

EVERYTHING YOU
NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT BECOMING A
NURSE'S ASSISTANT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
1 UNDERSTAND THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A NURSING ASSISTANT.	6
BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING	7
WEARING MANY DIFFERENT HATS.....	8
BREAKDOWN OF A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE NURSING ASSISTANT	9
2 FIND A CNA PROGRAM THAT FITS YOUR NEEDS	12
DOING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU	13
BEGIN YOUR SEARCH FOR THE RIGHT PROGRAM.....	13
3 GETTING A CNA CERTIFICATION AT A SCHOOL OR MEDICAL FACILITY	16
REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE GOES A LONG WAY	16
WHAT REQUIREMENTS AM I LOOKING AT?	17
HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?	18
ON THE JOB TRAINING	20
SUCCESS MEANS PASSING THE EXAM.....	21
4 RESEARCHING & APPLYING TO MEDICAL FACILITIES IN NEED OF NURSING ASSISTANTS.....	23
WHERE TO START YOUR JOB SEARCH	24
SO WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?	25
STEPS TO JOB-FINDING SUCCESS	27
5 USE YOUR CERTIFICATION TO PRACTICE YOUR PROFESSION	32

HOW CAN I BE THE VERY BEST?	33
IT MAY SOUND OBVIOUS BUT IT WILL MAKE YOU STAND OUT	35
CONCLUSION	38

INTRODUCTION

Becoming a nursing assistant is really a calling to many individuals. It takes a special person and a specific type of personality to be attracted to the nursing assistant profession. You are a huge part of patient care and for many people that can be a draw, though it does have its challenges. You are there to assist your patients with their most basic and fundamental needs, and you are the right hand to the nursing staff at your chosen medical facility. You need to know what it takes to be compassionate, patient, helpful, and discreet as you will help patients with needs that they are used to handling on their own.

To get the call and decide that a profession as a nursing assistant is an excellent first step—and an important one at that! For some, a career as a nursing assistant is a final destination and one in which they center their working life around. However there are many individuals who chose to become a nursing assistant on their road to becoming a registered nurse. Perhaps they are not ready to travel the long road to a role as a registered nurse or they are at a point in their life where they need to start working as they pursue the schooling. Nursing school can not only be a huge financial burden, but also a rather large commitment taking time away from other aspects of the life. Whatever your chosen path is as you enter into the world of the nursing assistant role, know that what you are getting into can be extremely rewarding and at times rather demanding as well.

Most individuals who pursue a career as a nursing assistant will need to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) as this is highly desirable. It can be possible to become a nursing assistant without education in certain facilities, but the majority of them require that an individual be a CNA to be hired. This can mean longevity and a more desirable salary, and is definitely a requirement for those who wish to pursue a more involved nursing profession. Whether you chose to make your long-term career goals as a nursing assistant or it is a stop along the way towards becoming a registered nurse, it's important to understand the role, responsibilities, and requirements for a CNA.

Being a nursing assistant can bring great satisfaction to an individual's life and can provide great comfort to those around you. You will be depended on by the nursing staff for which you serve, as well as the patients which you care for. You can find great fulfillment through your commitment and your tasks in patient care and can learn some excellent lifelong skills in the process. Within the chapters of this book we will look at what it takes to be an excellent nursing assistant, what the expectations and responsibilities are, how you can go about becoming a CNA, and finally what such a profession can mean in your life.

1

UNDERSTAND THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A NURSING ASSISTANT

Most people hear of the profession of a nursing assistant and are unsure of what exactly that means or just how much it entails. The nursing assistant can often be considered the “unsung hero” as they are in the background performing many of the responsibilities that patients or their families may take for granted. It is quite common that nursing assistants pay special care to the fundamental and daily needs of a patient so that the nurse can focus on some of the more involved procedures and tasks. Oftentimes a registered nurse is the only one capable of performing certain responsibilities by law, and therefore must rely on their nursing assistant to help with daily tasks.

A nursing assistant helps with many of the needs that a patient may have, some of which are not always easy or desirable. It takes a patient and compassionate person to be able to properly handle the tasks associated with patient care. Nursing assistants can be expected to help with doing everything from answering patient’s calls to their room to helping them to build up their physical activity. As you can expect to find nursing assistants in any type of medical facility from hospitals to nursing homes, the responsibilities will certainly vary based on the type of patient and their associated needs.

BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING

As with any other type of medical professional, it's important that a nursing assistant be well versed in emergency care. There will be the instance throughout the career of a nursing assistant in which they may very well be faced with an emergency type of situation and they must know what to do and be clear on how to properly proceed. This is important to keep the patient calm and to properly diagnose and deal with the situation at hand. It's safe to say then that a nursing assistant must be able to keep calm and handle stress properly when these types of situations arise. Without a clear head, a nursing assistant can only add to an already stressful situation so being calm, cool, and collected in times of trauma can be of great help. This is worth considering when one begins down the path towards a nursing assistant.

