

# How to choose your first nursing job wisely

Interview tool helps nurses find the right fit.

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AS A NEW GRADUATE NURSE, selecting where you choose to practice can be daunting but also empowering. However, the initial elation can quickly turn to disappointment if you don't choose wisely. Exploring whether an organization's and unit's culture, values, and practice environment are aligned with your own personal values and needs will help you identify a supportive employment setting that will set you up for success.

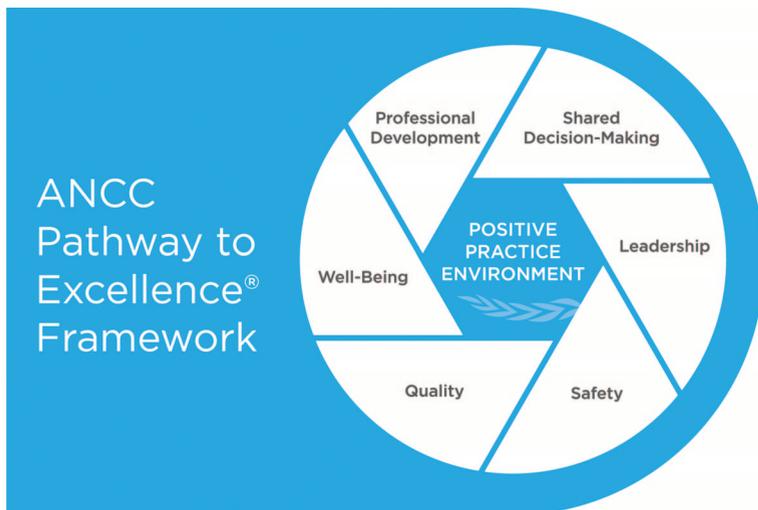
and have an overall positive impact on nursing retention. The American Nurses Credentialing Center Pathway to Excellence® framework outlines the essential elements—shared decision-making, leadership, safety, quality, well-being, and professional development—of a positive practice environment that supports nurses' success throughout their careers.

## Ask the right questions

Moving from the classroom to the practice setting is a challenging transition for every new nurse. In addition to typical anxiety, the stress that accompanies long work hours, rising patient acuity, and understaffing, many nurses report feeling unsupported by their colleagues and direct supervisors.

Recent graduates are at risk for burnout, which frequently leads to turnover. Research by Kovner and colleagues indicates that as many as one-third of all new nurses leave an organization within the first 2 years. And according to the *2019 NSI National Health Care Retention & RN Staffing Report*, overall nurse turnover rose in 2019, with first-year turnover continuing to outpace all other tenure categories. Nurse turnover can have a significant negative impact on employees, employers, and patients, so you want to choose an organization that's taken steps to improve nurse retention. The Pathway to Excellence Interview Tool includes questions you can ask to ascertain whether an organization has a supportive culture and one that will cultivate your professional growth as a new graduate nurse. (See *Are you asking the right questions?*)

In addition to asking the right questions, observe the interactions around you and how the interview is conducted. Are frontline staff invited to participate in your interview? Having them involved in the hiring process will allow you to engage with your potential col-



ANCC Pathway to Excellence Framework for Positive Practice Environments©

Leaders will carefully interview you to ensure you're the right fit for the organization. You also should invest the time and effort to carefully consider whether the organization is the right fit for you. Interview preparation includes asking questions about the organization's culture to determine what systems the organization has in place to help you successfully transition from school into clinical practice.

## A framework that supports nurses

A positive practice environment can decrease nurse burnout, improve nurse satisfaction,

leagues and also demonstrates how the organization empowers frontline nurses to have a voice. Does the hospital have a fellowship or RN residency program? Having such a program demonstrates the organization's commitment and investment in new graduate nurses' professional growth and development and the value it places on successful transitions into the clinical setting.

## Find your professional home

Nurses in Pathway to Excellence environments excel because they experience, among other things, job satisfaction, opportunities for professional growth and development, and meaningful recognition of their contributions. You get to choose where to start your practice as a new graduate nurse, so choose wisely. Arrive at interviews prepared with questions that will help you determine whether an organization will provide the support you'll need to succeed. Invest in yourself and take the time now to find the ideal practice environment so you can join with other engaged, collaborative, and committed nurses who have found their professional home. **AN**

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## Are you asking the right questions?

Use the American Nurses Credentialing Center Pathway to Excellence® Interview Tool to develop questions that will help you determine an organization's commitment to nurse well-being, professional growth, and an overall positive work environment. The following sample questions work equally well for new and experienced nurses seeking employment.

Sample interview questions	Question rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has your organization achieved Pathway to Excellence designation or is it on the Pathway to Excellence journey?</li> <li>If not, how does your organization support creating and sustaining a positive practice environment?</li> </ul>	Identifies whether the organization is committed to creating and sustaining a positive practice environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How would you describe the culture of your unit/organization?</li> </ul>	Reflects whether the organization fosters a collaborative atmosphere, the values the organization aspires to, how those values are implemented at the unit level, and leadership support of professional behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the onboarding process for a new hire?</li> <li>How does your organization support new employees?</li> <li>If a nurse needs additional help after orientation, what support is available?</li> </ul>	Shows the organization's investment in transitioning and preparing new hires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which hospital committees are direct-care nurses invited to attend?</li> </ul>	Reflects the organization's transparency and support of shared decision-making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the biggest challenges your nurses face daily?</li> <li>How has the leadership team helped them overcome these challenges?</li> </ul>	Showcases leadership support of nurses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is your organization's retention rate for new graduate nurses and employees?</li> <li>What is the current vacancy rate?</li> <li>What are some reasons why nurses have left?</li> </ul>	Flags high turnover and large numbers of openings (knowing the reasons for turnover and whether they're related to the practice environment may help you decide whether this is the right organization for you)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What have been your organization's most notable successes and failures during the past year?</li> </ul>	Reflects how nurses are recognized for their contributions to the organization's successes and how the organization reacts to failures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What programs or support services does the organization have in place to support nurse well-being?</li> </ul>	Reflects the organization's commitment to safeguarding clinician well-being

Access the tool and additional information for new graduates at [nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/pathway/resources/](https://nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/pathway/resources/).