



**American Board of Nursing Specialties
Member Organization Profiles
Summary Survey Data**

2016

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Introduction

From May – June, 2016, 26 out of 32 (81%) ABNS nursing certification member organizations responded to an electronic survey addressing a variety of certification, organization and governance questions. Appendix 1 lists the respondent organizations as well as those organizations whose information is not included in the Profile.

Certification Status

Number of Credentials and Certificants

26 organizations offer 130 credentials.

- * Non-RN Practice –5 organizations offer 10 credentials for non-RN practice.
 - * Basic RN Practice –22 organizations offer 74 credentials for basic RN practice.
 - * Advanced Practice –15 organizations offer 46 credentials for advanced practice certification.
- Appendix 2 lists the organizations that offer non-RN Practice certification and Advanced Practice certification.

Number of Certification Credentials Offered

Non RN Practice	Basic RN Practice	Advanced Practice	Total Credentials
10	74	46	130

The number of active certificants holding credentials among the certification organizations is 822,278. Overall, the trend shows increasing numbers of certificants in all areas with the exception of non-RN practice.

Comparison of Certificants by Type of Certification, 2010 - 2016

	2010 (N=29)	2011 (N=27)	2012 (N=24)	2013 (N=27)	2014 (N=28)	2015 (N=27)	2016 (N=26)
Non-RN Practice	25,092	33,229	47,319	30,610	39,420	89,018*	53,361
Basic RN Practice	369,495	411,074	350,450	421,959	471,328	446,447	474,460
Advanced Practice	194,153	185,869	198,804	231,115	247,164	271,056	294,457
Total	588,740	630,172	596,573	683,684	757,912	806,521	822,278

* 16,771 inter-professional subspecialty certificants; 72,159 technicians or non-licensed personnel.

Comparison of Credentials and Certificants, 2007, 2009 -2016

	2007 (N=21)	2009 (N=28)	2010 (N=29)	2011 (N=27)	2012 (N=24)	2013 (N=27)	2014 (N=28)	2015 (N=27)	2016 (N=26)
Credentials	111	134	120	138	110	122	144	178	130
Active certificants	385,802	487,987	588,740	630,172	596,573	683,684	757,912	806,521	822,278

No survey was conducted in 2008.

Retire a Credential

In the past year, two organizations retired a credential. One respondent noted the organization is no longer offering an initial exam, only renewal exams. Additionally, they've replaced their traditional exams with consensus model based exams.

Inactive Certification Status

Ten organizations offer an Inactive Status. There are about 1,419 certificants who hold the Inactive Status. 56 % of these organizations allow a person to remain inactive for three years, 22% allow a five-year inactive term, 11% allow a one-year inactive term, and 11% allow Inactive Status with no limitation on time.

Inactive Status Comparison 2011-2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Organizations that offer inactive status	10	12	10	10	10	10
Inactive certificants	1,583	3,437	1,454	1,428*	1,662**	1,419**

*8 of the 10 organizations offering inactive status provided a count of inactive certificants.

** 7 of the 10 organizations offering inactive status provided a count of inactive certificants.

Retired Certification Status

Eighteen organizations offer a Retired Status. Among the sixteen organizations that provided their number of certificants, there are 2,485 certificants who hold the Retired Status and 16 applicants, for a total of 2,501.

Retired Status Comparison 2011-2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Organizations that offer retired status	10	13	11	12	18	18
Retired certificants/applicants	1,538	2,157	3,066	3,254*	3,567**	2,501**

* 10 of the 12 organizations offering retired status provided a count of retired certificants.

** 16 of the 18 organizations offering retired status provided a count of retired certificants.

Years Certification is Granted

Number of Years Certification Granted

Type of Certification	Range of Years	Average Number of Years	Mode (Number of years that occurs most frequently)
Non-RN Practice	3-5	4	3, 5
Basic RN Practice	1-5	4	5
Advanced Practice	1-5	4.3	5

Limits on Exam Retakes

Nine (33%) of respondent organizations indicated they have restrictions in regard to how many times or how often a candidate who fails the certification exam can retake the exam. The responses included:

- After 3 failures, the candidate must wait 1 year to take the examination again.
- May fail the exam once before reapplying.
- They can take the exam up to 4 times within 24 months of their graduation.
- May retake an exam as many times as candidate chooses, but candidate must wait 90 days between each exam date.
- Every 60 days but no more than 3 times in any 12-month period.

