

Are You Considering a Career as Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner?



December 13, 2019 [Education](#), [Practice](#)

Take a closer look at the role of a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP).

Do you have a passion for patient-centered, holistic and collaborative approaches to care? Do you have excellent communication and relationship-building skills? If you answered yes, you should consider a career as a PMHNP. PMHNPs

provide advanced care to patients with psychiatric disorders, and they often work with primary care and specialty providers.

What Is a PMHNP?

The role of the PMHNP is to assess, diagnose and treat the mental health needs of patients. Many PMHNPs provide therapy and prescribe medications for patients who have mental health disorders or substance abuse problems. PMHNPs may also provide physical and psychosocial assessments, emergency psychiatric care and treatment effectiveness evaluations. Nurses interested in this career path should be aware that most PMHNPs working in inpatient settings have traditional working hours with some night shifts, when they are on call.

Nurses interested in becoming PMHNPs can achieve national certification from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). The certification was formerly known as the Family Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner but now includes patients across the lifespan. Therefore, the patient population that a PMHNP works with could include children, adolescents, adults and the elderly. Notably, the work setting of a PMHNP will likely influence the patient population that a PMHNP sees on a daily basis, and many PMHNPs work in private practice or hospital settings.

As your national NP community, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners® (AANP) is here to help guide you through the stages of your career. As a student member of AANP, you would have access to resources created specifically for you—from NPs who have been in your shoes. You can use the NP Program directory to search for NP programs by specialty and geography to find the program that best fits your needs.

Perspectives of a Working PMHNP

“When I was very young, I wanted to be a missionary and an artist. My parents thought better of my resolve, saying, ‘The girls will be nurses or secretaries,’ and the religious life interest waned in time.

The psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner [PMHNP] role serves every facet of health care because health cannot exist without mental health. The title embraces its definition: PMHNPs serve the public by preventing, identifying and treating psychiatric conditions through holistic approaches in many ways. PMHNPs assure mental health from pre-conception through the lifespan to end-of-life care and grief. PMHNPs assist persons, families and populations through public health policy, program development and administration, practice, research and education of both the public and the future PMHNP workforce. The PMHNP role considers all that a patient is as well as the potential of each one. It combines armamentarium of body, psyche and social knowledge. PMHNPs use biological interventions, psychotherapies, traditional approaches and more, as all nurse practitioners do, by partnering with people, penetrating conditions and making a difference in lives. Traumatized people, family interruptions and genetic illness are here to stay, and these are among many reasons for psychiatric conditions. The mentally ill will always be among us and social disruptions such as violence and war are antecedents of mental conditions. There are few psychiatrists and fewer pediatric, geriatric and addiction psychiatrists; these trends indicate the U.S. needs PMHNPs.

After many years of finding my way through professional nursing, I am currently positioned to help people in broad ways. I now employ personal brokenness, illness, experience, culture and history of patients to facilitate healing. I blend these ingredients with evidence-informed practice and each patient's gifts, hopes and aspirations by artfully reassembling these pieces to lend order, meaning and even beauty to lives. Life revisited becomes a meaningful collage, assisting personal futures. So yes, I am still an artist who practices the science of nursing as a PMHNP. Professionally, I want nothing more than to have this ongoing connectivity with humanity, this gift, as a driving force in my life. I am a world changer with humanity as a mission field and health as my vision. I do this as a clinical PMHNP, helping patients through telehealth in an integrated care practice, and as a faculty member, building and fortifying a bright future for the PMHNP workforce.”—Kathleen McCoy, DNSc, APRN, PMHNP-BC, PMHCNS-BC, FNP-BC, FAANP, Associate Professor, Community Mental Health, University of South Alabama

Five Facts You Should Know About PMHNPs

- 1.** An estimated 12,690 NPs are certified in psychiatric mental health.¹
- 2.** On average, full-time NPs certified in psychiatric mental health have a total annual income, which includes base salary, productivity bonuses, incentive payments and more, of \$130,967.¹
- 3.** On average, full-time NPs certified in psychiatric mental health reported that they see approximately 13 patients per day.¹
- 4.** The top practice setting for NPs certified in psychiatric mental health is a psychiatric mental health facility.¹
- 5.** The top diagnoses or health issues that NPs certified in psychiatric mental health treat are depression, anxiety, insomnia and dementia.¹

Career Resources for PMHNPs

Learn more about job opportunities available to PMHPS by visiting the [AANP JobCenter](#). You can filter your search by state, experience level and job type, including full-time positions, part-time positions or internships. You can also upload your resume to the JobCenter and let employers find you!

If you need help navigating the process of finding a job, please check out the [JobCenter's resources](#). The JobCenter is dedicated to helping you prepare for interviews, negotiate your salary and polish your resume. AANP also offers tips on becoming certified, finding the right practice setting and staying informed on important health issues at every stage of your NP career.

Professional Development Tools From AANP

Next Steps

If you are interested in mental health, you should consider completing the [Screening Adolescents for Risk of Suicide in Primary Care Settings](#), [FNP Scope of Practice Issues When Treating Mental Health Patients](#) and [Case Studies in Insomnia: A Collaborative Approach to Managing Insomnia in the Elderly](#) continuing education (CE) activities. These 1.0 contact hour CE activities are free to AANP members.

By now, you may have decided that this career path is right for you. If you are not already a member of AANP, you [should consider joining](#) to gain access to:

More than 150 hours of continuing education activities through the [AANP CE Center](#).

The [Psych and Mental Health Specialty Practice Group \(SPG\)](#), a community for NPs interested in advancing their knowledge and professional development in psychiatric and mental health.

Discounted registration for [AANP conferences](#) so that you can connect with your fellow PMHNPs and NP colleagues of all specialties.

Sources:

¹ AANP National Sample Survey: 2018 NP Practice. <https://www.aanp.org/practice/practice-related-research/research-reports>.

© 2012 - 2019

American Association of Nurse Practitioners