WES GLOBAL TALENT BRIDGE

CAREER PATHWAYS IN NURSING:

Using Your Foreign Education in the United States

E-GUIDE

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1
Your Career Pathway in the United States 4
The Nursing Profession in the United States 6
Gaining Recognition for Your Foreign Education 9
Educational Pathways in Nursing 11
Licensing and Certification Requirements in Nursing 18
Transferable Skills and Using Them in Related or Alternative Careers 20
SMART Goal Worksheet 25
Additional Resources in the Field of Nursing 26
Index of References 28

Pathways in Nursing | © 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Immigrating to the United States is an opportunity to use your international training to either advance in your field or pursue a new career that builds on your education and experience. Because nursing involves obtaining a license—a process that can be costly and time-consuming—it is especially important to consider your options.

This guide will help you explore career pathways related to the field of nursing, as well as alternative careers that use your skills but may not require a license. You will find useful resources to guide you as you plan for your future.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

The Pathways Guide at a Glance

If you have completed your education in nursing in another country and are now starting your career in the United States, you will need to understand to what extent you meet the academic requirements of your chosen career.

- The **Gaining Recognition for Your Foreign Education** section (page 9) will explain how to determine the U.S. equivalency of your foreign degree to help you explore career pathways in nursing and other fields.
- The **Educational Pathways in Nursing** section (page 11) provides examples of careers in healthcare that may match your qualifications.
- If you want to continue your nursing career in the United States, you must obtain a license. See the **Licensing and Certification Requirements in Nursing** section (page 18) of this guide.
- Not all internationally trained nurses decide to pursue a nursing license in the United States, either because of the time and expense involved, or because they want to pursue a different career. See the **Transferable Skills and Using Them in Related or Alternative Careers** section (page 20).

Let's get started!

Strategies for Success

Ask Lots of Questions

Although you may have a strong idea of what your career will be in the United States based on the professional experience you already have, establishing yourself in a new country is a chance to reach new goals and possibilities. Analyzing your career options in the U.S. can be challenging, but by remaining flexible you can use the education and experience you already have to take steps to succeed.

As you research your options, ask yourself:

- What are my short-term and long-term employment goals?
- What options are available to me based on my skills and qualifications?
- What are the steps and requirements in terms of time, costs, and additional training to pursue my goal?
- Who can I talk to about my options?

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Make a Plan

After you've explored some of the career options available to you in the United States, it is time to make decisions and come up with a plan. In the U.S., developing your career path requires a lifelong commitment to learning, networking, and taking risks.

A successful plan includes realistic steps and time frames for completion. Your plan should also make it possible for you to work toward multiple goals at once and allow for some setbacks along the way. It will take patience to reach your goals and it is normal to change your mind or adapt to new circumstances as you move forward.

Think about the steps it will take to reach your goal. A clear goal-oriented plan may look something like this:

GOAL: Improve my language skills.

STEPS TO GOAL:

- Take an English language course that suits my needs.
- Meet with an English language conversation partner weekly.
- Learn terminology and professional language in my field.
- Read the newspaper every day.

You can use the SMART Goal Worksheet (page 25) to guide you as you outline your plan.

Take Initiative

Although your **academic and professional credentials** are very important in your professional success, so are skills like your communication style, English language level, and ability to adapt to U.S. workplace culture. **Networking** with healthcare professionals you know, meeting professionals in the field, joining a professional association, attending conferences, and volunteering in a hospital are great ways to expand your understanding of the field, improve your skills, and grow your network in the U.S.

Finding meaningful work as an immigrant can take time and you may face challenging obstacles. Although many factors are out of your control, try to remain flexible, be persistent, and take initiative. As you explore this guide, you will find a number of helpful resources to support you.

GLOSSARY

Academic and professional credential: The degree, diploma, or license that you receive when you complete a program, pass examinations, or meet a set of requirements.

Networking: Interacting with other people to exchange information and develop contacts, especially to further one's career.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

YOUR CAREER PATHWAY IN THE UNITED STATES

Like many immigrants, you may initially struggle to gain entry into your professional field in the U.S. Although you may have adequate knowledge or experience, the challenge often occurs in translating your skills and qualifications in a way that local employers will value and understand. You may also need further education and training, an understanding of your local labor market, and knowledge of how to navigate your options to choose a **career pathway**.

> Your career pathway is made up of the educational and professional decisions that will open doors to new opportunities. Education and training are the building blocks of your career—with the skills you acquire, you can earn promotions and take on additional professional responsibilities.

To start thinking about your career options, you will need to understand the difference between regulated and non-regulated professions.

Understanding Regulated Professions

Each state decides which professions it will regulate and what level of formal education or training is required for entry into the field. In the United States, specific authorities or regulatory bodies are responsible for recognizing professional credentials required for state licensing. Because the time and cost associated with licensing varies by state, contact the relevant regulatory body before deciding to proceed with licensing. In this guide, careers usually requiring licensure are clearly marked, but again, this varies from state to state.

