

Advice for foreign-trained nurses

Hi Ana,

I am a foreign trained nurse and I recently arrived in Canada making this my new home. I am trying to understand this new system, how to look for work and particularly how I can begin getting back into my profession. I have spoken to some people, and everyone is telling me different pieces of information. Some of it makes sense and some of it doesn't. The truth is that I don't know where to begin. What I do know is that I want to work as a nurse. Could you please tell me where to start, who could I speak with, etc. Hoping to hear from you and thank you.

Mrs. M. Liu

Dear Mrs. Liu,

You are not the only one trying to figure out this maze. Getting your license to work as a nurse in Ontario requires you to do some research and planning as well as some personal and financial commitment.

The first step in becoming a licensed nurse in Ontario is to contact the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO). This is the regulatory body that has the authority to issue licenses. The CNO is also responsible for ensuring that licensed nurses practice according to professional and legal standards. The phone number for the NCO customer services department is (416) 928-0900 ext. 5051. Ask that a registration package be sent to you. Once you receive the CNO registration package, read the instruction and follow them carefully.

When the CNO has received your registration application and supporting documents, they will assess your file. You will be notified in writing as to whether you are eligible to write the Canadian Nurse Licensing Examination or whether you require additional upgrading. For more information about the registration process, visit the CNO's website at www.cno.org

Also, contact Care for Nurses, a project designed to help internationally educated nurses become licensed to practice in Ontario. The project is for registered nurses and registered practical nurses living in Ontario. You must be internationally educated as a nurse, a permanent resident, eligible to write the Canadian exam for nurses and at an intermediate level of English proficiency. By participating in the Care Project, you will have the opportunity to: learn more about the role of nursing in

Ontario's health care system, learn tips for success in writing the licensing exam, gain experience in health care settings, develop a clear understanding of nursing-specific terms and vocabulary and upgrade and review your clinical skills.

As a registered client of the CARE for Nurses Project, you will be eligible for the following free services: employer placement, test-taking workshops, tutors and mentors, resource centre, guest speakers, the opportunity to meet peers and potential employers, individual and group support and financial advice.

You will be eligible to enroll in specially designed courses at George Brown College, Centennial College and other locations around the city such as English Communication, Nursing in Ontario, Competency Skills Assessment, Clinical Theory and Practice Review, Examination Review Course (courses are subject to tuition fees).

As you can see, I have given you two important resources with which to begin your research and planning, However, it is also important for you to be aware of labour market information. For instance, the Ontario Job Futures <http://www1.onhrdc-drhc.gc.ca/ojf/ojf.jsp> provides employment prospects over the next five years for various areas of the economy. Nursing is classified as Good. Employment in this occupation is expected to grow more slowly than the average through to the year 2007. However, because of the large size of this occupational group and the aging work force, many more job openings will be created each year from the need to replace workers who retire or leave. The Canadian Nurses' Association predicts a shortage of 59,000 – 113,000 nurses nationally (excluding Quebec) by 2011.

While you are going through this process, start networking by speaking to people in the field, contacting local Community Health Care Centres and conducting information interviews with registered nurses. You will be amazed at how much information you can collect. You could also offer to do volunteer work, but be specific as to what your interest is. By doing volunteer work you will gain work experience that you can put on your resume. Obviously, you cannot volunteer as a nurse; however, if you volunteer in any capacity within the health care system, you can learn how the system works and meet people who work in your field. Before long, you will have developed your own networking system, and believe me this is a great start!

There is a lot of information and it is difficult to absorb it all at one time, so go at your own pace, read the information, study it, research as much as you can and when you are ready you can start this process and make a well informed decision. It is not going to be easy, however. If this career is important to you and you are ready to make a personal and financial commitment in order to practise it in Canada, these are the tools you can use to help you along the way.

Mrs. Liu, I do wish you all the best, and I hope that the information will assist you in finding your career path as a nurse in our health care system. Good luck to you and some time in the future, drop me a line to let me know how things are going for you.

Ana.

See the following resources for additional information.

College Nurses of Ontario <http://www.cno.org>

Registered Nurses Association of Ontario <http://www.rnao.org>

Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario <http://www.rpnao.org>

Ontario Nurses Association <http://www.ona.org>

Ontario Ministry of Health <http://www.gov.on.ca/health>

George Brown College <http://www.gbrown.on.ca>

Centennial College <http://www.cencol.on.ca>

Ryerson University <http://www.acs.ryerson.ca>

**Ontario Student Assistant Program (OSAP) <http://www.osap.gov.on.ca>
(information on financial assistance)**

www.settlement.org

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Sources: Care for Nurses Project, College of Nurses of Ontario, HRDC – Ontario Job Futures, Canadian Nurses Association.