- Applicants may test a maximum of twice in a calendar year. While there is a limit on the number of times an individual can test in a year after failing, there is no limit on the number of retakes, i.e. number of years an individual may apply to test.
- They can retake the exam after 90 days but can only take it twice in a year time frame. There is no limit on the number or retakes but this is the policy.
- 4 times in a 12-month period.
- Up to a total of 8 times in a 2-year period from the date of program completion.
- One try.
- They can take the exam up to 4 times within 24 months of their graduation.
- There are three tries and then a one year waiting period. If they fail the fourth time, they must again wait another year. If they continue to fail, they must wait a full year between attempts.

Initial Certification

Eligibility Requirements

Direct or Indirect Clinical Experience Required as an Eligibility Requirement

	Non-RN Practice (6)*	Basic RN Practice (31)*	Advanced Practice (18)*
Yes, direct	33%	31%	39%
Yes, indirect	33%	48%	28%
No	33%	13%	33%

*total does not equal 100% as some organizations selected more than one answer given different requirements among credentials.

Educational Degree Required as an Eligibility Requirement

	Non-RN Practice (4)*	Basic RN Practice (23)*	Advanced Practice (15)
Yes	50%	35%	100%
No	50%	65%	0%

* total does not equal 100% as some organizations selected more than one answer given different requirements among credentials.

Considering BSN Degree as Minimum Requirement for Certification Eligibility

	Percent Response (21 respondents)
Yes	5%
No	95%

Completion of Continuing Education Required as an Eligibility Requirement

	Non-RN Practice (5)	Basic RN Practice (22)	Advanced Practice (15)
Yes	40%	46%	47%
No	60%	55%	53%

Formal Review of Program Certification Requirements

This year, 11 certification programs underwent formal review: 2 non-RN practice programs, 5 basic practice programs, and 4 advanced practice programs. These reviews resulted in the following program eligibility changes:

Changes in Eligibility Requirements of Certification Programs as a Result of Formal Review

Eligibility Requirements	Non-RN Practice	Basic RN Practice	Advanced Practice
Clinical Practice Requirements	0	1	0
Educational Degree Requirements	0	1	1
Continuing Education Requirements	0	0	0
No requirements were changed	2	5	3

Role Delineation/Job Analysis

Frequency of Role Delineation/Job Analysis

Range of Years	Average Number of Years	Mode (Number of years that occurs most frequently)
3-10	4.8	5

Adding Certification Programs

Plans to Add a New Certification Program in the Next 12 Months

	Percent (Responses)
Yes	19% (5)
No	77% (20)
Uncertain	4% (1)

For the organizations that indicated they would add a new certification, the following programs were identified:

- Portfolio assessment for CNS (retired the examination in 2014)
- Rheumatology Nursing National Health Care Disaster
- Emergency Nurse Practitioner certification by examination program
- PCCN-K
- Nonsurgical pain management subspecialty certification
- Certified Nurse Educator clinical instructor

Certificate Programs

Among certification organizations, almost 12% offer certificate programs.

Offer Certificate Programs

	Percent (Responses)
Yes	11.5% (3)
No	88.5% (23)
In Process of Developing	0% (0)

Certificate Programs:

- Fundamentals of Magnet
- Chemotherapy/Biotherapy Radiation Therapy

Portfolio

Among certification organizations, almost 8% grant a certification credential through a portfolio process, which does not require an examination.

Grant a certification credential through a portfolio (no exam)

	Percent (Responses)
Yes	7.7% (2)
No	88.5% (23)
Exploring Option	3.9% (1)

Advanced Forensic Nursing Advanced Genetics, Nursing Advanced Public Health Nursing, Emergency Nurse Practitioner, Faith Community Nursing, Hemostasis Nursing, CWCN, COCN, CCCN, CWCN-AP, COCN-AP, CCCN-AP.

