

**Detailed Guide for**

## Nursing Assistants in California

**May also be called:** Certified Nurse Assistants; Geriatric Aides; Hospital Attendants; Nurse Aides; Nurse Assistants; and Patient Care Technicians

### **What Would I Do?**

Nursing Assistants carry out the routine work in the general care of patients. They work under the direction of nursing and medical staff. Nursing Assistants' duties depend on training, experience, and type of health care facility. Typically, Assistants answer patients' call lights, deliver messages, make beds, and help patients eat, dress, and bathe.

In California, a Nursing Assistant can earn the title of Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) after state certification requirements are completed. A CNA, under the supervision of a licensed nurse, provides basic nursing services to patients in an acute care, long-term or intermediate health care facility.

### **Tools and Technology**

Nursing Assistants use a variety of tools and technology in their work. They may use automated external defibrillators, bedpans, compresses, and electronic medical thermometers. They may also use accounting, query, medical, spreadsheet, and word processing software.

### **Important Tasks and Related Skills**

Each task below is matched to a sample skill required to carry out the task.

Task	Skill Used in this Task
Answer patient call signals, signal lights, bells, or intercom systems to determine patients' needs.	Customer and Personal Service Static Strength
Turn or reposition bedridden patients.	Service Orientation
Provide physical support to assist patients to perform daily living activities, such as getting out of bed, bathing, dressing, using the toilet, standing, walking, or exercising.	Written Comprehension
Review patients' dietary restrictions, food allergies, and preferences to ensure patient receives appropriate diet.	Problem Sensitivity
Measure and record food and liquid intake or urinary and fecal output, reporting changes to medical or nursing staff.	Monitoring
Record vital signs, such as temperature, blood pressure, pulse, or respiration rate, as directed by medical or nursing staff.	Oral Comprehension

Gather information from caregivers, nurses, or physicians about patient condition, treatment plans, or appropriate activities.	
Observe or examine patients to detect symptoms that may require medical attention, such as bruises, open wounds, or blood in urine.	Near Vision
Document or otherwise report observations of patient behavior, complaints, or physical symptoms to nurses.	Social Perceptiveness

Source: U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) at [online.onetcenter.org](http://online.onetcenter.org)

## Working Conditions

Nursing Assistants work in a variety of environments, including acute care, residential care, and skilled nursing facilities, as well as clinics and hospitals. Most facilities are well lit, air-conditioned, and have modern equipment. The work can be emotionally and physically demanding. Nursing Assistants walk or stand most of their work day. They must take precautions to guard against back strain from lifting patients and equipment, exposure to radiation and caustic chemicals, and catching diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis. Using proper safety procedures reduces personal risk. Most full-time Assistants work about 40 hours a week, but because patients need care 24 hours a day, some Assistants work evenings, nights, weekends, and holidays. Employers generally provide or pay for uniforms and supplies.

Some of these workers may belong to a union, such as the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees.

## Will This Job Fit Me?

This job may appeal to those with social natures who enjoy helping people and providing health care services. Nursing Assistants need to be able to communicate effectively with coworkers and supervisors in order to help meet the needs of their patients.

## What Wages and Benefits Can I Expect?

### Wages

The median wage in 2015 for Nursing Assistants in California is \$28,837 annually, or \$13.87 hourly. The median is the point at which half of the workers earn more and half earn less.

Annual Wages for 2015	Low (25th percentile)	Median (50th percentile)	High (75th percentile)
California	\$24,208	\$28,837	\$35,509

Source: EDD/LMID Occupational Employment Statistics Survey, 2015 at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/wages.html](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/wages.html). Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Hourly Wages for 2015	Low (25th percentile)	Median (50th percentile)	High (75th percentile)
California	\$11.64	\$13.87	\$17.08

Source: EDD/LMID Occupational Employment Statistics Survey, 2015 at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/wages.html](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/wages.html). Wages do not reflect self-employment.

### Benefits

Nursing Assistants in hospitals often receive at least one week of vacation after one year of service. Holidays and sick leave, hospital and medical benefits, extra pay for late-shift work, and pension

plans are available to many hospital employees and to some nursing care facility employees. In some cases, dental and long-term disability insurance is offered.

### **What is the Job Outlook?**

The elderly population, a group with much greater than average health care needs, will grow faster than the total population, increasing the demand for health services, especially for home health care, nursing, and personal care. This ensures continued demand for Nursing Assistants to work in the growing number of nursing homes and long-term care facilities. Further increasing the demand for Nursing Assistants is the managed health care practice of moving patients from acute care hospitals to skilled nursing facilities as quickly as possible.

