



# MAKE IT YOUR MISSION

*to Heal and Care for Veterans*

Total Rewards of  
VA Employment

NURSING CAREERS



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## CHOOSE VA for the Mission

*As a nurse at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), you have more than a job — you have a mission to serve Veterans who've borne the battle with honor. In carrying out this mission, you'll discover a career with competitive pay, opportunities for growth and mobility, a wealth of benefits and rich rewards.*

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VHA is the largest employer of nursing personnel, with a team of more than 100,000 professionals and projections for continued annual growth as we continue to fulfill the vision of advancing nursing and transforming health care. As a VA nurse, you are an invaluable member and leader of the interprofessional health care team. VA nurses contribute their knowledge and expertise to optimize patient-driven care and advance VA goals for improving access. They also provide safe, effective, high-quality care as part of a dynamic team helping our hospitals outperform the private sector.

VA nurses receive unparalleled opportunities to continuously develop as professionals and positively impact health care. They are empowered through shared decision-making, implementation of evidence-based practice, simulation and training/scholarship programs.

VA nursing practice provides Veteran health care across a continuum of services for acute and chronic conditions in hospital, ambulatory and skilled nursing settings. To improve Veteran access to care, nurses help create new models of care, introduce new nursing roles and advance existing ones. VA nurses share lessons learned, tools and evidence-based practices across the system. They can advance their education, mentor and be mentored, become a principal investigator and move into executive roles. They engage in emergency management and disaster preparedness both in VA and beyond. VA nurses are integrally involved in the greater federal, national and international communities of nursing, advocating for informed nursing practice so VA can constantly improve nursing care for our nation's heroes.

From your start as a nurse through retirement, you receive competitive pay and generous benefits that add to the satisfaction of a career based on giving back to those who have given so much to the nation.

No matter where or how you serve as a nurse at VA, support is there so you can focus on what matters most — the mission to heal and care for Veterans so they can thrive in life after military service.



*"I am proud to be a VA registered nurse. In 1995, I started my nursing career — not just a job — as a LPN at VA where the retirement benefits, health benefits and pay have provided me the privilege to work in many capacities while advancing my career. I value the diversity of settings and assignments with opportunities in acute, long-term, mental health, medical/surgical and primary care. I've participated in leadership programs, held both administrative and clinical positions, provided tutelage to countless nursing students and other health care professionals, received and provided coaching/mentoring, and have progressed to a terminal degree in nursing while working full time. I'm Team VA all the way! Come and join us."*

— DR. VICTORIA L. COX, RN, CHCR, VHA-CM, OFFICE OF NURSING SERVICES, NATIONAL CONSULTANT FOR RECRUITMENT AND RESOURCES





## CHOOSE VA for the Compensation

*Earn a competitive salary as you pursue excellence in health care for Veterans.*

What are your total rewards for choosing a career as a VA nurse? Let's do the math.

### SAMPLE AVERAGE SALARY FOR REGISTERED NURSE



**\$ 91,925** Average VA Central Iowa RN Salary\*

+ \$ 11,024 Value of VA health insurance premium

+ \$ 6,033 Social Security paid by VA<sup>1</sup>

+ \$ 1,411 Medicare paid by VA

+ \$ 500 Employee Assistance Program

+ \$ 2,750 Flexible spending account

+ \$ 195 Life insurance

+ \$ 4,865 Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

+ \$ 8,077 FERS

+ \$ 17,677 Value of 50 days annual Paid Time Off

**\$144,457** Estimated Annual Compensation

<sup>1</sup>Indicates a benefit received by most federal employees.

\*May vary by location, education and years of experience. This sample is representative of VA Central Iowa Registered Nurse average salaries as of September 2022.

NOTE: If you choose federal health insurance programs, your taxable wages and the employer's share of the Social Security tax will be reduced accordingly. Estimates above do not include the potential for up to \$60,000 annually in student loan reimbursement under the Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP), shift differential/premium pay, uniform allowances, Permanent Change of Station (PCS) relocation allowance, recruitment/relocation/retention incentives, the value of free liability coverage, and other payments and awards.

