



How to Choose the Right MSN Specialty

A Practical Guide to Finding the Best
Nursing Professional Path for You

Where Dreams Find Direction™

MSN How to Choose the Right MSN Specialty

A Practical Guide for Registered Nurses Exploring Graduate Education

Choosing a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) specialization is about more than selecting a degree—it's about choosing the professional path that aligns with your interests, strengths, and long-term goals.

This Guide will help you compare South College's four MSN concentrations so that you can confidently identify the path that's right for you.



South College

3904 Lonas Drive, Knoxville, TN 37909 • Main (865) 251-1800 • south.edu

How to Choose the Right MSN Specialty

A Practical Guide for Registered Nurses Exploring Graduate Education

Why Your MSN Specialty Matters

Graduate nursing education is an investment in your future.

While every MSN program is designed to build advanced nursing knowledge, each concentration prepares you for a different type of role within today's healthcare system.

- What type of patients do I enjoy caring for?
- Do I prefer outpatient or hospital settings?
- Am I energized by technology and innovation?
- Do I enjoy building long-term patient relationships?
- Do I thrive in fast-paced environments?
- Where do I want my career to be five or ten years from now?

There isn't one "best" MSN specialty.

There's only the one that's the best fit for you.



South College

3904 Lonas Drive, Knoxville, TN 37909 • Main (865) 251-1800 • south.edu

How to Choose the Right MSN Specialty

A Practical Guide for Registered Nurses Exploring Graduate Education

Compare the Four MSN Concentrations

Program	Best For	Typical Practice Setting
Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP)	Nurses who enjoy caring for patients across the lifespan and building long-term relationships	Primary care offices, family practices, urgent care, community health centers
Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner (AGACNP)	Nurses who thrive in fast-paced hospital environments and enjoy caring for medically complex patients	Hospitals, ICUs, specialty units, trauma centers
Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP)	Nurses passionate about mental health and therapeutic relationships	Behavioral health clinics, hospitals, community mental health, telehealth
Nursing Informatics	Nurses interested in technology, healthcare systems, and improving patient care through innovation	Hospitals, healthcare systems, technology companies, consulting



South College

3904 Lonas Drive, Knoxville, TN 37909 • Main (865) 251-1800 • south.edu

How to Choose the Right MSN Specialty

A Practical Guide for Registered Nurses Exploring Graduate Education

Which Specialty Sounds Most Like You?

Family Nurse Practitioner

You might be a great fit if you:

- ✓ Enjoy seeing patients of all ages
- ✓ Believe prevention is just as important as treatment
- ✓ Like building long-term patient relationships
- ✓ Enjoy educating patients

Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

You might be a great fit if you:

- ✓ Enjoy meaningful conversations
- ✓ Are passionate about mental wellness
- ✓ Value holistic patient care
- ✓ Want to advocate for behavioral health

Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner

You might be a great fit if you:

- ✓ Love critical thinking
- ✓ Thrive under pressure
- ✓ Enjoy hospital medicine
- ✓ Like solving complex medical problems

Nursing Informatics

You might be a great fit if you:

- ✓ Love technology
- ✓ Enjoy improving systems
- ✓ Like data and analytics
- ✓ Want to improve healthcare on a larger scale



South College

3904 Lonas Drive, Knoxville, TN 37909 • Main (865) 251-1800 • south.edu

How to Choose the Right MSN Specialty

A Practical Guide for Registered Nurses Exploring Graduate Education

Decision Worksheet

Rate each statement from **1** (Not at all like me) to **5** (Exactly like me).

Statement	Score
I enjoy caring for patients over many years.	_____
I prefer high-acuity hospital environments.	_____
I enjoy technology and innovation.	_____
Mental health is an area I'm passionate about.	_____

Statement	Score
I like teaching and educating patients.	_____
I enjoy solving complex clinical problems.	_____
I enjoy analyzing information and improving processes.	_____
I value building long-term patient relationships.	_____

After completing the worksheet, review which statements received your highest scores. They often point toward the MSN concentration that best aligns with your interests and strengths.



South College

3904 Lonas Drive, Knoxville, TN 37909 • Main (865) 251-1800 • south.edu

How to Choose the Right MSN Specialty

A Practical Guide for Registered Nurses Exploring Graduate Education

Your Next Step

Choosing an MSN specialty isn't about finding the "right" answer—it's about finding the path that fits your passion and professional goals.

Whether you're drawn to:

- **Primary Care**
- **Acute Care**
- **Mental Health**
- **Healthcare Technology**

South College offers graduate nursing programs/concentrations designed to help registered nurses build advanced knowledge, expand their professional opportunities, and prepare to make a lasting impact in healthcare.

Ready to Explore Further?

Visit the South College MSN program pages to learn more about each concentration, admission requirements, curricula, and clinical experiences.

Your next chapter in nursing starts with choosing the path that's right for you.

If you enjoy...

Caring for patients of all ages

Hospital-based acute care

Mental and behavioral health

Technology and healthcare innovation

Explore...

Family Nurse Practitioner

Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner

Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

Nursing Informatics



South College

3904 Lonas Drive, Knoxville, TN 37909 • Main (865) 251-1800 • south.edu