Understanding Non-Regulated Professions

Some occupations in the United States are either internally regulated by professional associations, or are entirely non-regulated. In occupations such as **Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)**[1], or Home Health Aide, academic credentials may be enough to gain employment. But, although less strict than **regulated professions**, certain standards of professional practice or **designations** might still be preferred by employers and professional associations in non-regulated professions. You can demonstrate that you meet these standards through a certification process linked to training programs provided by employers or community colleges.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Can I work as a nurse in the United States without a U.S. license?

The healthcare industry in the United States is highly regulated to protect public health and safety. That means that most healthcare occupations in the U.S., including nursing, require either a license or **certification** to practice.

The nursing license you may have from your home country is not valid in the U.S. Internationally trained nurses need to meet the same requirements as U.S.-educated nurses.

In this guide, occupations that require a formal certification or licensure process are clearly marked.

Many internationally trained professionals decide not to pursue employment in regulated professions due to the challenges of **relicensing**. The healthcare field provides access to less regulated employment opportunities in both clinical and non-clinical capacities, often with voluntary certification.

If you decide against relicensing as a nurse in the United States, you can still work in the healthcare field in a non-regulated occupation. Some related careers are discussed in the **Transferable Skills and Using Them in Related or Alternative Careers** section (page 20) of this guide.

GLOSSARY

Career pathway: A series of "stackable credentials"—achievements that build on each other based on continuing education, specialization, and certification to allow you to move up a career ladder.

Regulated professions: Professions that require a license or certification.

Designation: A title earned by an individual through a certification process.

Certification: A voluntary credentialing process by a non-governmental, private professional association.

Relicensing: Having to meet licensing requirements in the United States, even if you have a license from another country.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

THE NURSING PROFESSION IN THE UNITED STATES

Nursing is a regulated healthcare profession that focuses on providing care to individuals, families, and communities. It is actually the largest healthcare profession in the United States!

Nurses have a vital role in multidisciplinary healthcare teams, with special areas of responsibility. Depending on their level of training, nurses use technical, clinical, or managerial skills. They practice in different settings like homes, hospitals, schools, and doctors' offices, and they can specialize in caring for particular kinds of patients, such as children, cancer patients, or the elderly.

Working as a Nurse in the United States

A nurse's roles and responsibilities in the United States may be different than in other countries where the profession refers to more general care. Internationally trained nurses need to meet the same requirements as U.S.-educated nurses, so even if you have many years of experience, you must obtain a new license in the U.S.

In the U.S., each state/territory regulates the practice of healthcare professionals and establishes its own set of requirements and **scope of practice** concerning professional licensure.

Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) or Foreign-Educated Nurses (FENs) can obtain licenses in the U.S., although it can be a costly and time-consuming process.

For example, to register as a nurse in New York in 2017, you would have to pay an initial credential verification fee of $550.00, an application fee of $143.00, course and certificate fees of $70.00, and an exam fee of $500.00.

The costs associated with relicensing change over time and vary depending on your state, so check what the specifics are for your location.

GLOSSARY

Scope of practice: The procedures, actions, and processes that a healthcare practitioner is permitted to undertake in keeping with the terms of their professional license.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

It is recommended that IENs or FENs contact the **Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)**[2] for assistance in obtaining a license in the United States. The CGFNS will assist you by evaluating:

- Foreign education
  - Some states may require you to complete a Foreign Educated Nurses (FEN) refresher course that typically consists of 120 hours in the classroom and 120 hours of clinical practice under the supervision of a licensed Registered Nurse.
- Foreign licensure

Because nursing license requirements vary by state, consider these key points:

- Each state in the U.S. is responsible for the licensure of nurses within that state. State-specific licensure information can be found by visiting the **National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) website**.[3]
- All U.S. nursing boards require candidates to pass either:
  - The National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN)
  - The National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurses (NCLEX-PN)

Roles and Responsibilities

The main designation for a licensed nurse in the United States is as a Registered Nurse (RN).

In the U.S., nurses are responsible for:

- Working with a variety of patients from pediatric to geriatric, or specializing in one area such as neonatal intensive care, cardiac care, dermatology, or radiology.
- Observing and recording patient behavior and vital statistics.
- Consulting with physicians and other health care practitioners on treatment plans and options.
- Following treatment plans, operating medical equipment, and administrating medications.
- Supervising Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and Certified Nurse Assistants (CNAs).

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Understanding Job Titles

The roles and responsibilities of Registered Nurses are highly dependent on areas of expertise and experience. For example, when searching for employment as a Registered Nurse, you may see job postings with the following titles:

- Chief Nursing Officer
- Nurse Anesthetist
- Critical Care Nurse
- Clinical Nurse Manager
- Labor and Delivery Nurse
- Patient Educator

Continuing education and training can open doors for additional certifications and practicing in different settings.

