

Nurses Go Back to School and How This Affects Staffing

The back-to-school affects registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and certified nursing assistants (CNAs) as well.

BOUNTIFUL, UTAH, UNITED STATES, August 31, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- It's that time of year again: Colleges and universities are opening their doors, and students are buckling down, buying their books, and organizing their schedules as they prepare to go back to school for the fall semester. While this seasonal influx of students into lecture halls doesn't massively impact all industries, it does impact the healthcare industry, which is already straining to cover staffing needs due to the [ongoing nursing shortage](#).

How Many Nursing Professionals Go Back to School?

The back-to-school season affects not only the workforce of registered nurses (RNs) but of licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and certified nursing assistants (CNAs) as well. There are many motivations for nursing professionals to go back to school to advance their careers, such as the following:

Many see the increased earning capabilities as a suitable motivator as there is a stark difference between the average LPN and average RN salaries.

Others may be reaching limits to their scope of practice due to their level of licensure.

Still others entered the nursing occupation in a supportive role based on what their finances could manage at the time and are progressing up the ladder as time and resources allow.



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Hire PRN Nurses When Your Nurses Go Back to School

According to the American Association of [Colleges of Nursing \(AACN\)](#), there are presently 747 RN-to-BSN programs (for RNs with associate's degrees to obtain Bachelor of Science in Nursing degrees) and 658 schools of nursing that offer Masters of Nursing Science (MSN) programs that are up and running across the country; currently, enrollment for the bridge programs is around 98,000, and MSN programs have over 131,000 students. Additionally, there are over 600 LPN-to-RN bridge programs, although enrollment data is unavailable.

How Does Clinicians Returning to School Affect Healthcare Staffing?

With a large workforce population of over 5 million RNs, 970,000 LPNs, and 1.3 million CNAs—all positions along a path with opportunities for advancement—it's perhaps not surprising that August would be an especially challenging time of year for administrators and schedulers as they work to adjust scheduling accommodations and address new vacancies or shift gaps. How do these adjustments lead to healthcare staffing fluctuations and shortages?

Nurses leaving their staff positions in order to focus on advanced-paced programs to attain their licensure goals poses challenges for healthcare facilities, both due to the staffing vacancies and the loss of valuable experience among the nursing staff. Not all nursing professionals who go back to school leave their jobs entirely; hybrid programs that fuse online curricula with in-person training or clinicals are widely popular because they allow those working to perhaps keep their staff positions—albeit with reduced hours. Nevertheless, having even a few nurses or nursing assistants on staff reduce their hours from full- to part-time is no small challenge. Increased position vacancies and reduced availability of staff leave administrators and schedulers with the problem of maintaining safe patient-to-nurse staffing ratios.

Does the Demand for Per Diem Nurses Increase in the Fall?

The demand for per diem nurses (also referred to as PRN nurses) often increases in the fall. This increase can be correlated to the increased staffing demands from facilities due to some staff going back to school and to the change in weather and the usual ailments, viruses, and such that accompany this change.

The fact is that utilizing PRN nurses is an effective, affordable, and flexible method of addressing staffing shortages. When facilities hire PRN nurses on Nursa's open healthcare marketplace, there are quick results, no long-term commitments, and no financial resources spent on benefits (retirement, insurance, etc.).

By hiring PRN nurses one shift at a time, facilities can accomplish all of the following:

- Adjust their staffing needs efficiently to correlate with their patient admissions and fill the shift gaps created by the trusted staff who had to reduce their hours but will eventually return
- Schedule experienced nurses to cover vacancies while facilities seek out new permanent staff—with less pressure
- Source local talent unavailable for full-time positions but looking for contract work

- Avoid overburdening full-time staff, which increases burnout
- Facilitate retention and eschew high turnover costs

Recruiting a new RN for a staff position takes approximately 95 days; furthermore, facilities may not want to hire new staff to fill positions across the board because that limits their flexibility in adjusting to patient admissions. Therefore, short-term staffing strategies are important tools, and there is no better short-term tool than to utilize per diem nursing professionals to fill the gaps.

Cover Staffing Gaps As Nursing Professionals Go Back to School

This August, one can use PRN nursing professionals to temporarily fill vacancies by using Nursa, the open healthcare marketplace that connects their facility with PRN healthcare staff near them. One can protect patients and staff by maintaining safe nurse-to-patient ratios every shift when they contract experienced nurses and nursing assistants who work PRN.

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