Age-Based Requirements

No certification organization has different or additional requirements for new or recertifying applicants beyond a certain age (e.g. age 70 or over).

Age-Based Requirements

	Percent (Responses)
Yes	0% (0)
No	100% (26)

Recertification

Recertification Rates on an Annual Basis

Recertification Rates

	Range	Average
Non-RN Practice	25-96%	71%
Basic RN Practice	25-93%	63%
Advanced Practice	60-98%	84%

Requirements for Recertification (Mandatory or Optional)

Retesting

	Non-RN Practice	Basic RN Practice	Advanced Practice
Yes	80%	81%	78%
No	20%	19%	21%

CE Hours

	Non-RN Practice	Basic RN Practice	Advanced Practice
Yes	80%	95.5%	94%
No	20%	4.5%	6%

Clinical Experience Hours

	Non-RN Practice	Basic RN Practice	Advanced Practice
Yes	50%	82%	80%
No	50%	18%	20%

Professional Activities Count Toward Earned Hours

	Non-RN Practice	Basic RN Practice	Advanced Practice
Yes	100%	95%	87.5%
No	0%	5%	12.5%

Completion of a Self-Assessment Tool

	Non-RN Practice	Basic RN Practice	Advanced Practice
Yes	20%	9.5%	19%
No	80%	90.5%	81%

Development of a Portfolio

	Non-RN Practice	Basic RN Practice	Advanced Practice
Yes	0%	9.5%	0%
No	100%	90.5%	100%

On-Line/Web-Based Program to Track Recertification Requirements

Organizations with Programs for Certificants to Track Recertification Requirements

	Percent
Yes	77%
No	15%
In Development	8%

Link Renewal Activities with Job Analysis or Competence Statements

Recertification Programs that Require Certificants to Link Renewal Activities to Job Analysis/Subject Area Domains or Competence Statements

	Percent
Yes	36%
No	64%

Testing

Practice Tests

Organizations that Offer Practice Exams/Self-Assessments for Sale

	Certification Organizations	Membership Organizations
Yes	79%	59%
No	21%	41%

Study Tools

Study Tools Offered for Free or Sold to Exam Candidates

	Certification Organizations	Membership Organizations
Test Blueprint	100%	4%
Sample Questions	100%	8%
Bibliography	100%	0%
Test Taking Tips	77%	35%
Study Guide	44%	69%
Core Curriculum	12%	100%
Review Courses	0%	100%
CE Courses	10%	95%
Competency Modules	0%	100%

For organizations that developed study materials, 82% used volunteers to develop some or all of their materials, 59% used staff and 18% engaged a consultant.

Development of Study Materials (CE courses, competency modules, etc.)

Developed By	Developed some or all of their materials
Consultant / vendor	18%
Staff	59%
Volunteers	82%

Online information

Information on Website for Test-Taking Skills and/or Test Prep

	Percent
Yes	69%
No	31%

Testing Methods

Testing Methods

	Non-RN Practice	Basic RN Practice	Advanced Practice
Paper/Pencil	40%	23%	13%
Computer Based	100%	95%	87%
Computer Adaptive	0%	5%	13%
Simulation	0%	0%	0%

Fees

Fees Charged for Certification

Type of Certification	Percent That Charge Fee	Range in Dollars
Application	56%	\$50-\$525
Examination	88%	\$120-\$1500
Recertification	100%	\$45-\$460

Organization Raised Fees in Past Year

	Percent
Yes	11.5%
No	88.5%

Member Discount

69% of responding organizations offer a certification discount for members of the professional organization.

Number of Test Dates per Year

For non-RNs, the number of test dates per year ranges from a 4-month window to year-round testing. For basic RNs, the number of test dates offered ranges from one test date per year to year-round testing. For APRN tests, the range is from a 4-month window to year-round testing.

Range of Test Dates per Year

	Non-RN Practice	Basic RN Practice	Advanced Practice
Range of test dates per year	120-365 days	1-365 days	120-365 days

Testing in Other Countries

42% of responding organizations offer certification exams in other countries to nurses not licensed in the U.S. or Canada. Approximately 304 international candidates sat for an exam last year. For those exams offered in other countries, 100% of the organizations offer the tests in English only. None of the organizations conduct a separate RDS in the countries where they offer the exams.

