

Where to Find the Necessary Requirements for Certifications and Licenses for Nurses on Your Unit

According to [Becker's Hospital Review](#), nurses have been ranked as the most trusted profession in the United States for the 22nd year in a row. This ranking is essential to healthcare organizations because patients see nurses as honest and professional with high ethical standards. One reason that people view nurses in this way is because of the requirement that they maintain licensure, which comes with continuing education and maintenance of competency. Another reason that nurses are trustworthy is that many specialties encourage or require certifications to continue practicing or advance their careers.

Nursing Licensure

In the United States, individuals must meet many regulations before receiving a license to practice nursing. The state board of nursing grants licensure after predetermining competency criteria and determining that the applicant has competently passed minimum standards of practice. The [National Council of State Boards of Nursing \(NCSBN\)](#) lists the following as the basic components needed for a nursing license:

- Graduation from an approved nursing education program
- Successful completion of the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX)
- A criminal background check (state dependent)
- Fingerprints (state dependent)

Healthcare organizations and nursing leaders can verify nursing licensure by contacting the state Board of Nursing (BON). The BON for each state holds the nurse's license and establishes the required scope of practice for the nurse based on education level. The state BON will also be a resource for leaders regarding the Nurse Practice Act that defines licensure requirements, qualifications, and disciplinary actions.

Licensure Compacts

The NCSBN also regulates the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), which allows a nurse to hold a license that grants them the ability to practice in their home state and other states that have a compact agreement with their state. Currently, 30 states participate in the NLC, allowing qualified nurses to work in multiple states without obtaining additional licenses.

License Renewal

Your state's Board of Nursing sets License renewal requirements. Most states require renewal every one to two years with a renewal fee and application. Some states will require nurses to obtain a certain number of continuing education hours in various areas, such as jurisprudence,

human trafficking, abuse, and infection control. Nurse managers should become familiar with their state's requirements to assist staff with license renewal.

Nursing Certifications

Specialty certifications are a formal way for hospital organizations to validate a nurse's expertise, skills, knowledge, and abilities. Hospitals that seek Magnet designation show that their nurses have a high level of excellence by the number of certified nurses they employ. Nurses who obtain certification in their specialty have demonstrated experience and knowledge through specific requirements. Nursing certifications acknowledge publicly that a nurse has proven academic knowledge, skill sets, and experience that leads to better patient outcomes, higher staff engagement, and career advancement.

Obtaining Certification

There are as many certifications as nursing specialties and nurses can apply for certificates through different organizations. [The Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification \(ABSNC\)](#) is an accrediting body that sets standards for high-quality nursing certification programs. The ABSNC lists organizations that provide certifications in areas such as Ambulatory Care, Critical Care, Nurse Practitioner certifications, Emergency nursing, and many more.

The initial certification consists of general eligibility requirements to include, but not limited to, the following items, depending on the certification a nurse is seeking:

- Proof of licensure
- Academic transcripts
- Continuing education credits
- Experience hours
- Satisfactory knowledge test scores

Benefits of Certification

The complexity of nursing continues to increase as patients become sicker, patient loads increase, and technology becomes more advanced. Certified nurses have shown a desire to further their education and skill sets when they sit for certification exams. [Dierkes et al.](#) tell us that the increased knowledge of these nurses leads to many benefits.

Benefits to the Nurse

- Further education
- Professional respect
- Increased opportunities
- Career and salary advancement

Benefit to the Healthcare Organization

- High-quality employees
- Improved quality metrics
- Improved standing with accrediting agencies, payor companies, and patients

Benefits to the Patients

- Improved quality
- Improved health outcomes

Licensure and certifications are essential for professional nurses to meet and maintain specific standards and competencies. It is crucial for healthcare organizations and nursing managers to be aware of the requirements of licensure and the benefits of certifications. A healthcare leader has many resources they can access to verify and encourage the competency of the nursing staff that reports to them. As these leaders look at the quality metrics and standards required in today's health system, licensure and certification can be tools to improve these outcomes.

References

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