

Employed Student Nurse (ESN)/Employed Student Psychiatric Nurse (ESPN) 2025/2026 Intake Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 2024

Q: What are Employed Student Nurses (ESNs)/ Employed Student Psychiatric Nurses (ESPNs)?

The ESN/ESPN program at Vancouver Coastal Health provides a nursing employment opportunity for student nurses to work in a clinical setting with paid, hands-on experience. As an ESN/ESPN, you provide direct nursing care to both stable and unstable patients/residents/clients appropriate to the level of education and training you have received to date in your nursing program.

Q: If the ESN/ESPN is shortlisted for an interview, what should the ESN/ESPN expect?

There are many resources available online to help ESNs/ESPNs prepare for an interview. Here are some interview tips to get you started.

1. Practise

Review some common interview questions and prepare your responses (re: teamwork, communication, conflict resolution, your strengths, future goals, etc). Rehearse these common questions out loud to yourself or someone else to ensure you are comfortable with how it sounds.

2. Research

Research about the unit you would like to work on. ESNs will not be expected to know a lot but Managers would like to hear that ESNs/ESPNs are interested in their specific unit and have passion for the work.

3. Dress Professionally

No hoodies, t-shirts with large logos, jeans, or sneakers.

4. Don't be late!

- ESNs/ESPNs should arrive 10-15 minutes early to stay relaxed and ready for in person interviews.
- If your interview is online, please log-in and test both your camera and microphone beforehand.

5. Follow up!

Send a thank you note (email is fine) within 24 hours of the interview and reiterate your interest in the unit.

Q: How do ESNs/ESPNs apply?

1. Write a cover letter, providing a brief introduction of yourself and your units of interest. Express why you are interested in an ESN/ESPN position at Vancouver Coastal Health, and your short-term and long-term nursing goals. *Please note: **you must** include a cover letter for your application to be considered.*
2. Update your **resume** to include your clinical placements, work experience and volunteer experience. *Please note your clinical placements **must** be listed on your resume. See below for examples of the preferred resume format*
3. Click the “Apply now” button
4. Create an online profile or use an existing profile if you have previously applied to VCH
5. Attach your Basic Life Support HCP/CPR certificate.
6. Complete the application questionnaire

Examples of Preferred Application Format:

Clinical Placements

Please provide the information in the same format as the sample shown below:

Clinical Placement	Facility	Dates	Length of placement
(i.e.: Surgery, Psychiatry etc.)	(i.e.: Burnaby Hospital, VGH, etc.)	(mm/dd/yyyy)	(approximate number of hours)

Work Experience

Please provide the information in the same format as the sample shown below:

Position	Employer	Dates Employed	Hours per month
(i.e.: Care Aide, Volunteer Cast Clinic)	(i.e.: Surrey Hospital, UBCH etc.)	(mm/dd/yyyy)	(approximate number of hours)

Q: Are there any tips for ESNs/ESPNs?

- If there are any scheduled vacation or clinical placements planned for the year, please let the recruiter know as soon as possible. If something comes up during or after the application stage please also keep VCH informed.
- Check your emails frequently. It’s good to have a voicemail as well on your phone so we can leave a message if needed.
- Please reach out to ESN/ESPN Clinical Education team for support at ESNVCH@vch.ca



Q: Can an ESN/ESPN apply to another Health Authority as an ESN/ESPN and be considered for both?

The program seeks to give undergraduate nurses an opportunity to consolidate students' knowledge and skills so they are 'job ready' as new graduates. The program is highly demanded. You should only accept and work as an ESN/ESPN with one health authority.

Q: When should the ESN/ESPN hear back after the application is submitted?

Due to the volume of applications, we receive it could take approximately 6-8 weeks. We are working hard to screen all applications. Thank you for your patience.

Q: If the ESN/ESPN is successfully hired, how often would the ESN/ESPN be expected to work?

As an ESN/ESPN, you are considered supernumerary and are hired as a casual employee. This allows for flexibility when scheduling shifts around school schedules.

Q: How is the ESN/ESPN Schedule determined?

ESNs/ESPNs must complete Regional Orientation/ ESN Orientation and Unit Orientation. Once completed, ESNs/ESPNs work with the unit to schedule shifts based on their availability. We ask you to plan carefully when booking shifts to avoid cancelling them and to book a variety of shifts. Week day shifts offer the most opportunities for consolidation of skills and connecting with the health care team. It is preferable that you do not only work night shifts.

Q: How many hours can ESNs/ESPNs work, and who is responsible for tracking this?

Undergraduate nurses will be considered casual employees and will be allocated to work up to 400 hours to be used from April 1st to March 31st each year. Orientation hours are included in the 400 hours and are paid working hours.

Q: Do ESNs/ESPNs accrue seniority?

Seniority for undergraduate nurses is defined as the total number of hours worked by the employee at the worksite. You can apply your earned seniority towards your first job with VCH. ESNs/ESPNs seniority hours become effective post-graduation and remain active for one year. Seniority hours cannot be used prior to graduation.

Q: Can ESNs/ESPNs take leaves of absence from school?

As an ESN/ESPN you must be continually enrolled full time in good standing in a recognized registered School of Nursing Program in British Columbia.

Q: How do I obtain my Employed Student Nurse status through BCCNM?

Please visit this website for more details:

https://www.bccnm.ca/RN/applications_registration/how_to_apply/ESR_RN/Pages/Default.aspx

Q: What makes the ESN/ESPN opportunity at VCH different than the other Health Authorities?

- Our program is unique and the ESN/ESPN opportunities are different depending on the geographical location from small rural towns to major cities.
- We have a dedicated Clinical Education team to help support and mentor you. We support ESN/ESPN orientation, facilitate ESN/ESPN Skills Day and workshops, provide at-the-elbow support in the clinical areas and provide career planning/opportunities in speciality areas. Please check out our testimonial section on the ESN/ESPN page to hear about others experiences.
[Employed Student Nurse \(ESN\) Program | Vancouver Coastal Health \(vch.ca\)](#)

Q: Can I apply to the ESN/ESPN opportunity if I am from another Province?

The priority for the ESN/ESPN program will be given to undergraduate nurses who are studying at a BC post-secondary institution.

Q: What units are there ESN/ESPN positions available and where can I be hired as an ESN/ESPN?

We have many different opportunities across VCH and each site will vary, but in general we have had ESNs/ESPNs in the following units:

- Cardiac
- Community
- Emergency
- Endoscopy
- High Acuity
- Intensive Care
- Long Term Care
- Medicine
- MH Inpatient
- MH Outpatient
- Neurology
- Oncology
- Orthopaedics
- Palliative
- Pediatrics
- Perinatal/Postpartum
- Rehabilitation
- Renal
- Surgical

For questions and inquiries, please email esnjobs@vch.ca