You can read more about academic and professional credentials in the Educational Pathways in Nursing section (page 11) of this guide.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

GAINING RECOGNITION FOR YOUR FOREIGN EDUCATION

Your education is the foundation of your career. Although there may be challenges to using your foreign credentials in the United States, you do not have to "start over." For an internationally trained professional, exploring career pathways begins with an understanding of the value of the education you received in your home country.

Obtaining a **foreign credential evaluation** is often the first step an immigrant takes to gain access to educational and employment opportunities in the U.S. A credential evaluation helps you gain recognition for your previous studies by considering your country's education system, the status of the institution you attended, the content of the program, and any entry and graduation requirements.

A credential evaluation compares the education you received in your country to a similar degree or diploma in the United States and provides a **degree equivalency**.

In the United States, employers, licensing boards, and universities use credential evaluations to judge the quality and level of your academic achievements in comparison to U.S.-educated candidates:

- Universities use the information to make admissions decisions and to award transfer credit or advanced standing in a program.
- Employers and licensing boards refer to credential evaluations to assess whether or not you meet their academic requirements.

Unlike many other countries, the U.S. does not have a national education ministry to evaluate foreign degrees. As a result, some academic institutions and state licensing boards—and nearly all employers—rely on agencies like **World Education Services**[4] (WES) to examine official documents. Others perform their own evaluations or use preferred agencies.

Before requesting a credential evaluation from any agency, contact the institution that needs the evaluation to understand their requirements. These institutions are responsible for the final recognition decision.

For nurses educated outside the United States, all U.S. State Boards of Nursing require credential evaluation, certification, or verification as the first step in the application process. Specific requirements differ by state. Check the **Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)**[5] for a complete listing of the specific evaluation requirements by state.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

If you are exploring a new career, it may be helpful to have an idea of the U.S. equivalency of your foreign credentials.

WES allows you to preview the U.S. equivalency of your highest completed degree by using their **free degree equivalency tool**.[6]

Note: *This preview does not replace a formal credential evaluation that may be needed for official purposes.*

Many regulated professions in the U.S. require you to have your foreign degree evaluation conducted by a professional association or preferred provider. If you are applying for a license or certification, always remember to check with your state's licensing board and/or educational institution to ensure that a WES evaluation is recognized and accepted. If so, you can apply for a WES credential evaluation.

Watch* The WES Evaluation Process Explained**[7] ***video to learn more about credential evaluation.

Advanced Standing and Transfer Credit

If you are applying to an academic program, you may be eligible for **advanced standing** or **transfer credit** for previous education.

For internationally educated individuals, advanced standing and transfer credit is usually determined at the time of application through a foreign credential evaluation.

GLOSSARY

Foreign credential evaluation: An expert analysis of a foreign degree or diploma.

Degree equivalency: The extent to which a degree or diploma earned abroad compares to a similar U.S. credential.

Advanced standing: This means you may be allowed to skip pre-requisites for admission into a course, or not repeat a required course, reducing the time to complete a degree.

Transfer credit: This means that your previous education is counted toward the total number of credits required for the degree.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS IN NURSING

Once you know the value of your foreign degree, you can use the information in this section to move forward in your career.

Nursing is a growing and rewarding field that offers many exciting career options. In this section, you will find some examples of nursing careers you may be qualified for, including their key roles and responsibilities and where further education may be helpful. You will also find information on how to meet the academic requirements for some popular nursing careers.

There are many ways to enter the nursing field. Some internationally trained nurses gain U.S. experience in entry-level professions as they pursue licensing. Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), for example, only require the completion of a state-approved education program. Others begin by enrolling in degree programs to gain access to higher-level jobs.

HELPFUL TIPS

Research shows that immigrants who add a U.S. degree or certification to their foreign education and training are more likely to progress faster in their careers.

A career pathway is a series of "stackable credentials"—achievements that build on each other based on continuing education, specialization, and certification to allow you to move up a career ladder.

ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE IN NURSING DEGREE (ASN)

ASSOCIATE DEGREE IN NURSING (ADN)

Registered Nurse (RN)[8]

- Provide nursing care to patients and may offer health education and consultative services.
- Employed in hospitals, nursing homes, extended care facilities, rehabilitation centers, doctors' offices, clinics, community agencies, companies, and private homes, or self-employed.

Pathways in Nursing | © 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Specializations include:

- **Public Health Nurse**[9]
- **Pediatric Nurse**[10]
- **Psychiatric Nurse**[11]
- **Geriatric Nurse**[12]

Completion of an accredited nursing program and state licensure is required.

GO FURTHER

Although RNs can find jobs with an Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) degree, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree may increase your chances of finding employment. There is a growing national movement to require all nurses to hold a BSN.

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NURSING DEGREE (BSN)

Registered Nurse (RN)[8]

- Provide nursing care to patients and may offer health education and consultative services.
- Employed in hospitals, nursing homes, extended care facilities, rehabilitation centers, doctors' offices, clinics, community agencies, companies, and private homes, or self-employed.

Specializations include:

- **Occupational Health Nurse**[13]
- **Clinical Nurse Leader**[14]
- **Nurse Advocate**[15]

Completion of an accredited Nursing program and state licensure is required.