\*Stated figures were current at time of publication. Please reach out to a VA recruiter for up-to-date information.

**Competitive salaries.** At VA, you receive compensation based on your education, training, licensure, certification and experience. See how your total rewards add up (left and below).

**Regular increases.** Receive annual cost of living increases (when signed into federal law), within-grade or "step" increases and, when appropriate, grade increases resulting from additional credentials or promotions.

**Service without strings.** Whether you serve full or part time, your employment at VA is without employment contracts, noncompete clauses, restrictive covenants or other restrictions on outside work.

### Liability Protection



VHA nurses are covered under federal tort laws and may be defended by the United States against allegations of malpractice or negligence (38 USC 7316). The average cost of malpractice insurance in the private sector varies a great deal by occupation and other variables, ranging from \$80 to \$1,000 annually.



**\$17,677**

Annual combined value of paid holidays, sick leave and annual leave.

Computed as hourly salary x 50 leave days and holidays x 8 hours per day



## CHOOSE VA for the Coverage

*Rest easy knowing that VA has you and your family covered.*

**Health insurance.** With Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB), choose from a variety of self or family health maintenance organizations or fee-for-service health plans that all cover preexisting conditions. Your spouse, domestic partner and children under age 26 are eligible, as are children — regardless of age — who are unable to support themselves. VA pays up to 75% of health premiums, a benefit that can continue into retirement (conditions apply). Your portion of the premium is taken on a pretax basis unless you opt out.

