

# Despite hospital shortages, nursing school applicants being turned away

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The number of registered nurses in the U.S. is projected to decline by 1 million by 2027, yet nursing school applicants are being turned away by the thousands.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing reported more than 78,000 qualified applicants were not offered a nursing [school](#) spot last year, according to CNN.

The reason? Staffing shortages—not just at hospitals, but also in nursing schools, for clinical placements and for preceptors.

Preceptors, as defined by Baylor University, are "experienced licensed clinicians who act as teachers and coaches who supervise nursing [students](#) during their clinical rotations. Their role is to help students translate theoretical learning to real-world [clinical practice](#). Preceptors are needed for all levels of nursing education."

Preceptors can't just take on more students, because their ratios are set by the state. In Georgia, for example, the "preceptor/student ratio shall not exceed the ratio of one preceptor to two student practical [nurses](#) in the hospital, doctor's office, or clinics, or one preceptor to four [student](#) practical nurses in the nursing home."

"You can't just throw in a lot of people to expand nursing pools," Judith Jarosinski, professor emerita at Salisbury University's School of Nursing in Maryland, told CNN.

Although AACN says about 8% of teaching positions are vacant, that number doesn't include part-time faculty and clinical educators, Cynthia McCurren, who chairs the association's board and serves as dean of the School of Nursing at the University of Michigan-Flint, told the news organization.

There are many reasons for the shortage of instructors—including a lack of nurses with advanced degrees, which many schools prefer or require—Jarosinski said the biggest obstacle is salary.

The national median salary for nursing professors with a master's degree is about \$89,000, AACN reports. But for an advanced practice registered nurse, who holds graduate degrees, it's \$120,000. In Georgia, the average RN salary is \$75,040.

A certified registered [nurse](#) anesthetist, on the other hand, earns a median [salary](#) about twice that of a professor—\$195,610.

"We just can't keep up with the salaries on the education side with what they're able to earn on the practice side," McCurren told CNN.

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