GO FURTHER

You can upgrade your education and skills to qualify for more jobs in the field of nursing by earning a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree. If you have the equivalency of a BSN, you can also consider a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree, a graduate degree that prepares you to work on a wide range of public health initiatives without requiring a license.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN NURSING DEGREE (MSN)

Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN): Nurse Anesthetist, Nurse Midwife, and Nurse Practitioner (NP)[16]

- Work as a licensed RN with post-graduate education in a specialized educational background.
- Function as a primary care provider to the public.
- Responsibilities include diagnosing and treating patients with chronic illnesses and prescribing medications.

Licensure is required.

Nurse Educator[17]

- Train the current and future generation of nurses in nursing schools, hospitals, public health agencies, and other community settings.
- Responsible for ensuring the quality of nursing education by designing, implementing, evaluating, and reviewing academic and continuing education programs for nurses.
- The Certification for Nurse Educators (CNE) is granted by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). You must already be an RN to pass this examination to become a nurse educator.

Licensure is required.

Master of Public Health (MPH) Degree

In the U.S., any person with an accredited undergraduate degree may pursue an MPH and it usually takes two years of full-time work to complete. Some states recognize MPH holders as supportive clinical professionals (interacting with patients) especially with regard to preventive medicine, health education, and other functions in the clinical and hospital environments.

GO FURTHER

Upgrade your education and skills to qualify for more jobs in the field of nursing by earning an advanced degree.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

DOCTOR OF NURSING PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.)
DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE (DNP)

With these advanced degrees, you can supervise nursing homes, head local health outreach efforts, and assume oversight for hospital nursing practices. In contrast to a nursing Ph.D., which primarily focuses on research and teaching, a DNP can advance your career on the clinical side.

***Note**: A Ph.D. degree is optional for some occupations but can make you more competitive in the job market.*

Nurse Researcher[18]

- Conduct research on various aspects of healthcare and illness in order to improve the field of nursing.
- Work is conducted in various settings, including schools, hospitals, laboratories, scientific organizations, and private companies.

Licensure is required.

Nurse Executive[19]

- Facilitate the design of patient care delivery, advance the discipline of nursing, build relationships with staff and colleagues, and foster stewardship.
- Must have strong leadership and management skills, along with critical thinking, decision-making, and communication skills.

Licensure is required.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Academic Requirements in Nursing

Consider these educational requirements for careers in the field of nursing, from entry-level to advanced professions.

As the first step in the application process, all U.S. State Boards of Nursing require nurses educated outside of the U.S. to have their credentials evaluated. Requirements differ by state, and applicants must select either the RN or LPN evaluation category when applying.

Requirements for Nursing Aide

- Requires no formal education and can be trained on-the-job in most states; however, most employers prefer hiring graduates of accredited post-secondary education programs.
- Programs are accredited either through the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) or the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES).

Requirements for Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)

- Must earn a post-secondary certificate or award from a state certified CNA program and complete supervised clinical work in addition to passing a state certification examination.
- CNA programs are found in community colleges, vocational and technical schools, and in hospitals and nursing homes. Some high schools also offer nursing aide programs.
- In order to be admitted to CNA programs, you must have the equivalent of a high school diploma.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Requirements for
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)

- Must complete a state-approved training program in practical nursing or its foreign equivalent and obtain state licensure.

  ***Note**: Internationally trained RNs can get approval to take the NCLEX exam for LPNs, and some choose that pathway as a more manageable first step.*

- Training programs are available from high schools, technical and vocational schools, community and junior colleges, universities, and hospitals.
- LPN programs usually take 12-18 months to complete.
- Minimum education requirement for an LPN program is a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Apply to Nursing School as an Advanced Standing Student

Many U.S. nursing schools enable internationally trained nurses to receive credit for previous education and gain advanced standing. For example, an RN with the equivalent of an associate degree may want to obtain a bachelor's degree for better career prospects or professional advancement. When researching schools, be sure to check with the admissions office to see if this advanced standing can apply to you.

Search "State-approved RN Programs"[20]

Requirements for
Registered Nurse (RN)

- Obtain an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) or Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) degree (two to three years), nursing diploma (three years), or Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree (four years), or have a completed foreign equivalent.
- Must apply for licensure through your state's board of nursing upon completion of a state-approved nursing program or an equivalent program abroad.
- After receiving your RN license, consider taking a nursing refresher course to learn about the U.S. healthcare system while gaining clinical experience.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Case Study: Tsering

Tsering, an ethnic Tibetan, immigrated to the United States from India in 2009. In order to continue the work she had done as a nurse in her native country, Tsering enrolled in the NCLEX-Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) preparation course for English Language Learners through the NYC Welcome Back Center (WBC) at LaGuardia Community College in New York. The intensive eight-month training course integrated English language skills practice with technical instruction, while also providing assistance filling out credential verification applications. With this guidance, Tsering was able to obtain her New York State nursing license, and, finally, pass the NCLEX-RN exam. She is now continuing the career she began before immigrating and works as a full-time Registered Nurse (RN) in New York.