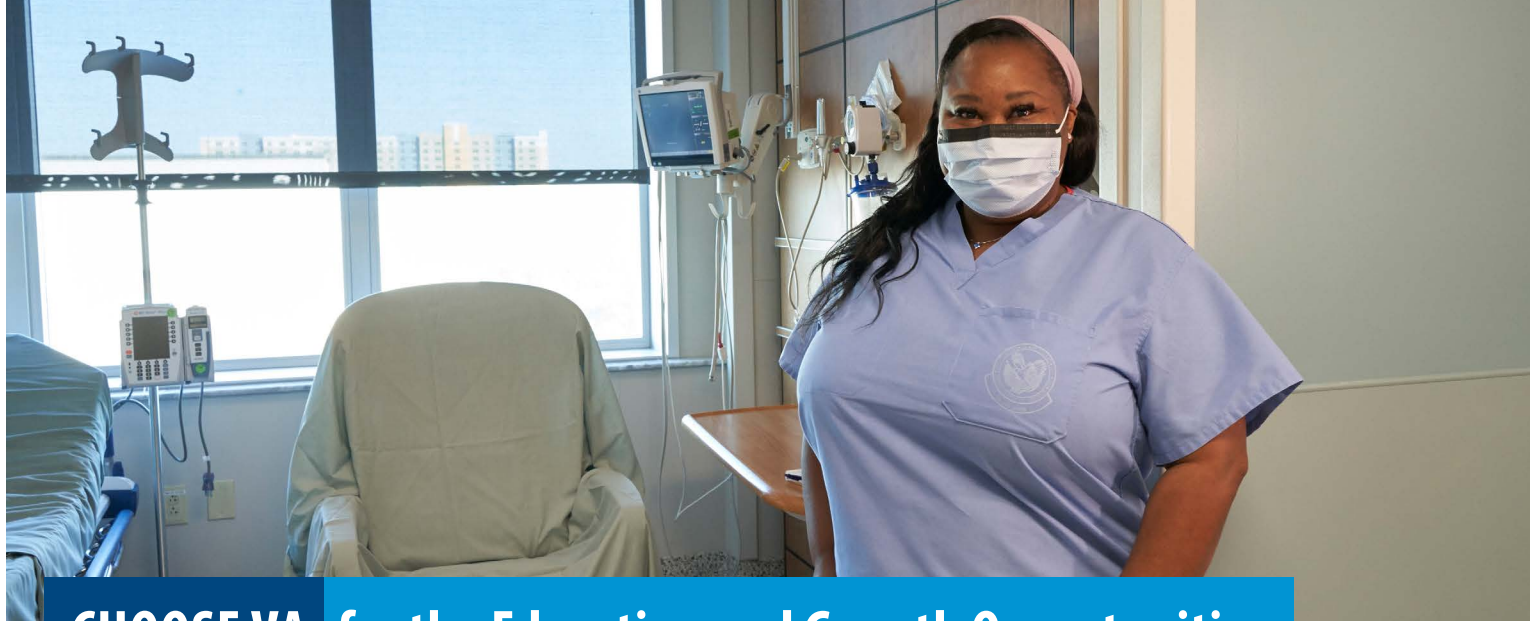


Plans can be adjusted during annual open season from November-December. Start flexible, tax-free spending accounts for up to \$2,500 in medical expenses for individuals and up to \$5,000 in dependent care expenses.

**Dental and vision insurance.** Under the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), supplemental dental and/or vision benefits are available to you and your family, including children up to age 22. FEDVIP coverage may continue into retirement for nurses enrolled as employees.

**Life insurance.** Plan for what's next with Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI), which is group term life insurance covering you and eligible family members. Receive this benefit with no physical exam if you elect to enroll within 60 days of being hired and get coverage that applies from your start date and continues into retirement.

**Long-term care.** Under the Federal Long-Term Care Insurance Program, VA nurses can access long-term care coverage for home care, adult day care and facility care. You may be eligible to apply for long-term care insurance even if you're not enrolled in the FEHB Program.



## CHOOSE VA for the Education and Growth Opportunities

*Start your career at VA and benefit from opportunities to build your skills throughout your tenure.*

**Student loan reimbursement.** If you're a VA nurse hired for a specific, difficult-to-recruit direct patient care position, you may be eligible for VA's Education Debt Reduction Program ([EDRP](#)). This program offers qualifying nurses student loan reimbursement of up to \$200,000 over a five-year period.

**Continuing education.** VA is the nation's leading provider of continuing nursing education credits and hours. As a VA nurse, you can keep your education up-to-date through the Talent Management System (TMS) while receiving opportunities from a wide variety of external agencies and presenters.

**In-person and virtual training.** VA leads in clinical simulation training, with dedicated experts and state-of-the-art resources to support the learning needs of VA staff across over 170 VA medical centers and more than 1,255 sites of care.



**Leadership skills development.** VA provides a competitive, three-tiered continuum of leadership development at the local, network and national levels for employees with the potential and desire to serve in leadership positions.



*"Since beginning my VA career in 2002, I have been thrilled with the countless professional development opportunities and pathways available for enhancing my education. For me, this has included attending training, becoming certified, advancing my formal education and completing leadership development programs. As my career progressed through various roles, such as student nurse technician, medical-surgical registered nurse, nursing informatics, nurse manager, chief nurse and program manager, I have always felt empowered to excel because of the various education and training opportunities VA has provided. Each day I am honored to use the advanced expertise I have attained, as well as continuously seek new knowledge, to fulfill our vision of advancing nursing and transforming health care."*