It's also important to know that a nursing assistant may have to deal with some difficult situations that require dignity and compassion. One such situation that may arise is when a nursing assistant is working with the elderly or bed ridden patient for whom they must assist with simple but important personal and private care. Patients will often require a bed pan and assistance with collecting urine or feces so it's important to remember this as it will be a part of a nursing assistant career. Patients rely on nursing assistants for their daily care and it's important to remember that they are at the mercy of those who care for them.

A nursing assistant may be required to keep a close eye on the intake of a patient for a variety of medical reasons. There are many medical reasons

which may dictate a patient be observed in their food and liquid consumption, and oftentimes a nursing assistant is the one who oversees such activity. Therefore it's important that a nursing assistant be observant, diligent, detail oriented and accurate as they handle and oversee such an important and precise type of activity.

In most instances, a nursing assistant is not the one who administers medication. By law, it must be the registered nurse who handles such a need for the patient but they will often work hand in hand with the nursing assistant to ensure that the intake is in line with the needs for the medication to be administered. You can quickly see how the nursing assistant forms the basis for the medical team which cares for each and every patient that walks through the doors of the given medical facility. It's important to have the type of personality who can blend well with an often stretched nursing staff and for whom can handle the most private of patients needs.

WEARING MANY DIFFERENT HATS

Nursing assistants wear many hats and often have to work with many different types of personalities so this is an important consideration as one begins their path towards this type of career. It's also important to remember that if one wishes to pursue a career as a registered nurse later on that they observe as much as possible. As one works in a career as a CNA, they can usually learn a lot from the registered nurses around them. Taking this on as a learning phase and asking questions can only make for a better candidate later on. It's always a good idea to be sure that a career as a registered nurse is a good match and there's no better way to evaluate

such a thing as to work side by side with them. Each type of nurse has their own sets of responsibilities that come along with it. A nursing assistant is an excellent way to dip your foot in the water of the nursing world and to evaluate what it's all about and if it is in fact a match for you.

Those patients that require the most attention can be challenging at times, but often provide the greatest rewards. As a nursing assistant you can fully expect that you will have to care for patients who are bed ridden, incapable of walking or moving, or who are physically or mentally impaired. For some, this may be just why they pursue a career as a nursing assistant so that they may care for those with special needs. You may have to help move such an individual, feed them, or just provide general care. For some people this may be tough as you are the source of their every need, but for others this type of patient can prove to be the most rewarding. Being able to provide the most basic and involved care can help to remind many of what a career as a nursing assistant is all about and why so many feel so passionate about it and their role in helping others.

BREAKDOWN OF A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE NURSING ASSISTANT

It's important to keep in mind that as a nursing assistant you are often involved with extensive periods of standing or being on your feet, as well as lifting heavy loads. Having the ability to lift or move patients either within their bed or from one surface to another can be a heavy burden for some. It's important to remember that these patients depend on the nursing assistants that care for them and they are at their mercy. The patients and their families put their trust into your hands as a nursing assistant and

therefore you must be able to offer all of the characteristics that you would want out of somebody caring for your very own loved one.

While there is no one typical day when it comes to the life of a nursing assistant, there are certain responsibilities that are quite common. These include:

- Answering patient's call lights to assist with needs as they come up
- Serving patients meals and in some cases actually feeding them
- Transporting patients between locations throughout the medical facility or outside points
- Lifting patients or turning them within their bed
- Keeping patients dry, helping to change soiled linens or gowns as necessary
- Collecting any required specimens such as urine or feces
- Observing and noting patient's daily habits, food or liquid consumption, or behavioral patterns
- Assisting the nursing staff on any required tasks involving patient care
- Keeping the line of communication open with the patient and their family
- Performing any necessary grooming that the patient may require
- Washing clothes and linens for the patients each day
- Ensuring that all of patient care provided is of the utmost quality

Obviously the amount of work involved and care required is dependent on the needs of the patients that a nursing assistant has in her facility. It can be helpful to consider what types of special responsibilities may be involved with the medical facilities that you may work for as a nursing assistant. Patient care is the number one priority no matter where you work as a nursing assistant and understanding that is an excellent start.

2

FIND A CNA PROGRAM THAT FITS YOUR NEEDS

There are ways to launch into the nursing profession without obtaining a certification, but it's rather limited. A nurse's aide doesn't require any training but there is limited capacity for what this role may do and the salary is also at a bare minimum as well. When it comes to becoming a nursing assistant, the best route to take is to obtain a certification and become a full-fledged Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). The requirements are certainly not as stringent as those for becoming a registered nurse or for getting a degree, but there are a certain number of hours involved in training in the classroom as well as working in a medical facility.

To become a CNA, requires a certification of at least 75 hours in basic healthcare, medical ethics, and health law. The specific requirements vary by state but it's essential that to become a CNA, an individual must have a common and inherent knowledge of medical practices and how healthcare works. As you consider this education, you want to search for a program that fits your specific needs. There are a number of different program types available that can cater to your individual lifestyle, budgetary or time constraints, or that can take you on the fast track and get you through the program quickly and efficiently. The choice is yours!

