

Advanced Practice Nursing Roles  
Clinical Nurse Specialist vs Nurse Practitioner

...How to decide the right role for you...

	Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)	Nurse Practitioner (NP)
What is...	<p>A Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) is an expert clinician who works in a specialized area of nursing practice. Specialty areas can be identified by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• population (e.g., adults, geriatrics, women, etc);</li> <li>• setting (e.g., critical care, emergency room, etc);</li> <li>• disease or medical specialty (e.g., diabetes, oncology, etc);</li> <li>• type of care (e.g., rehabilitation, psychiatric-mental health, etc);</li> <li>• type of problem (e.g., pain, wounds, eating disorders)</li> </ul>	<p>A Nurse Practitioner (NP) is a registered nurse who has completed a graduate education program. A nurse practitioner focuses on providing primary care to patients. There are numerous specialties for nurse practitioners, including Family Health, Geriatric Health, Adult Health, Pediatrics, Psychiatric Mental Health, Acute Care, and Women's Health.</p>
Practice Settings...	<p>CNSs practice in a wide variety of settings, such as hospitals, community health settings, educational institutions, long term care facilities, mental health settings, occupational health, and private practice.</p>	<p>NPs work collaboratively with physicians and other health care professionals, typically in an office, clinic, ambulatory care facility, long term care facility, or hospital.</p>
Education...	<p>Requires a Master of Arts or Master of Science degree in Nursing</p>	<p>Requires a Master of Arts or Master of Science degree in Nursing</p>
Scope of Practice...	<p>In addition to providing direct patient care, CNSs also work with nursing personnel and organizations/systems in a wide variety of ways.</p> <p>CNSs use their expertise as a clinical expert, educator, consultant, and researcher in</p>	<p>NPs utilize advanced practice skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take health histories and perform physical exams;</li> <li>• Assess, treat, and evaluate acute and chronic illnesses;</li> <li>• Prescribe and manage medications;</li> <li>• Use education and</li> </ul>

	order to influence outcomes by increasing the quality and cost-effectiveness of outcomes for patients, nurses, and organizations.		<p>counseling to promote healthy behaviors;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide health screening and disease prevention services;</li> <li>• Identify needs of patients that require a referral for more specialized care.</li> </ul>
Certification...	CNSs can apply for certification through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and other specialty organizations. Certification requirements need to be met prior to applying for the exam. For some specialty areas, there may not be a certification exam available at this time.		NPs can apply for certification through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners. Certification requirements need to be met prior to applying for the exam.
Prescribing...	CNSs may apply for prescriptive authority if they meet the criteria required (which can be obtained through most Master's Programs).		NPs are allowed (and in most cases expected) to prescribe medications.
Third Party Payment/Medicare Eligibility	Federal legislative directives and those in Minnesota authorize third party reimbursement for certified CNSs.		Federal legislative directives and those in Minnesota authorize third party reimbursement for certified NPs.
Other information...			<b>Collaborative Practice Agreements:</b> NPs are required (in the state of MN) to have a collaborative practice agreement with one or more licensed physicians; this agreement designates the scope of practice/amount of autonomy specific to prescribing, monitoring, and managing drugs.