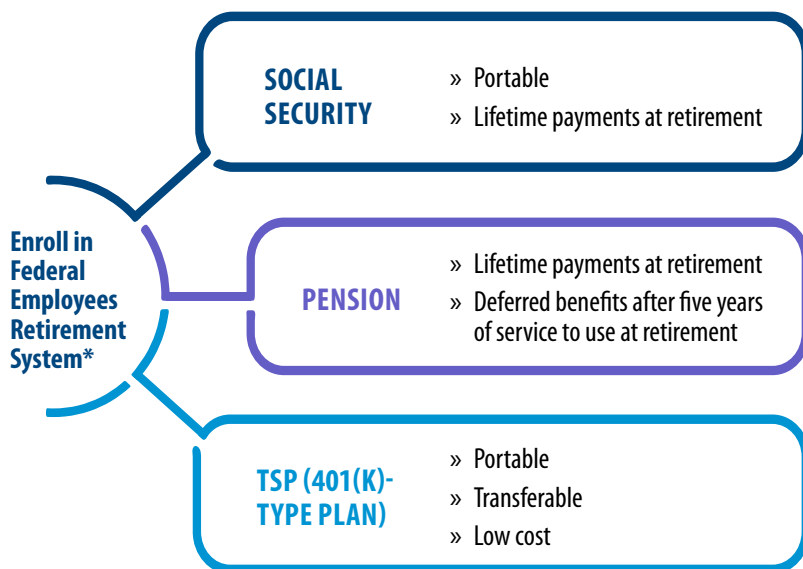
— HEATHER ARREDONDO, DHA, RN, VHA-CM, OFFICE OF NURSING SERVICES PROGRAM  
MANAGER FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARDS





## CHOOSE VA for the Retirement Benefits

Get ready for life after VA service with Social Security, a pension and Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).



\*Conditions apply. See pages 6-7 for more information and [www.opm.gov/retirement-services/fers-information](http://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/fers-information).



### Get credit for military service.

Have you earned service credits from your time in military service? Don't worry — if you move to a federal job at VA, you may carry over service time that is added to your total years of work for retirement purposes. This may increase your retirement pension payments (conditions apply).



*"I chose VA because of the wonderful experiences I had as a student nurse during my clinical rotations on the medical-surgical units. From the start, I received guidance and support from my nurse manager and chief nurse to pursue professional development opportunities. By the end of my first year, I was a competent medical-surgical nurse and an emerging leader in the organization. After five years, I have coordinated and led the efforts in the facility's first succession planning program, the implementation of a new shared governance model, and our journey to Pathway to Excellence® and Magnet® designations. In addition, the VA has provided various learning opportunities in areas such as program and project management and health care data analytics. I am grateful for the wonderful mentors that I have had throughout my journey, and I am proud to be a VA nurse serving our Veterans and the nursing workforce."*

— IVETTE VALADEZ, BSN, RN  
WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE COORDINATOR  
VA NORTH TEXAS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

