

## Building Your Career

Whether you're an RN, nurse practitioner, social worker, case manager, or other healthcare provider, you know that you have a lot of career options. And you may be thinking about your next move: more responsibility in your current job, a new credential, or a new job entirely. These tips may help.

### Network

Keep in touch with former colleagues, friends from school, and any work acquaintances you've met at conferences or events. If you're just starting out, think about identifying one or two people to act as informal mentors. If you're actively looking for a new job, discreetly put the word out to people who might know of good opportunities.

### Join professional associations

Take advantage of the educational and networking possibilities they offer, including conferences, workshops, classes, and volunteer work. You'll learn about interesting areas of your field that you may not be exposed to, and you might just hear about new opportunities.

### Find out what qualifications you need

If you're ready to move up but you're not sure about the qualifications you need, do an online search for your ideal job. Read a few job descriptions to find out what credentials you're missing, if any. Here are a few good places to search for job listings:

#### **National Association of Social Workers**

[www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org)

#### **The American Psychiatric Association**

[www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org)

#### **American Psychological Association**

[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

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While you're at it, conduct at least one informational interview with someone who has your ideal job or whom you simply admire. Try to schedule an hour with this person to talk about the personal qualities or skills that helped build their career. Many people are more than happy to share this kind of information.

### Attend industry conferences or earn CME credits

Classes and conferences can be a great way to explore new topics that interest you. You can find classes and conferences listed on the following Web sites:

**American Psychiatric Nurses Association**

[www.apna.org](http://www.apna.org)

**National Association of Social Workers**

[www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org)

**American Nursing Association Credentialing Center**

[www.nursingworld.org/ancc/](http://www.nursingworld.org/ancc/)

**American Mental Health Counselors Association**

<http://amhca.org/>