Testing in Other Countries Comparison 2011-2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Organizations offer testing in other countries (percent of respondents)	38%	42%	31%	30%	35%	42%
Number of international candidates	238	134	188	1,115	351	304

None of the international candidates have a higher pass rate when compared to pass rates in North America; 33% of candidates have an equivalent pass rate; 22% have a somewhat lower pass rate; and 44% have a significantly lower pass rate.

Accreditation

Accreditation Status

Accreditation Status and Accreditation Organizations

	Non-RN Practice Respondents		Basic RN Practice Respondents		Advanced Practice Respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
ABSNC	0	0%	15	68%	6	43%
NCCA	3	60%	11	50%	9	64%
ANSI	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Not Accredited	2	40%	0	0%	2	14%

Total may equal more than 100% as some organizations are accredited by ABSNC and NCCA/ICE.

For programs not currently accredited by ABSNC, 13% indicate they will seek ABSNC accreditation in the next year; 26% indicate they will not seek ABSNC accreditation. The remaining organizations (13%) don't know if they will seek ABSNC accreditation.

Governance

Structure

Certification Organization Part of a Professional Membership Organization

	Percent
Yes	19%
No, we are a separately incorporated entity	81%

Board Composition

Board Members

	Range	Average	Mode (Number of members that occurs most frequently)
Number of Board Members	5-12	9.4	9
Number of Board Members that are RNs	3-11	7.7	8
Number of public members	1-2	1.1	1
Number of Non-RN members (not counting the public member)	0-7	2.1	0

Who Serves on the Board?

	Yes	No
Are nurse board members required to be certified in specialty?	73%	27%
Are non-RNs eligible to hold officer positions on the board?	46%	42%
Does your organization have Board representation (board membership / direct board input) from the membership organization	42%	58%
Can the membership organization board representative vote on Certification Board business?	36%	64%

For Boards that offer both basic and APRN credentials:

Required Number of Board Members with Basic or APRN Credentials

	Range	Average
Number of Board members holding basic certification credential	1-8	3.6
Number of Board members holding APRN certification credential	1-4	2

Terms of Office

Board Member Terms of Office

	Range	Average	Mode (Number of years that occurs most frequently)
Board member terms of office in years	2-5	3	3
The total number of consecutive years a board member may serve on the board	2-10	5.5	6

Other

Succession Plan

Formal Policy or Written Succession Plan for Staff and/or Volunteer Leadership Positions

	Percent
Yes	60%
No	36%
Don't Know	4%

Social Media

Use of Social Media in Organization

	Yes	No
Have a website	100%	0%
Use Twitter	46%	55%
Offer a mobile app	33%	67%
Maintain a Facebook page	80%	20%
Host a listserv (on, i.e., Groupsite, LinkedIn, or proprietary site)	44%	56%

How organizations support nursing certification research

- In 2015 and 2016 we have funded a research project by NDNQI researchers.
- Membership organization has a foundation.
- In the past, both BCEN and ENA have funded resource opportunities in support of certification.
- Gretta Styles Research through the American Nurses Foundation.
- AANPCP has made donations to credentialing organizations, such as ICE and ABNS to

support research and development activities of these organizations. However, AANPCP does not offer funding for other types of certification research.

- We have \$20,000 research grants available on certification. We contribute to ABNS research.
- Agnes Marshall Walker Foundation (AMWF).
- A grant through the foundation funded by ONCC with priority to certification research.
- We have participated in ABNS research initiatives and supported the ABNS Value Convening.
- NBCRNA has most recently provided grants or contributed funds to the AANA Foundation and APSF.
- The Hospice and Palliative Nurses Foundation offers a Certification Research Grant.

What trends have you experienced this past year?