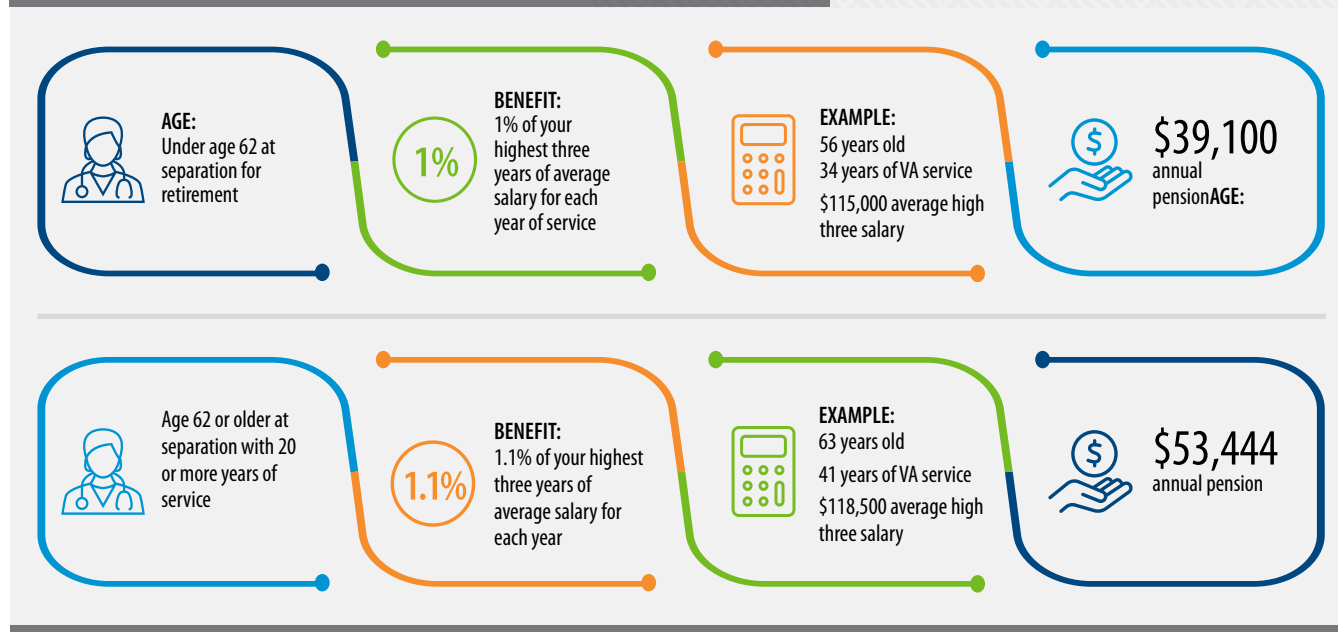
## Basic/Defined Retirement Plan

Earn a generous federal pension after a long career of service to VA as a nurse (see illustration below).

Highlights include:

- **Generous pension.** Under the federal retirement system, your future pension benefits are funded through an automatic 4.4% deduction from your salary and an 8.3% matching contribution from VA each pay period. After retirement, monthly pension annuity payments are distributed for life.
- **Vesting.** Become vested in the FERS Basic/Defined Benefit pension after only five years of creditable civilian service.
- **Long-term coverage.** Become eligible for disability retirement benefits (similar to long-term disability insurance coverage) and employee death benefits after 18 months of service.
- **Survivor benefits.** Become eligible for survivor benefits after 10 years of service.

Here are two examples of how VA may calculate your pension:



The information above is expressed in current dollars and based on the average salary for VA nurses who have served 30 years. Many different factors impact pension amounts; for instance, unused sick leave extends your creditable service time on a day-for-day basis. Review your specific situation with a VA recruiter and follow the links in the Resources section for more information.

## Thrift Savings Plan

Grow retirement funds by supplementing your pension, Social Security and other savings with the TSP (see illustration, next page).

Highlights include:

- **More savings.** TSP lets you contribute up to \$19,500 a year\* to your account.
- **Catch up at midcareer.** If you're age 50 or older, grow TSP beyond the maximum with additional "catch up" contributions of up to \$6,500 or more per year,\* for a total potential contribution of \$26,000. Catch-up ceilings are regularly increased so check the TSP website for the latest information.
- **Employer matching.** Earn VA contributions right away. VA makes an automatic contribution of 1% of your salary into your TSP fund. VA also matches



## Choose VA for the Retirement Benefits (cont.)

contributions dollar-for-dollar on the first 3% of your salary and 50 cents-on-the-dollar for the next 2% of your salary, for a total of up to 5% in employer contributions.

- **Vesting.** When you're "vested," you have ownership of contributions — they are yours to take with you, into the next job or retirement. You are automatically vested in your own contributions and VA's matching contributions from day one of VA employment. Employees are vested in the 1% automatic contribution after three years of VA service.
- **Low-cost, choice-based investing.** TSP features matching funds, tax-treatment options (pretax traditional/after-tax Roth), investment choices and portability so you control how much you contribute and where to invest. TSP administration fees are 25 times lower than industry averages: 40 cents for every \$1,000 invested versus the industry average of roughly \$10 for every \$1,000 invested. That's more money in your pocket to use when you retire.