DOING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

First and foremost, you want to consider your lifestyle and current commitments. There are some CNA programs that run all day as a full time commitment each week. While others are offered only as night classes to accommodate those that are already working and need to allot time for classes around their already busy schedules. You can even find some programs that are offered strictly and wholly online to work around your schedule. For example if you have children that you are trying to work around, you could find a program that fits into your busy schedule and allows you to still be home when your kids are. There is a program for everybody making it seamless to log in the required hours to obtain your CNA certification.

The good news is that there are so many resources online to help you in your search for the perfect CNA program. You can find programs through local universities, online resources, or through medical facilities directly. In this day and age, finding a program that works best for you is much easier than it ever used to be. As you begin your search it can be helpful to remember what sorts of requirements your specific state has. Take the time to research what you will need to do, the hours that you will need to log, and what options you have available to fill all of the necessary requirements. Then you can base your schedule around the requirements to be sure to zero in on the program that works best for you.

BEGIN YOUR SEARCH FOR THE RIGHT PROGRAM

As you look into a wide array of different CNA programs, consider the criteria that are most important to you. Look at various factors such as:

- What other commitments do you currently have?
- What time of day would classes be most convenient for you?
- Are you disciplined enough and equipped to handle all online classes?
- Is your lifestyle conducive to being in class each day of the week?
- Is there a convenient location for you to take classes near home?
- How quickly do you want to get your CNA certification?
- Is money a factor in taking classes? Is there any financial help available?
- Do you work best in a classroom setting with others or working independently?

As with any educational program, there is a good fit for everyone. There are certain personalities that do well with a traditional classroom type of setting, while others do much better working on their own. If you choose something like online classes, be aware that you must have a great discipline to turn away other distractions and focus on your work. Think through every aspect of the curriculum and program that you are looking at and be sure that it fits your life and everything you have going on within it.

Finding a CNA program that works best for you and fits your needs is the first and most important step towards your success. If you start such a program on the right foot, it will be a great way to secure your success and longevity in the future. Be honest with yourself about what you can accommodate with your current lifestyle as rushing through a program or trying to squeeze it in can really hurt you later. Take the time and clear your

calendar as much as possible to ensure that the program you select will provide you with the solid foundation that you need to be successful in your future as a nursing assistant. This is the first step towards a very important decision in your life, so be sure to make it last and allow yourself to search around and find the program that is best for you.

3

GETTING A CNA CERTIFICATION AT A SCHOOL OR MEDICAL FACILITY

Now begins a very exciting time in your life—you are about to begin your very important CNA training program. You've carefully researched all of the programs in your area and found the one that best fits your needs. You have an idea of what to expect, but until you get into the actual certification program, it can all be a bit uncertain. Some will receive their CNA certification through a community college as it's the best resource in terms of the cost—usually anywhere between \$1000-5000. Others will receive their certification through an actual medical facility. Still others will do all of their work through online courses. It matters not where you get your CNA certification from, it matters that you've made the leap and you are now going for it.

REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE GOES A LONG WAY

A very popular route that many seem to be choosing for their CNA certification is on-the-job options. These offer money towards your education and the attainment of your required credit hours, while allowing

you to gain valuable real world experience. Whether you choose this route or not, it can be advised to get some practical experience either before or as you work towards your CNA certification. This can help you to bring the lessons you will learn in the classroom into the real world and see just how you will handle the situations that arise in the profession.

Working in a medical facility or nursing home while you go for your schooling can also help you to secure a position after you have completed your training requirements. It used to be that many of these facilities were short handed and that they were in desperate need of staff. However times have changed and as a nursing assistant has become one of the fastest growing professions, it can help you so much later on if you get in some experience. This will not only help you to truly master the lessons you are learning in the classroom, but it will allow you to be competitive amongst others going through the same training program that you are.

WHAT REQUIREMENTS AM I LOOKING AT?

It's important to note that the requirements for a CNA certification program vary by state. Each state mandates what an individual needs to learn and pass in order to gain their certification; these are regulated by the state governments and are subject to change at any time. It's helpful to know up front what your individual state requires so that you are sure that the program you are enrolled in meets the qualifications, but chances are that you're safe if it's an accredited program.

There are some standardized requirements that seem to be common amongst states, and these include:

- Successfully passing a CNA certification program
- 75 hours of a CNA training course that are logged and recorded
- 16 hours of the course must be supervised in a clinical type of setting for real world type of experience
- A final test must be passed to measure the individual's skills taught and gained in the CNA class
- Mastering of fundamental but essential skills such as CPR, bathing, caring for, and feeding patients
- 12 hours of continuing education taken each year to stay certified in the given state

These are usually the fundamental requirements for an individual to pass before they can gain their CNA certification. Some states have additional requirements or rules that must be followed before the certification is given. Others have more lenient requirements, so it's definitely worth checking into. It can also be beneficial to check into the requirements of other states if you ever plan on getting a job elsewhere. You may have to take additional classes or fulfill other requirements if you were ever to move and plan on being a CNA in another state.

HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?