In addition, the high turnover rate means that many job openings will likely occur in the foreseeable future. Many Assistants leave the occupation to attend training programs for other health care occupations. Others decide they do not enjoy the work. Therefore, persons who are interested in, and suited for, this work should have excellent job opportunities.

### **Projections of Employment**

In California, the number of Nursing Assistants is expected to grow much faster than average growth rate for all occupations. Jobs for Nursing Assistants are expected to increase by 23.6 percent, or 23,200 jobs between 2012 and 2022.

**Estimated Employment and Projected Growth  
Nursing Assistants**

<b>Geographic Area (Estimated Year-Projected Year)</b>	<b>Estimated Employment</b>	<b>Projected Employment</b>	<b>Numeric Change</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>	<b>Additional Openings Due to Net Replacements</b>
California (2012-2022)	98,400	121,600	23,200	23.6	18,700

Source: EDD/LMID Projections of Employment by Occupation at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/employment-projections.html](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/employment-projections.html)

### **Annual Job Openings**

In California, an average of 2,310 new job openings per year is expected for Nursing Assistants, plus an additional 1,870 job openings due to net replacement needs, resulting in a total of 4,180 job openings.

**Estimated Average Annual Job Openings  
Nursing Assistants**

<b>Geographic Area (Estimated Year-Projected Year)</b>	<b>Jobs From Growth</b>	<b>Jobs Due to Net Replacements</b>	<b>Total Annual Job Openings</b>
California (2012-2022)	2,310	1,870	4,180

Source: EDD/LMID Projections of Employment by Occupation at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/employment-projections.html](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/employment-projections.html)

### **How Do I Qualify?**

#### **Education, Training, and Other Requirements**

The minimum education that employers typically prefer is a high school diploma or general education diploma (GED). In order to work in California, Nursing Assistants need to be certified, earning the title of Certified Nurse Assistant or Aide (CNA). The CNA programs, adult education, community colleges, and private training facilities may offer training. Facility-based CNA training programs do not charge tuition if the individual is employed by the facility. The armed forces provide training in related fields and those trained can challenge the test.

Nursing homes and convalescent centers are willing to train mature applicants on the job. Formal training usually lasts one to nine weeks under supervision of a general duty nurse or licensed vocational nurse. Nursing Assistants may work in a skilled nursing facility for four months from the time they enroll in training before passing the state exam. Those who cannot pass the CNA exam within that time are unable to work in the field until they pass the exam.

Acute care hospitals require high school graduation and six months to one year of experience.

Equivalency applicants are individuals who have had Certified Nursing Aide training, such as nursing services personnel from the U.S. Armed Services.

### **Early Career Planning**

High school preparation courses in biology, chemistry, mathematics, and health science can be helpful for job preparation. Strength training may also be helpful, as Nursing Assistants may have to lift or carry patients. Volunteer work in a hospital or long-term care facility can be valuable exposure to the work setting. Regional Occupational Programs (ROPs) providing training for Nursing Assistants may be available in the local area. To find an ROP program near you, go to the California Association of Regional Occupational Centers and Programs Web site at [www.carocp.org/carocps.html](http://www.carocp.org/carocps.html).

### **Certification**

To become a CNA, applicants must be at least 16 years of age and meet the prescreening requirements. Applicants must successfully complete either an Aide and Technician Certification Section (ATCS)-approved training program or one of the Department of Education's ROP or adult education programs for Nursing Assistants, be eligible through an equivalent training program, or be eligible through reciprocity from another state. In an ATCS-approved training program, applicants must submit fingerprints upon enrollment and complete a minimum of 50 hours of classroom training as well as 100 hours of supervised clinical training in a nursing facility. They must also successfully complete a competency evaluation conducted by an ATCS-approved testing vendor.

As part of the certification process, applicants must have a physical examination and provide a report prepared by a physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner stating that the applicant has no health condition that would create a hazard to self, fellow employees, residents, or visitors. For more information, go to the U.S. Department of Labor's Career InfoNet Web site at [www.acinet.org](http://www.acinet.org) and scroll down to "Career Tools." Click on "Certification Finder" at [www.acinet.org/certifications\\_new/default.aspx](http://www.acinet.org/certifications_new/default.aspx) and follow the instructions to locate certification programs.