## Plan for a comfortable life after federal service with TSP and compound interest.

**Invest \$19,500 annually toward retirement and see your savings stack up.**



*\*Indicates the 2020 amount and may increase in future years.*

## Spend Time with Family and Friends with Many Days of Paid Leave

Leave Category	Full Time	Part Time
Federal Holidays	11 days	11 days*
Annual Leave	26 days	1 hour for every 10 hours worked
Annual Leave Maximum Carryover	86 days	240 hours
Sick Leave	13 days	1 hour for every 20 hours worked
Sick Leave Maximum Carryover	Unlimited	Unlimited
Military Leave	15 days	Prorated
Military Leave Maximum Balance	30 days	Prorated
Paid Parental Leave**	12 weeks	Prorated (must work at least 1,250 hours per year)

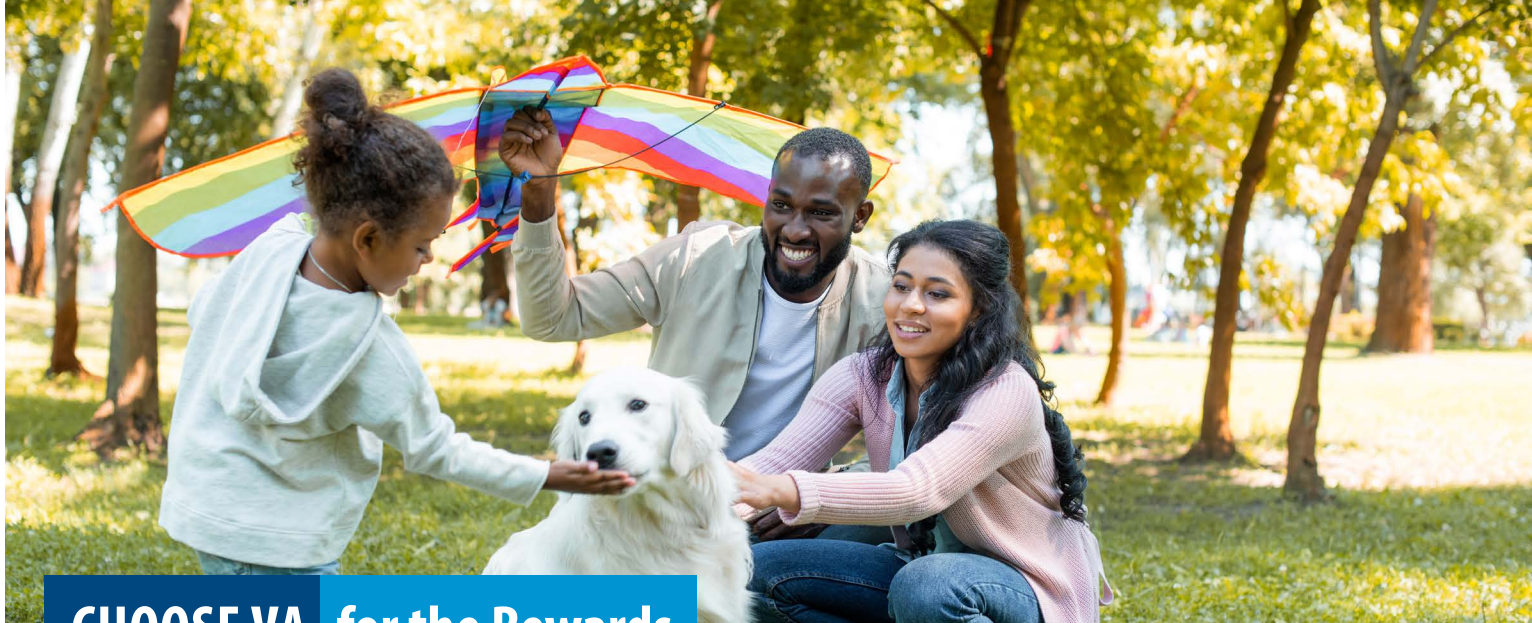
*\*Part-time employees are entitled to federal holidays that fall on days employees would otherwise be required to work or take leave. This does not include overtime work.*

*\*\*The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) provides up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave in connection with the birth, adoption or foster care placement of a child for employees covered by Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provisions applicable to federal civilian employees.*

## Annual Leave

As a full-time VA nurse, you accrue 208 hours, or 26 days, of annual leave a year.