Requirements for
Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN)

- Must possess a state-issued RN license, have completed advanced training beyond an undergraduate level RN course (BSN), and hold a MSN. **varies by state*
- Graduate programs prepare registered nurses to become nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, clinical nurse specialists, and certified registered nurses.
- A growing number of nursing schools offer accelerated BSN and MSN programs for non-nursing college graduates, as well as RN-to-Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) and BSN-to-Ph.D. programs.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS IN NURSING

This section of the guide provides general information on licensing and helpful resources to guide you as you move forward. Consult the **National Council of State Boards of Nursing**[21] for up-to-date information.

Licensure for Nurses

If you want to practice as a RN, LPN, or enroll in advanced nursing degree programs in the United States, you must either obtain a state-issued license or meet the prerequisites for admission.

- Licensing requirements for internationally trained nurses vary by state. Each state has a board of nursing that regulates licenses. You can search the **Nursing License Map**[22] for state-specific information on how to become a nurse, nurse salaries, nursing credentials, nurse certification tests, and nursing compact agreements.

Discovernursing.com provides a **step-by-step overview**[23] of the licensing process of foreign-educated nurses. However, you should always **consult with your state's board of nursing**[24] to learn about state-specific requirements and steps.

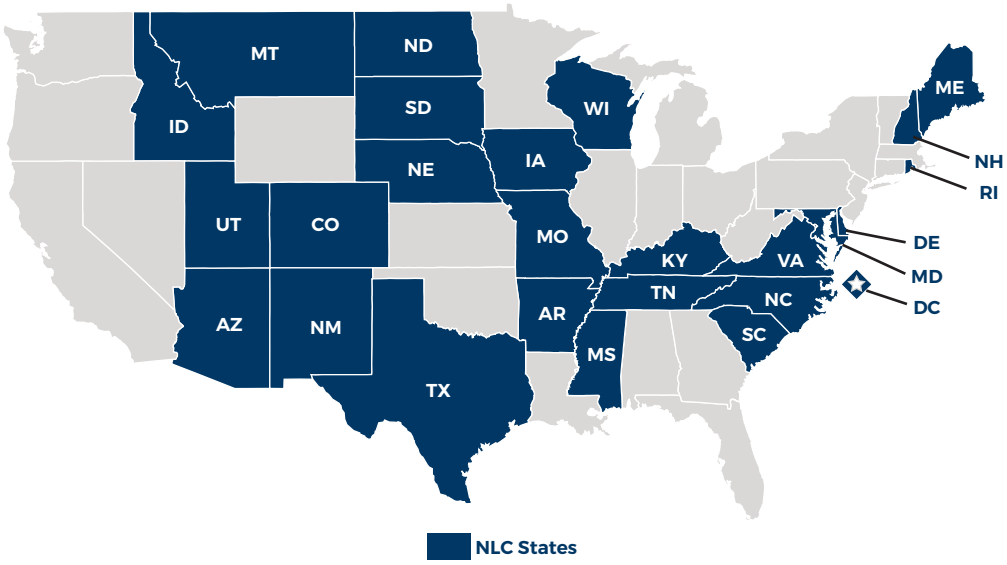
- In most states, to be eligible for licensure, you must successfully pass the NCLEX examination.
    - Specific state boards of nursing require the CGFNS Certification Program in order to take the NCLEX.
- Licensing takes time. Make sure to plan sufficient time for this process.

HELPFUL TIPS

The state of California allows you to apply for a six-month temporary license that entitles you to work as a nurse under supervision before you pass the NCLEX exam.

The **NCLEX** is administered at test centers throughout the United States and internationally. The examination covers four areas: safe effective care environment, health promotion and maintenance, psychosocial integrity, and physiological integrity. Candidates must correctly answer a minimum of 75 multiple-choice questions.

Interstate Licensing Agreements: Working in Other States



Source: **ncsbn.org/NLC_Map.pdf**

The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC)[25] is an interstate agreement that allows nurses to have one multistate license, with the ability to practice in both their home state and other compact states. You can obtain a compact (multistate) license as an Eligible Nurse if you:

- Legally reside in a NLC state.
- Hold an active RN or LPN/VN nursing license in good standing.
- Declare a NLC state as your primary state of residency.

***Note**: Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) are not included in this compact.*

The information presented in this guide should not be considered exhaustive. It is always important to consult state licensing boards and professional associations for the latest and most authoritative guidance. See page 26 for a list of helpful resources.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS AND USING THEM IN RELATED OR ALTERNATIVE CAREERS

Transferable Skills

Many immigrants find that they may not be qualified for the same job they had in their home country because job titles and requirements in their field are different in the United States. Whether because of a lengthy licensing process or a need for immediate employment, they may pursue other options that use their training and experience.

