

GENERAL POLICIES Handbook

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Note: Where used in this Handbook, the phrase “improper behavior” refers to (1) provision of false or incomplete information to the NBCRNA in relation to the credentialing process; (2) violation of any of the rules or regulations governing any NBCRNA examination or assessment; or (3) engaging in any activity which is grounds for disciplinary action as described in the NBCRNA Policies and Procedures for Discipline, Administrative Action and Appeals.

This publication contains general information about NBCRNA policies. Nurse Anesthetists are responsible for knowing the content of this handbook as well as any additional requirements pertaining to a specific NBCRNA program.

All correspondence and requests for information should be sent to the NBCRNA at support@nbcna.com. The NBCRNA does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

NBCRNA primary certification and continued certification programs are accredited by the following organizations:



NBCRNA OVERVIEW

The National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA) is a not-for-profit corporation organized under the laws of the state of Illinois. NBCRNA credentialing provides assurances to the public that certified individuals have met objective, predetermined qualifications for providing nurse anesthesia services. A nurse anesthetist who is certified by the NBCRNA is expected to: respect basic human rights and the dignity of all patients; protect the patient from harm; advocate for the patient's welfare and collaborate with other members of the health professions; be responsible and accountable for their actions; maintain confidentiality of patient information, except when disclosure is required by law; and maintain the knowledge and skill necessary for competent nurse anesthesia practice.

While state licensure provides the legal credential for the practice of professional nursing, private voluntary certification indicates compliance with the professional standards for practice in this clinical nursing specialty. The certification credential for nurse anesthetists has been institutionalized in many position descriptions as a practice requirement or as the standard for demonstrating equivalency. It has been recognized in state nurse practice acts and state rules and regulations.

The primary purpose of the NBCRNA is to seek to ensure that nurse anesthetists have the necessary knowledge and skills to practice safely and effectively. In so doing, it also protects the value of the CRNA credential. The NBCRNA has designed objective criteria intended to determine whether an individual holding the NBCRNA-issued CRNA credential is properly licensed, has attested to engagement in the practice of nurse anesthesia; has participated in continuing education and other activities sufficient to indicate an effort to keep current with advances, and is free of any mental, physical, or other problems that may interfere with the practice of nurse anesthesia. Whenever program eligibility criteria are developed and/or revised, the NBCRNA engages multiple stakeholders to ensure appropriate consideration has been given as to the impact of NBCRNA decisions.

NCCA defines competence as "the ability to perform a task, function, or role at a level that meets or exceeds prescribed standards in the work environment" (NCCA, 2016) and continuing competence as demonstrating "specified levels of knowledge, skills, or ability throughout an individual's professional career" (NCCA, 2016). These concepts serve as the foundation underpinning the NBCRNA certification and continued certification programs.

Vision

The vision of the NBCRNA is to be recognized as the leader in advanced practice nurse credentialing.

Mission

The mission of the NBCRNA is to promote patient safety through credentialing programs that support lifelong learning.

History

The primary certification program for nurse anesthetists was introduced by the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) in 1945. It was initially administered by the Credentials Committee of the AANA. In 1975, the AANA approved the establishment of councils for the accreditation and certification processes, and the Council on Certification of Nurse Anesthetists (CCNA) assumed the responsibility for the National Certification Examination (NCE). By this action, the profession recognized that credentialing mechanisms, which include examination and certification, function to protect and benefit the public.

Realizing that evidence of continued professional excellence was becoming increasingly important in our society, the AANA Board of Directors in 1968 directed the AANA Education Committee to study the issue of recertification. At the AANA Annual Meeting in 1969, a bylaw was adopted to establish an optional program to provide certificates to members who had demonstrated they had completed clinical and didactic experiences reflective of the changes in nurse anesthesia practice within a five-year period.

Recognizing that continuing education provides one means to assess current educational and knowledge levels of practitioners, a mandatory continuing education program was adopted by the AANA membership at the 1976 Annual Meeting, with full implementation effective August 1, 1978.