You can expect the foundation and bulk of a CNA certification course to be just like any other classroom setting. You will be given a great deal of material on everything related to patient care, fundamental medical information, and anything related to the job and its responsibilities. You will

be taught how to properly care for a patient, how to administer CPR, what to do in certain situations, and a wide array of other topics. The training for a nursing assistant varies in length depending on the actual program that you select, but it can take anywhere from a couple of weeks to a couple of months. It's important to truly focus on the subject matter at hand because in this certification program, you are learning all of the ins and outs that will pertain to your daily life on the job. This is an excellent depiction of what it will be like to work as a nursing assistant and the entire curriculum is developed around the first hand perspective.

Many times you may even find that a CNA certification course is actually taught by a real life registered nurse. This can be that much more helpful to the students within the classroom as they can understand how it all works from a firsthand perspective and ask all of the pertinent questions that may come up as they go through the course material. You will be walked through the fundamental duties, how the responsibilities work in a real life setting, and see what a day in the life of a nursing assistant. Consider yourself lucky if the course is taught by a registered nurse as this can be your single best source for showing you the ropes and guiding you through what you can expect.

Take advantage of any of the real life setting scenarios you are faced with in your CNA course. Whether you are learning in the classroom, performing role plays with fellow students in your class, or logging your actual training hours, this is what makes for a true distinction amongst other professions. To be a truly successful nursing assistant, you can find that paying close attention and working well in your real life scenarios can be the best preparation you can ask for.

ON THE JOB TRAINING

You will undoubtedly learn a great deal of useful information in the classroom. You'll be taught many useful skills and understand the basics of fundamental health and medical care. This can come in handy as your profession as a nursing assistant and will teach you lessons that you can likely take with you into other aspects of your life. However as most CNA training course also allow you to have true on the job training, this is where you really want to focus your attention and be sure that all of your questions are answered.

While it may seem easy initially to see what patient care is all about and what it entails, there's a great deal of attention involved with it. The fact that the majority of CNA certification courses give you the opportunity to log actual training hours in the field presents you with a very distinct and helpful training regimen. Take advantage of any patient care that you get to observe or assist with because this experience or vantage point will come in quite handy later on. You may find yourself in a situation where you are trying to lift a patient or move them on the bed they are restricted to and you will find that looking back on your training course can be quite helpful. Even something that sounds simplistic such as gathering specimens, feeding a patient, or tracking the eating habits of a patient can all be made much easier if you get the necessary on the job training.

There are also some very important medical procedures that you will likely be involved with for which your on the job training can be extremely valuable. You will often be asked to measure a patient's vital signs, and though this may sound easy or you think that you have the hang of it, you never know until you are faced with it in real life. Observe as much as you possibly can through the on the job training that you are provided with, it

will pay off later on. Measuring a patient's vital signs are part of it but administering CPR can be another big part of the job. It's not to say that every day you will be faced with a situation that warrants CPR or that there won't be others that can help such as a registered nurse. However as you will likely be working in either a medical facility or a nursing home, the need for understanding how to administer CPR can be quite helpful and come in handy later on.

SUCCESS MEANS PASSING THE EXAM

Not only will you get the great on the job training that you will need later on, as well as learn the valuable lessons that the curriculum provides, but you will have to apply all of this to the exam. This is where paying attention really comes in handy—if you ask the right questions and truly absorb the material, then passing the exam at the end will be a breeze! To be a successful nursing assistant and have the necessary CNA certification, you must first pass the exam. This will come at the end of the course and measure your knowledge of all of the important subject matters. This is when it truly pays to not only be a good student, but to be one that is focused on and truly passionate about this new profession before you.

Adding to the likelihood of successfully passing the class is to practice the lessons that you learn. Apply them in the on the job training, use them at home to be sure that you master them and understand them. So much of patient care is about practicing and getting better and more well versed, and you will become more agile and far more likely to pass your exam by practicing the lessons you are taught. You will be measured on everything that you learned and there's a great deal of information thrown at you at

once, so take your time to really study up. If you pass then you are officially certified, but if you do not then you have a lot more work to do and will likely have to repeat the course.

For most people, once they get into the real life lessons and see how they will be working, this can seal the deal and provide an excellent motivation to pass the test and be done once and for all. Take your time, ask plenty of questions along the way, and study up so that you are sure to get the passing result you want and move on with your career as a nursing assistant. Once you pass, the pressure is off and you can begin your new and exciting career. Your CNA certification is yours to keep and cherish, you just have to be sure to remember to take any necessary courses to keep your certification going each and every year. Again this will vary by state but the continuing education requirement is usually minimal and in place to ensure that you are keeping current with trends and staying fresh within your profession.

4

RESEARCHING & APPLYING TO MEDICAL FACILITIES IN NEED OF NURSING ASSISTANTS

Here's the good news for those that are about to embark into the world of being a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)—this is a position that is in high demand! Even in tough economic times or when there are high unemployment rates, there is usually a need for certain medical professions. The medical community rarely goes into a holding pattern, particularly when times get tough. People will always require good and proper medical attention and they will always need people to nurse them back to health. This becomes especially important when you consider that a nursing assistant is one of the most fundamental and necessary when it comes to good solid patient care.

