



What Skills Are in Demand For Nurse Administrators?



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What Skills Do Nurse Administrators Need?

Nurse administrators play integral roles in managing the operations of health care organizations. Their experience and education prepare them for leadership roles in nursing. A Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.) degree with a concentration in [Executive Nurse Leadership](#) can put aspiring nurse professionals on the path to become nurse administrators.

Nurse administrators generally don't work directly with patients and their families. They oversee staff who are responsible for patient interaction. Their day-to-day responsibilities may include:

- **Human Resources (HR):** Hiring, training, scheduling and overseeing nursing staff and, occasionally, support staff.
- **Finance:** Creating and managing budgets, financial forecasting and cost-benefit analyses.
- **Compliance:** Staying current on health care regulations and making sure nursing staff know about and adhere to those regulations.
- **Reporting:** Setting standards for record maintenance.
- **Communications:** Serving as intermediaries between their staffs and other health care providers, other departments (such as HR) and patients.
- **Strategic planning:** Setting goals, creating tactics, managing project timelines and identifying obstacles.

Because nurse administrators have various responsibilities in health care organizations, they must have great communication and leadership skills and be adaptable to the ever-changing health care landscape.

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Nurse Administrator salary range *



***According to the 2013 American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) Salary and Compensation Study, nurse administrator salaries typically range from \$80,000 to \$130,000 and can go as high as \$160,000.**

Communication

Nurse administrators need excellent communication skills to interact with a variety of people on a daily basis. For example, the way they communicate about a treatment plan with a physician will be much different from the way they might communicate with an elderly patient. Similarly, the way a nurse administrator manages an RN with 30 years of experience will not be the same as the way they manage a nurse who is fresh out of college. Through effective communication, nurse administrators can:

- Foster trust between patients and care providers.
- Foster trust between administrative leaders and staff.
- Ensure patients' best interests come first.
- Overcome differences between individuals and departments.
- Facilitate professional and personal growth for their teams.

There are a number of other factors, however, that might present challenges in communication including:

- Gender.
- Age.
- Religion.
- Language.
- Culture.
- Health impairment. (e.g., brain injury, stroke, learning disability, etc.)

Nurse administrators might establish communication best practices and ethical guidelines, as well as require their teams to participate in sensitivity training so they are better prepared to address these challenges and become aware of the potential pitfalls and risks of poor communication.



Effective Practices for Communicating with Other Health Care Workers

The nurse administrator's role is to establish and oversee best communication practices for the way they and their staff interact with other health care workers. Whether nurses communicate with their peers, their managers or people who report to them, they follow these best practices:

- Be aware of nonverbal cues (facial expression, tone, and body language).
- Listen to others and repeat back what you heard them say.
- Emphasize key points by repeating them.
- Respond in a timely manner, especially to one-way communication (e.g. emails).
- Use relatable analogies to illustrate difficult concepts.
- Seek honest feedback and be open to not liking everything you hear.
- Follow up important conversations with a written message that confirms what you discussed.

When the nurse administrator's staff sees their leader using these communication best practices, they are more likely to use them. This mindful communication will strengthen and fortify relationships and build a culture of respect.



Effective Practices for Communicating with Patients and Their Families

Communication between nurses, patients and patients' families is a sensitive topic that is governed by several parties:

- The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) that Congress passed in 1996.
- American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics.
- Individual health care organizations' codes of ethics, compliance rules and communication procedures.
- Best practices established by a nurse administrator.

Nurse administrators are responsible for staying current on changes to federal, state and hospital policies that affect the way nurses interact with patients and their families. Congress passed HIPAA in 1996, which includes provisions for handling confidential health information, and every health care worker should be familiar with it. Violation of HIPAA laws puts the nurse and the health care organization at risk for lawsuits.

The ANA's Code of Ethics helps nurse administrators establish best practices for managing patient care. It includes provisions for interacting with patients, collaborating with other health care providers, privacy and confidentiality and more – all of which have effective communication skills at the center. Most health care organizations have protocol in place for patient communication in addition to federal guidelines that protect patients' privacy. Nurse administrators help inform staff of protocol and enforce violations. For instance, nurse administrators are responsible for helping their

teams understand how social media, electronic media and personal electronic devices may be used in the workplace.