The key to finding alternative paths to a fulfilling career is to identify your *skills* (what you know how to do), *knowledge* (what you know), *competencies* (what you are good at), and *aptitudes* (what is easy for you to learn) that can be useful in a related or alternative career. These **transferable skills** are essential for career success and will enable you to adapt to changing circumstances, especially when your education and experience are from another country.

As you identify your transferable skills, it can be helpful to think about the difference between *hard skills* and *soft skills*. Employers place great value on *soft skills*, such as your ability to communicate, lead others, organize projects, and work effectively on a team—skills you probably already use on a daily basis. You can also apply your more technical *hard skills*, such as computer skills, foreign language fluency, and understanding specialized vocabulary, to a completely different career.

Are you including your transferable skills on your résumé?

Nursing professionals typically have the following skills and expertise that could be applied to a different career:

- Monitoring, assessing, and evaluating complex situations.
- Juggling multiple tasks at once.
- Keeping detailed records.
- Delegating responsibility and managing outcomes.
- Collaborating with other professionals on an interdisciplinary team.
- Managing crises.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Related and Alternative Careers

Why Consider a Different Career?

Finding employment in a related or alternative job can:

- Open doors to new career possibilities.
- Provide income while you work toward your license.
- Grow your **professional network** in the United States.
- Help you gain American work experience.

If you have spent many years committed to a profession, it is understandable to feel that your career—just like your relationships, hobbies, and beliefs—is a key part of your identity. It is not unusual to experience a sense of identity loss or failure at having to explore a **new career path**.[26] In the United States, however, going "back to school" to switch careers is quite common.

Some of the careers described in this section require additional education or training. It is possible to find options that take only a few months, as well as more in-depth options that can take a year or more.

Examples of Related Careers

Allied health careers[27] support the fields of nursing, medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of patients. There are dozens of occupations that you can explore in this category that include both technical and clinical roles. Some examples are occupational therapist, nutritionist, medical sonographer, and laboratory technician. Although a license or certification is usually required for these professions, the cost and length of training may be less than that needed to relicense as a nurse.

Some healthcare careers do not require you to be licensed or certified. These are ideal options for internationally trained nurses who want to continue working in the field of healthcare, but do not want to undergo the relicensing process, or who want to work while relicensing in the United States.

Healthcare Interpreter[28]

- Help patients with limited English proficiency communicate with doctors, nurses, and other medical staff.
- Requires a strong grasp of medical terminology in both languages, along with cultural sensitivity.

- Often self-employed.
- Minimum requirements vary by state and most states do not require certification.
- There are two national certifications for healthcare interpreters: The **Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI)**[29] and the **National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters (NBCMI)**.[30]

Homecare Assistant/Aide[31]

- Assist people who are ill or disabled with activities of daily living.
- Administer medications and perform routine examinations.
- It is not necessary for a homecare assistant/aide who works in patients' homes to have certification. However, some employers prefer hiring certified candidates.
- A homecare aide who works for Medicare-certified home health agencies must have state certification or pass a competency evaluation program that meets certain federal regulation standards.
- The **National Association for Home Care & Hospice**[32] (NAHC) certifies homecare assistants/aides.

Medical Transcriptionist[33]

- Record physicians' and other healthcare workers' recordings into written reports.
- Interpret medical terminology in preparing patients' medical histories, discharge summaries, and other documents.

Pharmacy Technician[34]

- Help pharmacists dispense prescription medication to customers or healthcare professionals.
- Work in pharmacies, which can be located in grocery stores, drug stores, hospitals, and healthcare facilities.
- A high school diploma is required to become a pharmacy technician. Training is provided on the job, and many states require pharmacy technicians to pass an exam or a formal education program.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Case Study: Mohammed

When he came to the United States as a refugee from Iraq in 2015, Mohammed left behind a successful career as a nurse in Baghdad, and assumed he would step into the same profession in the United States.

Once his family was settled, Mohammed hoped to quickly find work as a nurse, but the relicensing process was longer and more costly than he had anticipated. He needed to support his family right away, and hoped to find work that would use his skills and professional experience.

With the help of a resettlement agency, he was able to enroll in a short medical interpretation certification class offered by a local community college. As a medical interpreter, he was able to use his experience in nursing and his understanding of medical terminology to help Arabic-speaking patients communicate with their medical team. He is currently financially stable, making about $22 an hour, and looking forward to taking the NCLEX examination later this year to obtain his U.S. nursing license.

Examples of Alternative Careers

Alternative careers are occupations outside of the field of healthcare in which you can use the skills and knowledge you gained during your education and training as a nurse. Consider these types of careers if you are interested in exploring a different career path.

Technical Writer[35]

- Prepare instruction manuals, how-to guides, journal articles, and other resources to clearly communicate complex information, such as medical information.
- Work in a variety of industries.
- A college degree is usually required, as well as experience or expertise in a specific subject.

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Medical Sales Representative[36]

- Provide physicians and hospitals with information and customer service to purchase new medical devices, products, and supplies.
- Requires the ability to make presentations and to manage a region or caseload of clients.
- Educational requirements vary and on-the-job training is usually provided.