It used to be that people underestimated the profession of a nursing assistant. When there was a nursing shortage in general, people just assumed that a registered nurse could do it all and find the time to provide key medical procedures as well as handle the often demanding patient care. Times have sure changed! Not only is the medical community understanding and embracing the importance of nursing in general, but they are also seeing just how important each level is to ensure the very best in patient care. Most registered nurses are often overworked and have a great deal of

responsibilities to handle for each patient in conjunction with the doctors. That means that the nursing assistant plays a vital role in ensuring that the patient is taken care of, comfortable, and in the state required for their specific health condition.

WHERE TO START YOUR JOB SEARCH

As with any other job search, you need to have a starting point. You need to step back and take a look at where you really see yourself working. You've already taken the big plunge and decided that a career as a nursing assistant is for you. You've found the right CNA program that matches your needs, and once you've successfully passed your certification exam you want to be able to jump into the right profession for you. There are a number of different routes that you can take when it comes time to really narrow down your job search. Before you begin applying to various facilities or employers to find the CNA position that's right for you, consider what will be a match for your personality and career aspirations. Ask yourself some rather important questions as you begin your job search, such as:

- Do I plan to remain as a CNA or is this just a stop in my overall nursing career?
- Do I intend on focusing on patient care solely or wish to learn more that can lead me to future opportunities?
- Am I cut out to work in an emergency type of setting?
- Do I intend on having a specialty within my nursing career?
- Are there facilities that are close to my home that may work out in terms of convenience?
- Are there certain places that may pay more than others?

- Do I wish to work as a part of a team or will I do better working independently?
- Do I want to get a taste of various types of nursing care?
- Would I enjoy working on individualized patient care, perhaps even out of their home?
- Would I consider temporary or contract work as I get started?

There are so many questions to ask yourself to be sure that you get an accurate measure on what the right nursing assistant career is for you. As with the decision to become a nursing assistant, this too is a personal choice and everybody is going to have a varying view on it. Some people may enjoy strictly focused patient care because they feel that this is why they obtained their CNA and where they plan to stay with things. You have to ask yourself the tough questions and truly evaluate why you went into the nursing assistant profession and what your long term career goals really are. Only you can decide upon these aspects and every nursing assistant will take a different path, the right one is truly up to you.

SO WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

Most people outside of the nursing profession would never have an idea of just how many options lie before an individual who gains their CNA certification, but there opportunities are almost limitless. If you keep up with current events, you will quickly see that this is a hot profession right now. The need for nursing assistants is on the rise and shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. This is great news for the people already in the profession and particularly for those just entering their career as a nursing assistant. This means that you have options, and this is a great distinction from so many other fields out there. As the need for qualified health care and excellent patient care continues to rise, so too does the need for

certified nursing assistants who bring experience to the table. All great for an individual about to finish their CNA training!

This also means that you don't have to settle and that depending on your area of the country, that you just might have some excellent choices before you. In the past, you may have been "pigeonholed" into a job at a nursing home as that was the only facility with the needs for a nursing assistant, now you can find some truly "out of the box" opportunities as well as some excellent stepping stones in your nursing career. Think about what's important to you, what's going to teach you the most, and where you intend on ultimately ending up, and then plan your career around all of that. You can make this all work for yourself. So consider this, looking at all of your many options can help you to focus on what you truly want to do. A profession as a nursing assistant can entail a great deal of things and opportunities. Some possible opportunities for a CNA include the following:

- Working at a nursing home
- Working through a temporary nursing placement agency
- Working with individual patients who require their own private nursing assistant
- Doing home nursing care
- Working as a nursing assistant at a hospice facility to help keep patients happy in their terminal illness
- Working at a hospital
- Working at an outpatient medical facility assisting with patient care in the operating prep or recovery rooms
- Working at a health clinic
- Working at an urgent care facility that requires nursing assistant help
- Picking a specialty or focus and lining up a nursing assistant job that will help you to gain the necessary experience

- Working with bed ridden patients on helping with all of their needs through the appropriate medical facility

This is only the tip of the iceberg because if you start getting into certain specialties or specific areas of the country, you will be sure to find so many other wonderful opportunities out there. Don't limit yourself—think through what would really make you happy in your career as a nursing assistant and then focus your efforts on finding a job within that particular field. This is where it really pays to ask yourself the tough questions up front and ensure that you are going about your job search the right way.

STEPS TO JOB-FINDING SUCCESS

Though the fact that a nursing assistant is in high demand works to your favor, you still need to be prepared in order to successfully find the job of your dreams. Some areas of the country are easier than others to find a great job, and also have some excellent resources available. It's on you though to take the necessary steps required to land yourself a job that will make you truly happy as a nursing assistant. Even with the number of jobs available, that doesn't translate to the jobs falling into your lap. You have to put forth the work to find a great job, just as you put forth the work to find a great CNA program. As you studied your curriculum and observed in the training portion of your certification, the job search is a true process.