Additionally, nurse administrators should encourage their staff to be accessible, approachable and sympathetic. They must also coach nurses to how to actively listen to patients, and ensure they feel valued and understood.



For example, a nurse administrator might require his or her staff to use these tactics when they talk to patients:

- Incorporating visuals when appropriate (e.g. sketching what a broken toe and a healthy toe look like).
- Avoiding the use of large words, complex medical terms and lengthy explanations.
- Pausing often to ask for questions and feedback.
- Writing down important information that the patient and their families may need.
- Providing additional resources where patients may learn more about their conditions.
- Great communication is not the only skill that a nurse needs for an administrative position. A nurse administrator must have excellent organizational and leadership skills as well.



Leadership

Leadership skills primarily come from experience working as a nurse, but they are also acquired from practice. Successful nurses know how to motivate a team to do great work. They also know how to spot team members who might need additional coaching or have leadership potential themselves. Nurse administrators are coaches, quality assurance experts and advocates (for patients and nurses). They are also willing to jump in themselves when work gets busy.

Leadership abilities and skills needed to succeed in the role include:

- Establishing and maintaining a culture of fairness in the workplace
- Embracing workplace diversity
- Resolving conflict
- Encouraging behaviors and attitudes optimal for the workplace
- Mentoring relationships across the enterprise
- Helping employees recognize and achieve their leadership potential

Nurse administrators must ensure that their teams have the proper training and access to resources that help them do their jobs. This might include:

- Earning continuing education credits
- Earning certifications and remaining current in specialization areas
- Continually upholding professional standards
- Maintaining active professional association memberships
- Identifying and striving to achieve goals and aspirations

Additionally, a successful nurse administrator has the ability to listen and make fast, effective decisions, especially in a world that is constantly changing. Whether it's new technology, new legislation or changes in administration, the best nurse administrators are able to adapt to change.

Flexibility

Change is constant in the health care industry because it has many moving parts, especially in these areas:

- Federal and state regulations – The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is the best example of changes at the national level that have had rippling effects throughout the health care industry. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services reported in 2014 that since the ACA went into effect, for-profit hospitals have experienced 50-70 percent decreases in uninsured admissions. A change like this could mean additional revenue for hospitals, increased demand for services and more jobs for health care workers.
- Insurance requirements – *BenefitNews.com* says that insurance companies are holding health care providers accountable by requiring evidence of positive health results. This requirement creates the need for increased reporting as well as adherence to HIPAA laws.
- Advances in technology – Telemedicine, personal mobile devices, electronic health records (EHR), portal technology and self-service kiosks are some of the advances in technology that the health care industry has seen in recent years.
- Administrative policy changes – Hospital and health care organizations make their own policy changes as they grow and expand their services. They also create policies in reaction to legislation, insurance company policy changes and advances in technology.

Keeping pace with these frequent (and often fast-paced) changes requires nurse administrators to be grounded but flexible. They must be willing to learn about changes in laws, policies and technology, and be able to adapt their own best practices and policies to keep up with the changes – all while maintaining a calm demeanor.



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Nurse Administrator Education

Nurses can gain leadership skills through hands-on, professional experiences and a comprehensive, accredited [Master of Science in Nursing \(M.S.N.\) program](#) with a Nurse Executive Leader concentration can sharpen these skills. While the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) is acceptable for being a nurse administrator, it uses nurse administration and nurse management interchangeably. Nurse management and nurse administration are different career paths with different responsibilities and different income potential. In an organizational chart, a nurse manager would likely report to a nurse administrator. Another option that some nurses find professionally beneficial is to earn a dual degree (such as a [dual M.S.N.-M.B.A.](#)) to acquire both business and nursing expertise.

Many nurses start the path toward nurse administrator as RNs. They can earn certifications, such as a Certified Nurse Manager and Leader (CNML) certificate. They can also advance after years of hands-on experience. An advanced degree from an accredited online MSN program has the potential to open more opportunities for nurse administrators.

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