

Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)

Hands-on bedside nursing about a year after high school, with a real license at the end of it.

TYPICAL PAY

\$64,400

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$50k to \$83k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**Nursing homes, hospitals, clinics,
home care**

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Biology and any health science or medical terminology class. A nursing assistant course in high school gets you patient experience early.
- 2 Get into a practical nursing program** Apply months ahead
Community colleges and technical schools run them. Entry needs a placement test, a clean background check, and sometimes a wait list.
- 3 Finish the program** 1 to 2 years
Classroom work in anatomy, pharmacology and nursing care, plus supervised clinical hours in real facilities. Roughly 12 months full time, 18 to 24 part time.
- 4 Pass the NCLEX-PN (National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurses)** Weeks after graduating
A computer adaptive exam. It gets harder when you answer correctly and can stop early once it knows your level.
- 5 Get licensed by your state board** Weeks
Apply to the board of nursing in the state you will work in, with fingerprints and a background check. Then you can work.

Pros and cons

- + A licensed, respected job about a year after high school
- + Cheap training compared with almost any other health career
- + Hired anywhere in the country, in any size of town
- Short staffing is normal and the patient load can feel unsafe
- Nights, weekends and holidays on a rotating schedule
- Physically hard: lifting, standing, bodily fluids

Good to know

Two names, one job

California and Texas call it a licensed vocational nurse. Every other state calls it a licensed practical nurse. The training is the same, the national exam is the same, and the federal wage survey counts them...

Most work in nursing homes, not hospitals

The biggest single employer of practical nurses is long-term and residential care. Hospitals have shifted most bedside roles to registered nurses over the last few decades, which is a large part of...

Optional boosts

Intravenous therapy certification. Wound care. Charge nurse in long-term care. Dialysis or hospice.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses (29-2061.00)

NCLEX: fees and payment

National Council of State Boards of Nursing

California Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/licensed-practical-nurse>



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