If you follow the required and recommended steps it will help you to find something that is truly a match for you and for which you can be happy with for a long time. Even if there are a great number of jobs out there for nursing assistants, it doesn't mean that the first one you find is the best

match. Take your time, do your research, gain some perspective, focus on what's truly important to you, and begin the process towards finding the nursing assistant job that is an excellent match for you. So what are the steps in the job search process?

1. Prepare a Detailed Resume: Think of things that will make you stand out from the crowd. Be sure to list out any related or pertinent experience, what value you bring to the table, or what you can offer to help set you apart from other nursing assistants you may be competing against. If you think along these lines, you are sure to create a resume that will blow people away in the job search process.
2. Do Your Research: Take the time to research what options are available in your area and do this early on. Educating yourself is a huge part of the process and a surefire way to get to the successful career you are after. Being proactive is what will set you apart from the competition. Rather than just waiting for a nursing assistant job to come your way that may or may not meet your goals and objectives, take the time to research what your options may be. There may be new needs popping up, new medical facilities opening up, or something that fits within your specialized or specific needs.
3. Write Down Your Goals and Aspirations: When your goals are tangible and visible, they become much more attainable. Decide upon what is important to you so that you can focus your job search efforts on it. If you want a longer term or more specialized career within the nursing world, then by all means document it. If you want to become well

versed with patient care and become established at a given facility, then write that down as well. Having something to look forward to and work towards makes you better and this is especially important at the beginning of your nursing assistant career so you are clear on where you want to head. As your goals or objectives change, write them down and keep on top of them moving forward.

4. Network and Make Connections: Even though a CNA is a “hot” job that is in high demand right now, it can be extremely beneficial to make connections. Talk to people in your related field, make connections with those that may be in a specialized field that you are ultimately interested in, and join any possible organizations in your area. You can even find online forums that can be of great help in the networking world to point you in the right direction for your goals. It takes one contact to get you to the nursing assistant job of your dreams, so talk to people that can help you to get there.

5. Make a List of Possible Avenues and Then Apply to Them: Whether they show a job opening or not, sometimes a proactive attempt at an application can open a door for you. After performing your research, make a list of the types of facilities that interest you and then determine where these exist in your area. Send a personalized cover letter, your resume, and an application or any other required documents to successfully apply for employment with that potential employer. If you find that the facilities you are interested in are not actively hiring, then try to gain access for an informational interview.

Just do what you can to tactfully and successfully get your foot in the door and make the opportunity happen for yourself.

6. Interview Well: Even if there is not a job opening, simply setting up an informational interview or initial meeting is a proactive measure that can truly pay off. You want potential employers to remember you for all the right reasons and have you come to mind when they envision the right person for their job opening. Rely on your experience and your personality to do well in an interview. Do whatever interview preparation you can such as studying up on the medical facility you are meeting with. Be prepared to answer questions about your background or situational based scenarios so that employers see how you would handle typical situations. Always put your best foot forward and a big part of that is being prepared and proactive so that the employer sees that you put forth all of the necessary effort to land the job.

7. Follow Up as Necessary: This is a step that a lot of people forget and it's an important one. Following up immediately after an interview, even if it's a proactive or informational one, can truly set you apart from the crowd. Thanking potential employers for their time and reiterating your interest just might be the necessary step required to help you land the job and get to the nursing assistant position that you are truly after. Remember that professionalism can go a long way and help you to achieve your career goals.

Finding the perfect nursing assistant position is a matter of being prepared. As you begin researching programs and find one that is a great fit for you, it is at this time that you should really ask yourself what you wish to accomplish with your CNA career. If you strive towards the true position that you want and focus your job finding efforts on it, you will land it. It may take time but it will lead you to the path that's right for you as a nursing assistant. This is important if you plan to stay where you land for awhile or even if you intend on moving onto a registered nurse profession. Thinking through what you really want out of your career and then actively going after it is what will lead to success as a nursing assistant.

5

USE YOUR CERTIFICATION TO PRACTICE YOUR PROFESSION

You've finally done it! You've landed the job that you really wanted and are about to embark on your first days as a nursing assistant. It may have seemed like a long road, but if you are in a career that you truly love doing the things you really want to do it was worth it. Now it's time to settle back and enjoy what you do? Not really, it's time to keep sharp and constantly better yourself in your profession as a nursing assistant. This is the type of profession where sitting back on your laurels will never work. You are constantly thrown into new situations, asked to perform new tasks, or bettering yourself for the next step in your career. Even if you intend on staying as a CNA as your chosen career path, it's extremely important to stay sharp. Not only that, but to stay a Certified Nursing Assistant, it's a must to keep up on your continuing education credits so that you maintain your gained certification each and every year.