## CHOOSE VA for the Rewards

*As a VA nurse, you serve with dedicated colleagues and are rewarded with a strong support system. A VA health care career offers you a balanced, flexible work environment focused on your unique needs.*

- **Work anywhere.** With one full and unrestricted active U.S. license, you can be a nurse at any of the 1,255 VA sites of care — by the beach, in a city or in the countryside — and take your benefits with you. Apply for an open position at VA facilities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa and the Philippines.
- **Take time off.** On day one as a full time VA nurse, you start accruing five weeks paid annual vacation, 13 days paid annual sick leave and 11 paid holidays each year.
- **Relocate with ease.** Applying for work at another VA? You won't typically lose any benefits or accumulated paid leave. Your nursing grade or step should not be affected by the transfer..
- **Receive assistance.** Under VA's Employment Assistance Program (EAP), get free, short-term counseling and other services to cope with the stresses of life and other issues. EAP includes:
  - » 24/7 access to and follow up with professional counselors.
  - » Counseling on legal, financial, child and elder care, mental health, identity theft and wellness issues.
  - » Community resources and referrals.
  - » Internal and external tools on EAP services.



*“Transitioning from the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps to the VA in 1980, I started a journey through five VA Medical Centers and countless opportunities locally and nationally, all using the same Nursing License. Opportunities abound in VA and I progressed from ICU nurse through management roles and have been fortunate enough to work for VA nursing staff as a Chief Nurse Executive since 1993. Nursing shared governance and mentoring are cornerstones of VA’s effort to help every nurse own and contribute to their evidence-based professional nursing practice. My VA journey has included the Midwest, Southwest and the Southeast. A close friend described the VA not as a career but rather a lifestyle. Our commitment to serving Veterans and advancing our nursing profession cement that lifestyle characterized by growth and the privilege of leading in health care.”*

— DAVID PRZESTRZELSKI, MS, RN  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PATIENT CARE SERVICES/CHIEF NURSE EXECUTIVE  
CHARLES GEORGE VA MEDICAL CENTER, ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA





## CHOOSE VA to Contribute to the Quality of Care

### RESOURCES

#### Benefits, education and employment incentives

- Education support: <https://www.vacareers.va.gov/Benefits/EducationSupport>
- Employment benefits: <https://www.vacareers.va.gov/Benefits/EmploymentBenefits>
- Federal benefits: <https://www.opm.gov>

#### Coverage

- Liability protection explained: <https://www.vacareers.va.gov/Benefits/EmploymentBenefits/#insurance>
- Life insurance: <http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/life-insurance>

#### Health insurance

- Dental/vision: <http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/dental-vision>
- Federal health benefits: <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/index.asp>
- Federal health benefits comparison tools: <https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance>

- Federal insurance frequently asked questions: <http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/insurance-faqs>
- Flexible spending accounts primer: <http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/flexible-spending-accounts>
- Long-term care: <http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/long-term-care>

#### Retirement

- Estimate future pension benefits: OPM's Federal Ballpark Estimate – <https://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/calculators/federal-ball-park-estimator/>
- Thrift Savings Plan: <https://www.tsp.gov/index.html>
- Retirement benefits: <http://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/fers-information>



*"I have found the Transition to Practice Nurse Residency program at the William S. Middleton VA Hospital to be an invaluable asset as I navigate the start of my nursing career. In addition to opportunities to practice and develop critical nursing skills, it has provided exposure to other units, services and resources in the hospital that are useful not only in my current practice but also in formulating my long-term goals as a nurse. Further, it has been helpful to develop relationships with other newly hired nurses in this program, to be able to support each other and learn from each other."*

— JILL FRANK, BSN, RN





V A C A R E E R S . V A . G O V



Contact human resources for specific eligibility questions and visit [www.VAcareers.va.gov](http://www.VAcareers.va.gov) for general information.



Choose **VA**