Public Interest Job Feature

Make a Difference as a Director of Licensed Care

One of the biggest job sectors in the United States that continually requires employees is that of health care. As the population ages, those who participate in direct patient care are going to be most in demand. One of the most cost-effective ways to do this is by using the services of licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses. Finding a job opening at a licensed practical nurse or a licensed vocational nurse can be one of the easiest healthcare jobs to find. If you choose a career as a licensed vocational nurse or a licensed practical nurse, you can advance in your career by eventually becoming a director of vocational nursing or some other similar job title. These types of director jobs are going to continue to be in demand, too, because nurses at this level will require the direct supervision of an administrative director, such as that of a registered nurse in charge of nursing services.

What does it mean to be a licensed practical nurse or a licensed vocational nurse?

As a licensed practical or vocational nurse, you care for people who are convalescing, disabled, injured, or sick under the direction of other healthcare personnel such as doctors or nurses. You may provide help with hygiene, take height, weight, temperature, respiration and pulse readings, give massages, dress wounds, and so on. You may also help patients stand or walk when necessary.

As you continue in your career, you may also provide supervision to those who are nursing aides or assistants.

Overall, your job when working in director jobs is to supervise, monitor and help patients wherever they need. You may also take information from patients like health histories and current health status. You give this information to registered nurses and doctors so that they can determine how best to treat a patient.

You may also work in teaching capacity, whereby you teach friends or relatives of patients to care for them or teach about good health habits or other necessary skills. Some states will allow you to dispense medications, start IVs, or provide ventilator care to those who use ventilators.

Where do licensed practical nurses and licensed care directors work?

Most often, these types of health professionals work in many different areas, although some may specialize by working in convalescent centers, rehabilitation centers, doctors offices, or by providing in-home health care.

Background and education

If you begin your career as a licensed practical nurse or licensed vocational nurse, you will usually go to school for a year first, usually at a community or junior college. Once you finish your degree, you have to pass an examination to become licensed. This examination is known as the NCLEX-PN and can only be completed after you have also completed a state approved practical nursing program, such as those offered at many community colleges or vocational schools. In most cases, to get into one of these programs, you will need a high school diploma or the equivalent. Some high schools also offer programs in these areas.

As part of your training, you will have both classroom study and clinical care practice. Classroom study will cover aspects of patient care including physiology, anatomy, pediatrics, psychiatric nursing, obstetrics, medical-surgical nursing, drugs' administration, nutrition, and first aid practices.

Once you get into clinical practice, it will be supervised direct patient care as described above in a hospital or other clinical setting. After finishing graduation, you can take the exam to become licensed.

Advancing in your career

Once you are a licensed practical nurse or a licensed vocational nurse, you can become a registered nurse. Much of the time, registered nurses are the ones who can assume jobs as directors of licensed care. In some cases, you as an experienced licensed practical nurse may oversee the job duties of health care aides and other entry-level patient care jobs.

Nursing home settings also give licensed practical nurses the opportunity to become charge nurses in some cases; these nurses oversee other LPNs' work; again, you can also choose to become a registered nurse, as this is a common career path for an LPN to take. Many degree programs exist whereby you can receive additional training to become a registered nurse once you've become a licensed practical or vocational nurse.

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Other necessary skills

In addition to an affinity for the medical field, you will also need to be compassionate and patient, since many patients you work with are dealing with difficult situations. You will also need to have considerable physical strength, since this type of work requires a lot of standing, kneeling, lifting, and so on. Once you move into administrative positions, these skills are less necessary, but you will still need them at the start of your career.

If you become a director of licensed care, you will have to deal with a variety of people with a calm, direct manner, and to be good at managing a variety of tasks simultaneously.

Job outlook and compensation

Licensed practical and vocational nurses have very good job prospects for the future, in large part because an aging population requires the services of these most important health care professionals. Positions as directors of licensed care are of course less common than licensed practical nurses, but can be a relevant next step to attain once you have established yourself in a nursing career.

On average, licensed practical nurses made about $37,000 a year as of 2006, with directors of licensed care earning more.

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