So you've worked hard, done all of the necessary research and preparation to land the job, and are ready to enjoy it. Now what? Now is the time to really utilize the certification that you worked so hard for and to practice it within your profession. Within a nursing assistant profession, there is always the opportunity to keep getting better and continuing to improve upon your skills and your performance. When it comes to patient care, you will likely be faced with new situations and adventures each and every day and week. You

will likely learn new things as you continue on within your career, far beyond what you ever learned in your training in your CNA certification course. So how can you continue to improve? What can you do to practice within your profession and either progress to the next level or become one of the most trusted and best in your field?

HOW CAN I BE THE VERY BEST?

It may seem that a career as a nursing assistant doesn't leave much room for perfection. Some may think that you are either good at patient care or are not, but that couldn't be further from the truth. While it may hold true that a career as a nursing assistant is a calling of sorts or that certain personalities are more well versed at it than others, the reality is that everybody can always improve upon their skills. There are some excellent ways to get started with sharpening your skills and some which may very well work throughout your career as a CNA. Whether a nursing assistant is the career of your dreams or simply a step towards becoming a registered nurse, there are ways that you can improve upon your performance and climb the ranks to be a trusted resource and one of the best in your profession.

After all of the hard work you've put into obtaining your CNA certification, it's time to put it to the test. This is where the best stand out from the crowd and where you can draw a line of distinction to show that you will in fact go on to be the best nursing assistant you can be. Here are some tips that will help you along your journey and allow you to truly practice what you've learned and keep getting better.

- If at all possible, find a mentor. While this is helpful in just about any profession, it can make for a huge distinction when it comes to moving on with your career or doing well where you're at. Let this person take you under their wing and teach you everything they know as this can help you to go from good to great very quickly.
- Ask a lot of questions. This sounds obvious but when some people are new to a profession, they are too shy to ask questions. If you want to get better and truly put what you've learned to the test, then you have to ask questions so that you know how to handle certain situations.
- Observe as much as you can. Even if there are situations that come up that aren't under your umbrella of responsibilities, take it all in. Observe what procedures are followed in certain situations or how you should react to patient care needs that come up. This will only help you to become a better CNA and ultimately get to where you want to be with your career.
- Talk to others in your field and compare experiences and techniques. This can be an excellent forum by which you can further your experience and get to the point you are happy with in your career. Understanding that people may do things differently and that you can learn from others may help you to stay focused and work on your improvement.
- Never turn your back on potential experience. Each time you are presented with a new scenario, take advantage of it. Even if it seems like a rather unsavory or less than desirable job requirement, do your best to embrace it. Realize that as you practice all of these different aspects of your job responsibilities and progress through your career, each of these will prepare you as you move ahead.
- Study up as needed. If you find that you are struggling with various aspects of being a nursing assistant or that you require further

development, go back to your education or find new sources to learn. To become more well versed and better at your career moving forward, you need to take the time to understand how certain things work. Educate yourself and recognize that as a nursing assistant, you are a constant work in progress.

- Enjoy what you do and work to always improve upon your job. You are responsible for continuing education credits, so be sure to focus your attention on areas that can make you better or for which you struggle within. At the same time, take the time to truly enjoy what you do and let it show. Even if you are only planning on being a CNA for a short while as you progress to other things, enjoy the job and learn from it, you may even make some great contacts along the way.

IT MAY SOUND OBVIOUS BUT IT WILL MAKE YOU STAND OUT

Though the tips surrounding how you can better yourself and truly practice your CNA certification within your profession may sound obvious, it's often ignored by many. Some may get into their job as a nursing profession and look at it as nothing more than that—just a job! While others may get into their nursing assistant role and really embrace it, but never figure out ways to better themselves or learn how to improve upon their performance. It's quite easy to become comfortable within your career or to think of it as just another aspect of your life. However as it takes a special personality to handle delicate patient care that lead you into the nursing assistant profession, it will also take the right attitude to progress. There are certain to be times that you will be challenged or feel that your career is not exactly

what you envisioned, but try to embrace even those moments as opportunities.

Think back to what made you decide to become a nursing assistant and focus on it. After the long road of researching programs, getting into and excelling in a CNA certification course, and finding the job that was a good match for you, now it's time to really make it happen. This is a big step in your career and can set you apart from the rest of the pack if you open yourself up to the opportunities that lie ahead of you. Think about why you love what you do and what drew you to the nursing assistant profession and then apply that passion to the next major steps in your career. You are at an important and exciting threshold when you can practice what you've learned and figure out the ways to do it well.

With all the hard work that it takes to become a CNA, you should celebrate this new career as often as you can. Even when days get tough, you're doing something that you enjoy doing either as your final career destination or en route to an even broader nursing career. You've worked hard to find the job that you were after and now it's time to practice the skills that you've learned along the way. You will surely be met with challenges along the way, but you have arrived at your destination and now it's time to make it all work. It may have seemed intangible as you worked through the lessons in the classroom or practiced techniques in your on the job training, but this is it.

Being a nursing assistant is an excellent choice and there's a reason that it's a "hot" job right now—it takes a certain person to do the work that you are about to do so embrace it. You studied hard, practiced your skills, passed your test, went after the job you desired, and now it's time to make it all come together into a streamlined work flow. You've got what it takes so make it happen and allow all of your hard work, personality traits, and skills

to come together to carve out a beautiful nursing assistant career path that's right for you. Going into the profession is an important decision and a huge commitment with a long path ahead of it, but once you arrive at the time to practice your skills and actually be a nursing assistant; this is what it's all about. This is the point at which greatness is made!

