

Federally Funded Apprenticeship Programs

Note: This document covers U.S. Department of Labor sponsored apprenticeship programs. There are many types of apprenticeship programs that are not federally funded.

United States Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Programs

There is a gap between the skill level of new RN and LPN graduates and the skill level required by many healthcare employers. This skills gap is a barrier for new graduates starting their nursing careers. Many healthcare employers lack the budget and/or staffing to provide training to bring an inexperienced LPNs or RNs up to skill level required by the employer. Increasingly, these employers seek only experienced nurses for open positions, which exacerbates the nursing workforce shortage. Some states have addressed this workforce skills gap issue by using United States Department of Labor (US DOL) registered apprenticeship programs, which offer student nurse apprentices additional on-the-job clinical training, bringing the students' skills to the level required by health care employers.

US DOL registered apprenticeship programs combine paid on-the-job training with classroom/online instruction to prepare apprentices for highly skilled careers. The federal government provides funding for the on-the-job training and related costs for these programs. Federal regulations define minimum requirements for approval and operation of registered apprenticeship programs. Basic components of U.S DOL registered student nurse apprenticeship programs are described below:

- Apprentice Program Sponsors. Usually, a hospital and/or an RN or LPN education institution register as sponsors of student nurse apprenticeship programs. Sponsors assume full responsibility for the operation of a registered apprenticeship program.
- Health Care Employer. Usually, hospitals provide paid on-the job training to student nurse apprentices for completing required patient care education as well as for additional hours of on-the job training.
- Nursing Program. A licensure qualifying RN or LPN program provides classroom/online education required for participation in a student nurse apprenticeship. Some states require the nursing program enter into a written agreement with the hospital that employs the student nurse apprentices, which describes each party's responsibility for operating the registered apprenticeship program and addresses clinical supervision, training, and scope of practice issues.
- Apprenticeship Plan The apprenticeship program must have a written plan embodying the requirements for employment, training, and supervision of student nurse apprentices, which is subscribed to by the apprenticeship program sponsor. Student nurses must be enrolled in and in good academic standing in a licensure qualifying RN or LPN program while participating in the apprenticeship program.
- Equal Employment Opportunity Federal regulations require equal employment opportunities in apprenticeship programs.
- Apprenticeships. US DOL registered apprenticeship programs require the healthcare employer offer paid on-the-job training: (a) of at least 2000 hours; or (b) that leads to the attainment of nursing competencies, as verified by the program sponsor, or (c) a blend of the time-based and competency-based approaches.
- Credential. Upon completion of the apprenticeship the student nurse receives credential, which signifies to employers that apprentices are fully qualified for the job.

Student Nurse Apprenticeships in Other States

Each state has different eligibility, operational, and clinical practice requirements for student nurse apprenticeship programs. Some apprenticeship models are described below.

Alabama: Hospitals agree in writing with an RN or LPN program on a student nurse apprenticeship training program that is approved by the Alabama Board of Nursing. The Alabama Board of Nursing also issues student nurse apprentice permits, which allow the student nurses to practice nursing under supervision while participating in an apprenticeship program.

Wisconsin: Student nurse apprentices start paid, on-the-job training as nursing assistants and transition to student nurse roles as they progress in their nursing education program. The program transitions successful apprentices into nursing positions within a Wisconsin hospital system.

Nevada: Student nurse apprentices provide nursing care in accordance with a Nevada Board of Nursing Approved Skills List (See Attachment A). The hospital Director of Nursing ensures that each student nurse apprentice: (a) is enrolled in an acceptable RN or LPN program; (b) acquires skills to perform the nursing tasks approved by student's nursing program and on the Nevada Board of Nursing Approved Skills List; and (3) meets other apprenticeship program requirements.

Texas: Student nurse apprentices complete require nursing program clinical hours in the same manner as other nursing students. Student nurse apprentices are paid for nursing program required clinical hours and additional non-nursing program on-the-job training.