Rates of Certification

- Increase in certificants
- Increased growth
- Applicants from non-health related degree nurses
- Increased applicants through incentive program
- Growth in initial exam applicants and initial certifications
- Continued growth in initial certifications and high renewal/retention rates
- Increase in FailSafe hospital recruitment program
- Increase in rollovers (register for exam but elect to test in the following window)
- Increased interest nationally and internationally in holistic nursing certification
- Increase in initial exam applicants
- Request for new certifications
- Increase in contact from interested and certificants
- Steady recertification
- Record testing volume for the base credential – CNOR
- Increased use of online recertification process
- Strong interest from NP membership organization to offer advanced practice specialty certifications
- Increase in amount of testing
- Increase in membership recertification rate
- Increase in verification

Retirement

- Decrease in recertification due to nurses retiring
- Slight increase in retired status (OHNs are older than RN population)
- Increase in expired credentials (retirement, no longer practicing in the specialty area)
- More certificants from initial cohort retiring

Technology

- Increased use of technology in all aspects of organizational management
- Greater need for social media to communicate with younger cohorts
- Technological challenges of keeping current with end users
- Decreased attendance for in-person certificate of mastery courses
- Launch of “Question of the Week” program on website extremely popular
- Increasing stakeholder communication needs

Decline in Candidates, Recertification, Passing Rate, Attendance

- Declining candidates for RN certification
- Decline in basic nursing applicants
- Decrease in passing rate
- Flat recertification numbers
- 2015 experienced decrease in recertification by 20%
- Decline in non-consensus model APRN applicants
- Fewer certificants recertifying
- Competing programs with less rigor, not eligible for accreditation
- Slight decrease in renewals
- Decreased test takers for the expanded role certification – CRNFA
- Decrease in recertification rate
- Decrease in pass rate
- Lower renewal percentage
- More individuals not meeting discipline requirements inquiring at certification

Appendix 1. Respondent Organizations

AACN Certification Corporation
American Association of Colleges of Nursing Commission on Nurse Certification (CNC)
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Program (AANPCP)
American Board for Occupational Health Nurses, Inc. (ABOHN)
American Board of Certification for Gastroenterology Nurses (ABCGN)
American Board of Neuroscience Nursing (ABNN)
American Board of Perianesthesia Nursing Certification, Inc. (ABPANC)
American Holistic Nurses Credentialing Corporation (AHNCC)
American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB)
American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC)
Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN)
Competency & Credentialing Institute (CCI)
Hospital and Palliative Credentialing Center (HPCC)
Infusion Nurses Certification Corporation (INCC)
Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board (MSNCB)
National Board for Certification of School Nurses (NBCSN)
National Board of Certification and Recertification of Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA)
National Certification Board for Diabetes Educators (NCBDE)
National Certification Corporation for the Obstetric, Gynecologic,
and Neonatal Nursing Specialties (NCC)
National League for Nursing (NLN)
Nephrology Nursing Certification Commission (NNCC)
Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC)
Orthopaedic Nurses Certification Board (ONCB)
Pediatric Nursing Certification Board (PNCB)
Rehabilitation Nursing Certification Board (RNCB)
Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board (WOCNCB)

Non-Respondents

Addictions Nursing Certification Board (ANCB)
American Legal Nurse Consultant Certification Board (ALNCCB)
American Organization of Nurse Executives – Credentialing Center (AONE)
American Society for Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS)
Certified Nurse Life Care Planners Certification Board (CNLCP)
National Alliance of Wound Care Certification Board (NAWCCB)

Appendix 2. Organizations Offering Non-RN and Advanced Practice Certification Programs

Organizations Offering Non-RN Practice Certification Programs

- American Midwifery Certification Board
- Hospice and Palliative Credentialing Center
- National League for Nursing
- Nephrology Nursing Certification Commission
- Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board

Organizations Offering Advanced Practice Certification Programs

- AACN Certification Corporation
- American Academy of Nurse Practitioners National Certification Board
- American Holistic Nurses Credentialing Corporation
- American Midwifery Certification Board
- American Nurses Credentialing Center
- Competency & Credentialing Institute
- Hospice and Palliative Credentialing Center
- National Board on Certification and Recertification of Nurse Anesthetists
- National Certification Corporation for the Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing Specialties
- National League for Nursing
- Nephrology Nursing Certification Commission
- Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation
- Orthopaedic Nurses Certification Board (ONCB)
- Pediatric Nursing Certification Board
- Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board