

A variety of career opportunities are available in nursing homes

by Patricia Roy

HEALTHCARE

“Nursing homes offer many career opportunities while providing an essential service to the senior residents of Prince Edward Island,” says **Pamela Handrahan**, Nurse Coordinator at Maplewood Manor in Alberton.

Pamela says working in a nursing home environment has its own rewards, and a great number of different skills and abilities are required and can be learned on the job. “Nurses working in long-term care can develop and use skills and leadership qualities in a number of areas. For example, skills can be developed when being involved with implementing new health standards, serving on a committee, or learning about new safety measures for residents.”

Life-long learning

“Nurses can take part in continuing education courses which can lead to supervisory positions,” says Pamela. “Opportunities for career advancement and personal development are available to the entire nursing staff. Here at this manor, we have a budget for education, and we try to work with staff to offer further training.

“Nursing is about helping people and working together as a team,” says Pamela. “It is a very demanding job. Having access to continuous training is one component that can lead to job satisfaction.”

Greatest staffing needs

“Our greatest need is for more **Registered Nurses** in permanent and casual positions,” says Pamela. “There is a shortage of RNs everywhere,” says **Kirk Deboer**, President of the PEI Nursing Home Association. He says the situation is the same for practically all nursing homes in the province.

While there are no permanent **Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)** positions available right now at Maplewood Manor, Pamela says there is a shortage of casual LPNs. “It is getting to the point that if anyone else retires, we are going to be in dire need.”

“The bulk of our staff are **Resident Care Workers**,” says Pamela. “RCWs need a course from a recognized school in order to work in nursing homes. It is important that such courses adequately prepare RCWs for the crucial role they play, particularly as it relates to the increasing number of people in nursing homes with dementia and cognitive problems.



Pamela Handrahan is the Nurse Coordinator for Maplewood Manor in Alberton. The facility is home to 48 residents and employs close to 120 people in full-time, casual, and part-time nursing and support services positions. “There is nothing more rewarding at the end of the day than knowing you have helped the residents,” says Pamela. “It feels good to know that you may have made a difference in their lives and even in their families’ lives.”

“These days, residents who enter nursing homes require much more care than they did in the past,” says Pamela. “People are living longer, and many have more complex health and cognitive problems. Most of our residents are considered to be level four or five, which means they require full nursing care.”

Youth employment and involvement

“A number of students who take part in government-sponsored programs work here as summer students or take part in a high school Cooperative Education program,” says Pamela. “We also have a reading program where children come in and read to the seniors. These programs help to make younger generations aware of what it would be like to work in a nursing home. As a result, some of the students who participated in these programs have decided on a career in the healthcare field.”

Other employment opportunities

“Many different jobs help to sustain and ensure the day-to-day operation of the nine public nursing facilities in the province,” says **Linda Smith**, Human Resources Assistant with the provincial Department of Health. “There are jobs for **RNs, LPNs, and RCWs**. Some nursing homes also employ **Occupational Therapists, Activity Directors and Physiotherapists**.”

In public nursing facilities, several jobs come under the category of environmental services. These occupations include the people who take care of the building and its surroundings, such as **Carpenters, Painters, and Utility Workers**, who do lawn cutting and snow removal. **Plumbers and Boiler Attendants** do furnace maintenance and repair. **Laundry workers** are also under this category.

“The dietary department has a number of positions such as **Cooks, Dietitians, Dishwashers, Prep Cooks, and Kitchen Helpers**,” says Linda. “The administration staff includes **Ward Clerks, Receptionists, and Clerical Workers**.”

Competitive wages

According to the **PEI Nurses’ Union**, as of April 2007, wages for RNs range from **\$25.13 to \$30.62** per hour, based on years of experience. The **Licensed Practical Nurses Association of PEI** reports that wages for LPNs range from **\$15 to \$20.75** per hour. According to the **Service Canada 2006 PEI Wage Survey**, the average wage for nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates in hospitals, nursing homes and other healthcare facilities is **\$10.90**.

There are nine public nursing facilities and eight private nursing homes in the province.

For more information about job opportunities in provincial public nursing facilities, contact the PEI Public Service Commission at **368-4080** or go on-line at www.gov.pe.ca.



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