### **Where Can I Find Training?**

There are two ways to search for training information at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/resources/training-and-apprenticeships.html](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/resources/training-and-apprenticeships.html)

- Search by Field of Study to find what programs are available and what schools offer those programs. You may use keywords such as: Nurse Assistants, Nurse Attendants, Nursing, and Nursing Aides.
- Search by Training Provider to find schools by name, type of school, or location.

Contact the schools you are interested in to learn about the classes available, tuition and fees, and any prerequisite course work.

## Where Would I Work?

Most Nursing Assistants work in nursing care facilities and general medical and surgical hospitals. A small number work in community care facilities for the elderly and employment services as well as residential care facilities for those with intellectual disabilities and mental health issues. The largest industries employing Nursing Assistants are as follows:

Industry Title	Percent of Total Employment for Occupation in California
Nursing Care Facilities	48.1%
General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	25.0%
Employment Services	3.9%
Residential Mental Health Facilities	2.6%
Home Health Care Services	1.6%

Source: EDD/LMID Staffing Patterns at  
[www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/iomatrix/staffing-patterns1.asp](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/iomatrix/staffing-patterns1.asp)

## Finding a Job

Direct contact with employers is a good way to find a job in this field. Program placement offices in training locations may also assist in locating a position. Some applicants find jobs through newspaper or online classified advertisements. **Online job opening systems** include JobCentral at [www.jobcentral.com](http://www.jobcentral.com) and CalJOBS<sup>SM</sup> at [www.caljobs.ca.gov](http://www.caljobs.ca.gov).

To find your nearest One-Stop Career Center, go to [Service Locator](#). View the [helpful job search tips](#) for more resources. (requires [Adobe Reader](#)).

## Yellow Page Headings

You can focus your local job search by checking employers listed online or in your local telephone directory. Below are some suggested headings where you might find employers of Nursing Assistants.

- Health Clinics
- Home Health Care Services
- Hospitals
- Nursing & Convalescent Homes
- Nursing Homes-Intermediate Care Facilities
- Nursing Homes-Referral Service
- Nursing Homes-Skilled Nursing Facilities
- Temporary Agencies

## Find Possible Employers

To locate a list of employers in your area, use "Find Employers" on the LaborMarketInfo Web site at <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/aspdotnet/databrowsing/empMain.aspx?menuChoice=emp>

- Select the search for employers by occupation.

- Select a geographic area.
- Search for an occupation by keyword, occupation, or category.
- Select one of the top industries that employ the occupation.
- This will give you a list of employers in that industry in your area.
- Click on "View Filter Selections" to limit your list to specific cities or employer size.
- Click on an employer for the street address, telephone number, size of business, Web site, etc.
- Contact the employer for possible employment.

### **Where Could This Job Lead?**

Nursing Assistant is the entry-level position in the nursing field and sets the foundation, skills, and knowledge that could lead to other health care occupations. With additional education and training, a Nursing Assistant can work in a specialty area such as pediatrics, geriatrics, surgery, obstetrics, orthopedics, or psychiatry. A typical nursing career path would be Nursing Assistant to CNA to licensed vocational nurse to registered nurse.

Many employers encourage advancement by giving training within the facility and offering flexible work schedules to make formal classroom study easier.

### **Related Occupations**

Below is a list of occupations related to Nursing Assistants.

- Home Health Aides (SOC 31-1011)
- Medical Assistants (SOC 31-9092)
- Orderlies (SOC 31-1015)
- Physical Therapists (SOC 29-1123)
- Psychiatric Aides (SOC 31-1013)

### **Other Sources**

- California Department of Public Health  
[www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov)
- American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees  
[www.afscme.org](http://www.afscme.org)
- National Association of Health Care Assistants  
[www.nahcacares.org](http://www.nahcacares.org)

These links are provided for your convenience and do not constitute an endorsement by EDD.

### **For the Career Professional**

The following codes are provided to assist counselors, job placement workers, or other career professionals.

System	Code
SOC - Standard Occupational Classification at <a href="http://www.bls.gov/soc/">www.bls.gov/soc/</a>	31-1014
O*NET - Occupational Information Network at <a href="http://online.onetcenter.org/">online.onetcenter.org/</a>	
Nursing Assistants	31-1014.00
Interest Codes (RIASEC) at <a href="http://online.onetcenter.org/find/descriptor/browse/Interests/#cur">online.onetcenter.org/find/descriptor/browse/Interests/#cur</a>	SCR

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