Hospice Manager[37]

- Provide administrative oversight for management of hospice facility and compliance with all regulations.
- Train and coach interdisciplinary teams.
- Educational and experience requirements vary.

Health Insurance Claims Specialist[38]

- Apply knowledge of medical terminology and diagnostic coding to process medical insurance claims and resolve billing issues.
- A high school diploma is sufficient, but employers typically prefer to hire candidates with bachelor's degrees.

Community Health Worker[39]

- A trusted member of the community who serves as a liaison between community and social/health services.
- Responsibilities may include outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.
- Some employers require only a high school diploma, whereas others require a college degree. This is not a licensed profession and on-the-job training is often provided.

GLOSSARY

Transferable skills: Skills developed in one situation or occupation that can be transferred to another context.

Professional network: Relationships and acquaintances that you stay in contact with based on professional rather than personal connections.

SMART GOAL WORKSHEET

Now that you have reviewed this guide, the next step is to think about your career plan.
We recommend using Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based (SMART) goals.
You can use this SMART goal template to help you identify your next steps.

GOAL	SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACHIEVABLE	RELEVANT	TIME-BASED
What do you want to achieve?	Who? What? Why? Where? When?	How much? How often? How many?	Can it be done?	Is it relevant to your ultimate vision?	When?

Pathways in Nursing | © 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES IN THE FIELD OF NURSING

You can explore the following helpful resources for more information on education, employment, licensing, and financial assistance to pursue a career in the nursing field.

Educational Resources

- **Nursing education programs**[40] includes guidelines prepared by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN). There is also information about different nursing programs based on academic levels, bridge programs, and accelerated programs.
- The **NYC Welcome Back Center**[41] at LaGuardia Community College (CUNY) offers a variety of free courses for international candidates. If you want to become licensed in New York State, you can enroll in the **NCLEX Preparation Course for Internationally Trained Nurses**.[42]
- The **English for Health Care**[43] courses give a basic overview of medical terminology and help students who are Home Health Aides or non-clinical hospital employees in NY.
- The **Acclimation of International Nurses into U.S. Nursing Practice**[44] course is designed for internationally trained nurses who would like to practice in the U.S.
- The ESOL Bridge to Allied Health Careers course at LaGuardia Community College (CUNY) is designed for immigrants who want to join the healthcare industry in NY.

Career/Employment Resources

- **Nurse.com**[45] includes a search engine for nursing jobs that addresses questions for prospective nurses in the U.S.
- **National Student Nurses Association (NSNA)**[46] provides information for nurses on how to write cover letters and résumés, as well as tips on **how to get a job in nursing**.[47]
- **NurseZone.com**[48] offers job interviewing tips for prospective nurses.
- **Career Link**[49] lists employment opportunities in nursing education.
- **New Careers in Nursing Career Central**[50] offers career tools, advice, and mentorship opportunities.
- **ExploreHealthCareers**[51] offers comprehensive information about a wide variety of health careers.
- **Discover Nursing**[52] includes a step-by-step overview of 104 professions in the nursing field as well as a nursing program search engine and a scholarship search function.
- **Welcome Back Initiative**[53] helps foreign-trained health professionals re-enter their careers in the United States. There are 10 Welcome Back Centers across the U.S.
- **Resumeok.com**[54] provides résumés examples and templates for healthcare professionals, including **CNAs**[55] and **medical nurses**.[56]

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Licensing Resources

- **Resource Manual for International Nurses**[57] includes information on licensing, degree evaluation, English proficiency, and immigration for nurses in the U.S.
- **The Official Guide for Foreign-Educated Nurses**[58] is a guide book for foreign-educated nurses in the U.S.
- **Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools Certification**[59] offers information about CGFNS certification that is required by many U.S. boards in order to take the NCLEX-RN exam for licensing.
- **Nurse Licensure Compact**[60] includes information about nursing licensure (RN &LPN) that is valid in 24 states.
- **Upwardly Global's Professional Licensing Guides**[61] provide licensing information for California, Illinois, Michigan, New Hampshire, and New York.
- **National Council of State Nursing Boards**[62] provides links to all nurse aide state registries.

Financial Resources

- The Office of the U.S. Department of Education provides **resources for eligible non-U.S. citizens**.[63]

Pathways in Nursing | © 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

INDEX OF REFERENCES

The Nursing Profession in the United States

1. https://nursingassistantguides.com/what-is-a-certified-nursing-assistant-cna/
2. http://www.cgfns.org/
3. https://www.ncsbn.org/index.htm

Gaining Recognition for Your Foreign Education

4. http://www.wes.org/
5. http://www.cgfns.org/support/resources/
6. https://applications.wes.org/degree-equivalency-tool/
7. https://youtu.be/7lMmpBb1pn8