- LVN apprenticeship programs must: (1) be 1-year (2) include at least 144 hours of LVN classroom training (3) include 2000 hours of paid on-the-job patient care training with at least 1 wage increase (4) appoint a mentor or clinical preceptor for one-to-one support.
- ADN apprenticeship programs must: (1) be 2-years (2) include at least 496 hours of RN classroom training (3) include 4150 hours of paid on-the-job patient care training with at least 1 wage increase (4) appoint a mentor or clinical preceptor for one-to-one support, and (5) can award up to 50% of credit/time earned previous to entry into the apprenticeship program.

Registered Student Nurse Apprenticeships in New York State

The New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL) registers and oversees apprenticeship programs in New York State on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor. As of April 28, 2024, NYS DOL has not registered apprenticeship programs for student nurses. However, New York State's health care employers and nursing programs are considering student nurse apprenticeship programs as a solution for recruiting, training, and retaining highly skilled nurses.

Considerations for Student Nurse Registered Apprenticeships in New York State are described below.

Apprentice Program Sponsors. Sponsors should include hospitals or nursing home employers and/or an education institutions that operate a NYSED registered licensure qualifying RN or LPN programs.

- Are there other organizations that should be considered as student nurse apprenticeship program sponsors?

Nursing Program. NYSED-registered, licensure qualifying RN or LPN programs must provide the classroom/online education required for participation in a registered student nurse apprenticeship program. Students must be enrolled in and in good academic standing in the nursing program to participate in the registered apprenticeship.

- Are there other types of nursing programs that should be considered?

Nursing Program Curricular Changes. NYSED approval is required whenever a registered RN or LPN program plans to add an apprenticeship track to the curriculum. See, 8 NYCRR Section 52.1(h). In addition, student nurses are not legally allowed to practice nursing except when "enrolled in registered schools or programs as may be incidental to their course of study." See Education Law sec. 6908(c). Therefore, all on-the-job student nurse apprenticeship training must be included as coursework offered by a registered RN or LPN educational program. Apprentice track nursing students should complete required nursing program clinical hours/assignments in the same manner as other students enrolled in the same nursing program. However, the nursing program must offer apprenticeship track students elective courses that include the additional hours required apprenticeship on-the-job training. On-the-job training must be based on national standards but customized to the needs of the particular employer. The nursing program must address these and other issues when requesting NYSED approval for a curricular change.

- Should the curriculum specifically describe clinical supervision and training requirements for student nurses enrolled in apprentice track elective courses? In addition to preceptor supervised patient care education, are there other models of clinical supervision and training that should be considered for apprentice track elective courses? In other states, the facility DON is responsible for ensuring adequate clinical supervision of student nurse apprentices by a qualified nurse.
- Should the curriculum define the specific nursing tasks to be performed by student nurse apprentices in apprentice track elective courses?
- Are there other criteria that NYSED should consider?

Healthcare Employer. Healthcare employers provide paid, on-the job training to student nurse apprentices who must work under the clinical supervision of a nurse who is competent to provide such supervision and training. The hospital pays the student nurse apprentice

for completing required patient care education in the hospital, as well as for completing *additional* patient care hours that are part of the apprentice track elective course.

- Should NYSED require the nursing program to enter into a written agreement with the hospital that employs the student nurse apprentices? Should NYSED require that the written agreement describe each party's responsibility for (a) operating the registered nurse apprenticeship program (b) ensuring adequate clinical supervision and training of apprentices while they participate in elective courses, and (c) describing the scope of practice of apprentices? Should the agreement make the Director of Nursing responsible for the supervision of student nurse apprentices while they participate in elective courses? Are there other requirements that should be included in the agreement?

Equal Opportunity Federal and New York law require equal employment opportunities in apprenticeship programs as well as participation in higher education coursework. NYSED does not have jurisdiction over student nurse employment. However, NY law prohibits discrimination (on the basis of race, gender, national origin, religion, and disability, etc.) against students enrolled in registered nursing education programs. NYSED does have jurisdiction to address illegal discrimination against the student nurses stemming from their participation in nursing program courses.