

Licensed Practical Nurses: Advancing, Succeeding & Achieving

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There are over 630,000 active licensed practical/vocational nurses (LPNs) in the United States and 2,700 are in the State of Delaware. Over 171,000 LPNs work in long-term care facilities, which is ranked as the number one field of nursing that LPNs are offered employment. Additional areas of nursing that LPNs work in are home health, retirement/assisted living facilities, psychiatric/mental health, substance abuse, and outpatient/ambulatory clinics. (U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024)

I have been a proud LPN for over 25 years. It can be a very rewarding profession if you are passionate about it, as well as confident in the education and skills that you acquire before you graduate and long after. If you are thinking about becoming an LPN, take time and review the definition of what an LPN is and the scope of practice. You will also want to investigate the prerequisites, requirements, and identify accredited and board-certified practical nursing programs. Most of all, know your why; why do you want to be an LPN? There are currently three practical nursing schools in Delaware that are approved by the Delaware Board of Nursing. They are Delaware Skills Center, Delaware Technical & Community College, and Polytech Adult Education.

There are many students who enter

practical nursing programs to gain nursing experience on their journey to becoming a registered nurse (RN). However, there are a lot of LPNs who do not want to become an RN but seek advancement and/or other opportunities in nursing. According to the research, some of the top reasons that LPNs reported for leaving their jobs, transitioning, and or leaving the nursing field, other than burnout, were the need for respect, acceptance, better working conditions, better salary, and opportunities for advancement (Jones et al., 2021). The research also showed that employers who implemented some or all these needs had a positive impact and decreased the turnover rate for LPNs (Jones et al., 2021).

The nursing profession is broad and forever evolving, which means that no matter what level of nursing you are in, you have options to work in the area that you are most passionate about. LPNs are employed in hospitals, insurance companies, schools, health and wellness businesses, community organizations, travel nursing, and embracing their own entrepreneurial spirits. Here are some keys that helped and continue to help me be an LPN in leadership, along with the tips shared in the beginning of this article that you may find helpful.

- Reflect often on why you became a nurse.
- Review state nursing regulations often, not just during license renewal time. There were many times that I delayed my own progress because I did not know about updates made to nursing practice requirements.
- Stay educated and up to date by taking advantage of accredited education offered in the area you are interested

in. Many opportunities for LPN advancement can be obtained through other degree and healthcare certification programs.

- Implement self-care into your day even if it's for a moment.
- In conclusion, pursue that which you are most passionate about, think outside the box, do your research and take the limits off. A happy, healthy, educated, and compassionate nurse is more likely to have happier, healthier patients. ■

References

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