Educational Pathways in Nursing

8. http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm
9. https://www.discovernursing.com/specialty/public-health-nurse#.Vz4NXvkrLcs
10. https://www.discovernursing.com/specialty/pediatric-nurse#.Vz4NjvkrLcs
11. https://www.discovernursing.com/specialty/psychiatric-nurse#.Vz4Np_krLcs
12. https://www.discovernursing.com/specialty/geriatric-nurse#.Vz4NufkrLcs
13. https://www.discovernursing.com/specialty/occupational-health-nurse
14. https://www.discovernursing.com/specialty/clinical-nurse-leader#.WXuW6YqQwUE
15. https://www.discovernursing.com/specialty/nurse-advocate
16. https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nurse-anesthetists-nurse-midwives-and-nurse-practitioners.htm
17. https://www.discovernursing.com/specialty/nurse-educator#.WYDJcITyvcs
18. https://www.discovernursing.com/specialty/nurse-researcher#.WR8HVsm1sUF
19. https://www.discovernursing.com/specialty/nurse-executive#.WR8HZ8m1sUF
20. http://www.acenursing.us/accreditedprograms/programSearch.htm

© 2017 World Education Services. All rights reserved.

Licensing and Certification Requirements in Nursing

21. **https://www.ncsbn.org/index.htm**
22. **https://nursinglicensemap.com**
23. **http://www.discovernursing.com/starting-out#.UvOiGj1dVKo**
24. **https://www.ncsbn.org/contact-bon.htm**
25. **https://www.ncsbn.org/enhanced-nlc-implementation.htm**

Transferable Skills and Using Them in Related or Alternative Careers

26. **http://cjcdonline.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Restoring-Hope-Responding-to-Career-Concerns-of-Immigrant-Clients1.pdf**
27. **https://explorehealthcareers.org/field/allied-health-professions/**
28. **https://explorehealthcareers.org/career/allied-health-professions/health-care-interpreter/**
29. **http://www.healthcareinterpretercertification.org/**
30. **http://www.certifiedmedicalinterpreters.org/**
31. **https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/home-health-aides.htm**
32. **http://www.nahc.org/**
33. **https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/medical-transcriptionists.htm**
34. **https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/pharmacy-technicians.htm**
35. **https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/technical-writers.htm**
36. **https://www.verywell.com/medical-device-sales-jobs-1736209**
37. **http://www.topmastersinhealthcare.com/job-profiles/hospice-administrator/**
38. **http://education-portal.com/articles/Health_Claims_Specialist_Job_Description_and_Requirements_for_Becoming_a_Health_Claims_Specialist.html**
39. **https://explorehealthcareers.org/career/allied-health-professions/community-health-worker/**

Additional Resources in the Field of Nursing

40. **http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Education/nurse_ed/nep_index.htm**
41. **http://www.laguardia.edu/nycwbc/**
42. **http://www.laguardia.edu/uploadedFiles/CE/Content/Career_Skills_and_Training/Healthcare/NYC_Welcome_Back_Center/NCLEX-Preparation-Course.pdf**

43. **http://www.laguardia.edu/ciet/**
44. **http://learningext.com/nurses/p/acclimation_intl_nurses.aspx**
45. **http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/ciet/work_description.html**
46. **http://www.nurse.com/jobs/browse/**
47. **http://www.nsna.org/**
48. **http://www.nsna.org/career-planning-guides.html**
49. **http://www.nursezone.com/Recent-Graduates/interviewing-tips.aspx**
50. **http://www.aacn.nche.edu/career-link**
51. **http://www.newcareersinnursing.org/scholars/career-central**
52. **http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/home**
53. **https://www.discovernursing.com/launch-your-nursing-career#.WSW09Ovyvcs**
54. **http://www.welcomebackinitiative.org/wb/index.html**
55. **http://www.resumeok.com/doctors-resume-samples/**
56. **http://www.resumeok.com/certified-nursing-assistant/**
57. **http://www.resumeok.com/medical-nurse-resume-example/**
58. **https://www.ncsbn.org/171.htm (free download)**
59. **http://www.springerpub.com/product/9780826110657**
60. **http://www.cgfns.org/**
61. **https://www.ncsbn.org/nlc.htm**
62. **http://www.upwardlyglobal.org/job-seekers/american-licensed-professions/licensed-professions-guides**
63. **http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/immigration-resources.html**

WES GLOBAL TALENT BRIDGE

Our Expertise. Your Success.

wes.org

nyc@wes.org

WES Global Talent Bridge is a program dedicated to helping skilled immigrants fully utilize their talents and education in the United States. Global Talent Bridge joins with institutional partners and community organizations to help skilled immigrants leverage their training, achieve their professional goals, and contribute their talents to their full potential.

Global Talent Bridge provides technical assistance, staff training and specialized resources to community organizations, adult education programs, government agencies and academic institutions so they can better support, advise and integrate highly-qualified immigrants. It also conducts research and policy advocacy efforts to advance opportunities for skilled immigrants at the local, state and national level.

Find us on **Facebook**, **LinkedIn**, and **Twitter**.

Tweet us with any questions and comments online by using @WESAdvisor.

Click here to subscribe to our newsletter.