensee Community College](#)

Employment/Salary Outlook

Employment of orderlies is projected to grow 11 percent from 2014 to 2024, faster than the average for all occupations. This growth is in response to the long-term care needs of an increasing elderly population. Job prospects for nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants with formal training should be excellent, particularly in long-term care facilities.

State and National Wages

Location	Pay Period	2021		
		Low	Median	High
United States	Hourly	\$11.46	\$14.51	\$21.27
	Annual	\$23,880	\$30,310	\$44,240
Illinois	Hourly	\$13.59	\$15.43	\$18.01
	Annual	\$28,280	\$32,090	\$37,460

State and National Trends

United States	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2021	2031		
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	1,343,700	1,406,400	5%	212,700
Illinois	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2020	2030		
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	57,120	58,050	+2%	7,040

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

Employment trends data for **Nursing Assistants** is included in the trends data for *Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants*.

Professional Organizations

National Association for Home Care (nahc.org)

References

Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
(<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nursing-assistants.htm>)

O*NET OnLine (<http://online.onetcenter.org/link/details/31-1014.00>)

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