Scope of Practice for Nurse Practitioners

Professional Role
Nurse practitioners (NPs) are licensed, independent practitioners who practice in ambulatory, acute and long-term care as primary and/or specialty care providers. NPs assess, diagnose, treat, and manage acute episodic and chronic illnesses. NPs are experts in health promotion and disease prevention. They order, conduct, supervise, and interpret diagnostic and laboratory tests, prescribe pharmacological agents and non-pharmacologic therapies, as well as teach and counsel patients, among other services.

As licensed, independent clinicians, NPs practice autonomously and in coordination with health care professionals and other individuals. They may serve as health care researchers, interdisciplinary consultants, and patient advocates. NPs provide a wide-range of health care services to individuals, families, groups and communities.

Education
NPs are advanced practice registered nurses who obtain graduate education, post-master’s certificates and doctoral degrees. Educational preparation provides NPs with specialized knowledge and clinical competency which enable them to practice in various health care settings, make differential diagnoses, manage and initiate treatment plans and prescribe medications and treatment. National NP education program accreditation requirements and competency-based standards ensure that NPs are equipped to provide safe, high-quality patient care from the point of graduation. Clinical competency and professional development are hallmarks of NP education.

Accountability
The autonomous nature of NP practice requires accountability to the public for delivery of high-quality health care. NP accountability is consistent with an ethical code of conduct, national certification, periodic peer review, clinical outcome evaluation, and evidence of continued professional development.

Responsibility
The patient-centered nature of the NP role requires a career-long commitment to meet the evolving needs of society and advances in health care science. NPs are responsible to the public and adaptable to changes in health care. As leaders in health care, NPs combine the roles of provider, mentor, educator, researcher, and administrator. NPs take responsibility for continued professional development, involvement in professional organizations, and participation in health policy activities at the local, state, national and international levels. Five decades of research affirms that NPs provide safe, high-quality care.
There are more than 270,000 nurse practitioners (NPs) licensed in the U.S.\(^1\)

- More than 26,000 new NPs completed their academic programs in 2016-2017\(^2\)
- 99.1% of NPs have graduate degrees\(^3\)
- 87.1% of NPs are certified in an area of primary care, and 72.6% of all NPs deliver primary care\(^3\)
- 82.9% of full-time NPs are accepting Medicare patients and 80.2% are accepting Medicaid patients\(^3\)
- 41.7% of full-time NPs hold hospital privileges; 11.7% have long-term care privileges\(^3\)
- 95.7% of NPs prescribe medications, and those in full-time practice write an average of 20 prescriptions per day\(^3\)
- NPs hold prescriptive privileges, including controlled substances, in all 50 states and D.C.
- In 2018, the mean, full-time base salary for NPs was $105,903\(^3\)
- The majority of NPs (57.4%) see three or more patients per hour\(^3\)
- Malpractice rates remain low; only 1.1% have been named as primary defendant in a malpractice case\(^3\)
- NPs have been in practice an average of 10 years\(^3\)
- The average age of NPs is 49 years\(^3\)

### DISTRIBUTION, TOP PRACTICE SETTING AND CLINICAL FOCUS AREA BY AREA OF NP CERTIFICATION \(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification*</th>
<th>Percent of NPs</th>
<th>Top Practice Setting</th>
<th>Top Clinical Foci</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family(^^)</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>Hospital Outpatient Clinic (13.5%)</td>
<td>Primary Care (37.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult(^^)</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>Hospital Outpatient Clinic (17.9%)</td>
<td>Primary Care (17.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult–Gerontology Primary Care(^^)</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Hospital Outpatient Clinic (14.4%)</td>
<td>Primary Care (25.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acute Care</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Hospital Inpatient Unit (50.8%)</td>
<td>Cardiology (16.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pediatrics–Primary Care(^^)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Hospital Outpatient Clinic (31.1%)</td>
<td>Primary Care (51.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult–Gerontology Acute Care</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Hospital Inpatient Unit (53.6%)</td>
<td>Critical Care (16.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Health(^^)</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Private Group Practice (23.6%)</td>
<td>OB/GYN (66.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric/Mental Health–Family</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Psych/Mental Health Facility (24.2%)</td>
<td>Psychiatric (67.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric/Mental Health</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Psych/Mental Health Facility (28.7%)</td>
<td>Psychiatric (66.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerontology(^^)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Long-Term Care Facility (20.5%)</td>
<td>Primary Care (31.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* NPs may be certified in more than one area
\(^^\) Primary Care Focus

Updated January 2019

\(^1\) AANP National Nurse Practitioner Database, 2019
\(^3\) 2018 AANP National Nurse Practitioner Sample Survey
NURSE PRACTITIONERS

NPs are the providers of choice for millions of Americans. NPs evaluate patients, diagnose, write prescriptions and bring a comprehensive perspective to health care.

With a track record of quality health care delivery for nearly half a century ...

and a growing need for health care providers, especially in primary care ...

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PRIMAR Y CARE FOCUS
NPs are choosing primary care more than physicians and physician assistants. In 2018, more than 87% of NPs were prepared in primary care programs, while only 8% of physicians entered a primary care residency.

AREA OF PRIMARY CARE PREPARATION

MORE THAN 87% PREPARED IN PRIMARY CARE

66.9% Family
19.8% Adult and Geriatrics
2.7% Women’s Health
4.0% Pediatrics

REQUIREMENTS FOR PRACTICE

State NP Licensure/Registration
National Board Certification
Graduate Nursing Education
Registered Nurse License
Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing

6+ YEARS OF ACADEMIC AND CLINICAL PREPARATION

NPs AT A GLANCE

More than 5 decades of improving patient access and quality care

Estimated annual patient visits exceed 1.06 billion

Prescribe medications in all 50 states and D.C.

DELIVER PRIMARY CARE

57.4% OF NPs SEE 3 OR MORE PATIENTS PER HOUR

An increase in the overall population, aging baby boomers and number of individuals living with chronic disease will drive the need for robust primary care access.

INCREASING IN NUMBER
The number of nurse practitioners continues to grow rapidly.

INCREASING IN NUMBER

2019:
270,000

2018:
248,000

2013:
171,000

2010:
140,000

2007:
120,000

2004:
106,000

2003:
97,000

2001:
82,000

1999:
68,300

PRESCRIPTION FOR THE FUTURE
2 out of 3 patients support legislation for greater access to NP services

NPs BY THE NUMBERS

83% accept Medicare
80% accept Medicaid
87% accept Private Insurance
77% accept Uninsured

AANP
American Association of
NURSE PRACTITIONERS®