CONCLUSION

A career within the medical field at all is certainly not for everyone. There are a lot of less than desirable tasks that an individual must perform in any sort of medical role. To some this can be a turn off and therefore deter any interest and turn them away from any sort of related career aspiration. However for others, a career within the medical field is a true calling that reaches out to them, even as kids to certain individuals. If you are simply meant to be in the medical field, you know it and you feel it. That's what you hear so many people say, and that holds especially true for nursing assistants. To be a nursing assistant means to have a true love for patient care and a desire to handle whatever they may need. Sure it's not often glamorous, but to many this is the core of patient care and what so many go into the profession for. It's what makes the medical field great to be able to handle a patient's every need.

SOMETIMES A LONG PATH

It matters not if you intend to go into the nursing assistant role simply as a stepping stone towards becoming a registered nurse or if it's your lifelong aspiration, either way it's hard work. This hard work is also one of the best teaching type of roles some would say because you are thrown into the

trenches of patient care and handling needs that require patience, dignity, and a certain personality to be able to make the patient comfortable and happy. Many of the patients that you will deal with along the way have special needs or are in a bad spot in their life, and so you as a nursing assistant bring them the things that they can't do for themselves. This is what drives so many to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and what keeps them motivated throughout their career.

It can be a long path at times along the way. Sometimes you can feel as though you are never going to reach the end or attain that dream job, but it will come with hard work and an internal motivation. Not everybody will follow the same path, but in summary here are the steps that individuals wishing to become a nursing assistant often follow:

- **Make the Decision.** Whether it's a calling or some research that has brought you to the platform of becoming a CNA, it's a big decision. Whether you've known that this is what you wanted to do your whole life or simply just came upon this career choice, make the decision that this is the direction you want to head and then stick with it. Be confident with your decision as this is an excellent career with great opportunities.
- **Understand the Roles and Responsibilities of a CNA.** There are a lot of misconceptions surrounding the role of a nursing assistant. There are many responsibilities that you will handle and then those that are designated for a registered nurse. As you have made your decision to become a nursing assistant, be sure that you understand what you will be focused on and what sort of work you will be doing when you find the right opportunity. There are some responsibilities that may be more difficult than others, but it can be a very rewarding career overall.

- **Research CNA Programs.** You have to consider your own lifestyle, schedule, limitations, and desires as you look for a CNA program. You want to make this all work from the start and ensuring that you get into the right program that will set the perfect tone for you is extremely important. There are many different types of CNA programs out there, all of which can cater to different individuals and their hectic lifestyles. You can find classes at a community college, major university, through a medical facility, or even online. Be sure to give proper thought to your decision so that you are sure to go with what will work best for you and allow you to put your best foot forward. The education and training that you get will form the basis of your career so think it through.
- **Get Your CNA Certification.** Each state has different requirements for their own individual CNA certification, so be sure that you research what you will need to do in your own state. On average, most states require about 75 hours in the classroom and 12 with practical or on the job training. This may sound like a lot, but it's extremely beneficial as it will properly prepare you for your role as a nursing assistant. It's important to remember that you have to successfully pass the certification exam when all is said and done, and that you must keep up with your continuing education to keep your certification as the years go on.
- **Research Companies Hiring Nursing Assistants.** The great news for those going into the nursing assistant profession right now is that this is a "hot" job. Even in tough economic times, hiring for nursing assistants is on the rise. This is wonderful for those just getting their certification and just goes to show that even when times get tough, there's always a need for good solid patient care. This should also serve as a platform by which individuals should take the time to look

into the opportunities that are good for them and not settle. As you go through the process of becoming a nursing assistant, remember that you want to end up somewhere that will allow you to practice your skills and really build up your experience.

- Practice Your CNA Certification. After a long road, you can really get into the heart of why you decided to become a nursing assistant in the first place. Whether it was a true calling or just simply something that you are doing on your way to become a registered nurse. Whether you always envisioned yourself working as a nursing assistant or it came to you as you decided what you wanted to do with your life, this can be a very rewarding and at times challenging role. All the hard work finally pays off when you get to care for patients that appreciate everything you can for them.

Patient care is certainly not for everyone, but those who decide to become a nursing assistant can appreciate that there are some excellent rewards. There are challenges along the way and some days that may prove to be difficult, but giving back by caring for those who can't care for themselves can make it all worthwhile. Making the decision to become a nursing assistant is a great one and through a few well thought out steps, it can be tremendously successful for you and your career aspirations. Be sure to think everything through each step of the way and you will very well end up with a lifelong career that allows you to practice the patient care that so many are after. Being a nursing assistant is an excellent career path and if you follow the steps that we've outlined for you here, you will find that it can be a smooth and enjoyable transition to a career that is sure to give you great satisfaction for years to come.