In September 1978, the AANA membership adopted the bylaw revisions providing for an organizational restructuring of the Association and establishing a Council on Recertification of Nurse Anesthetists (COR). Bylaw provisions granting the COR autonomy were adopted in 1983. In 2007, the CCNA and the COR became independent of the AANA, and together they incorporated as the National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA).

With its continued mission to promote patient safety, the NBCRNA implemented the Nonsurgical Pain Management subspecialty certification in 2015 and the Continued Professional Certification (CPC) Program in 2016. In 2023 the NBCRNA Board of Directors modified the continuing certification program to incorporate longitudinal assessment, making the NBCRNA the first nursing certification program to do so. In 2024, the NBCRNA launched the Maintaining Anesthesia Certification (MAC) Program, which incorporated longitudinal assessment.

Purpose

The purpose of the NBCRNA includes, but is not limited to, seeking to ensure that nurse anesthetists have the necessary knowledge and skills to practice safely and effectively. In so doing, it also protects the value of the CRNA credential. The NBCRNA is responsible for:

- Formulating, adopting and confirming compliance of initial and subspecialty certification eligibility requirements for nurse anesthetists.
- Formulating, adopting and confirming compliance of Continued Professional Certification (CPC) eligibility requirements for nurse anesthetists.
- Formulating, adopting and confirming compliance of Maintaining Anesthesia Certification (MAC) eligibility requirements for nurse anesthetists.
- Formulating, adopting and confirming compliance of the requirements for eligibility for admission to NBCRNA-administered examinations or assessments including, but not limited to, the SEE, NCE, NSPM exam, the CPC Assessment (CPCA), and MAC Check.
- Formulating, adopting and administering NBCRNA-created examinations or assessments to candidates who have met all requirements for examination or assessment and have been found eligible.

No national organization can expect to determine the specific procedures that any individual nurse anesthetist is qualified to perform. Neither can any national organization determine whether an individual nurse anesthetist may have developed an impairment that could interfere with the proper administration of anesthesia. Ultimately, these judgments must be entrusted to the individual nurse anesthetist and to those with whom he or she works.

Structure

The NBCRNA is managed by a Board of Directors who are recognized as leaders in nurse anesthesia and related fields. The members of the Board are certified registered nurse anesthetists, as well as a board-certified surgeon and anesthesiologist, both of whom have a current working relationship with nurse anesthetists, and a representative of the public at large. Members of the Board are elected to serve staggered three-year terms. Two of the CRNA Board Directors are elected by currently certified CRNAs through an open election following a call for applications.

NCCA Accreditation

The primary certification and continued certification programs of the NBCRNA and the Nonsurgical Pain Management (NSPM-C) credential program of the NBCRNA are accredited through April 30, 2027 by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), a private not-for-profit organization. The NCCA is the accrediting branch of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE), which is the national standard-setting organization for credentialing groups, including certification boards, licensing boards, and associations. The NBCRNA (and before it, the CCNA and COR) has been continuously accredited by the NCCA since 1980.

NCCA accreditation means that the NBCRNA credentialing programs meet the highest national voluntary standards for private certification. It means that the programs have been reviewed by an impartial commission and deemed to have met the nationally accepted criteria and guidelines of the NCCA.

ABSNC Accreditation

The primary certification and continued certification programs of the NBCRNA are accredited through July 1, 2027 by the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC) of the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS), and the Nonsurgical Pain Management (NSPM-C) credential program of the NBCRNA is accredited by ABSNC through August 1, 2027. The NBCRNA (and before it, the CCNA and COR) was one of the first national credentialing organizations to be recognized and accredited by the ABSNC.

The ABNS, established in 1991, is the national peer review program for specialty nursing credentialing organizations. ABNS serves as the national umbrella organization for nursing specialty certification boards authorized and recognized to certify nurse specialists in the United States. It promotes the highest quality of specialty nursing practice through the establishment of standards of professional specialty nursing certification.

AUDIT POLICY

The NBCRNA conducts a thorough review of all application information at the time of receipt. In addition, nurse anesthetists may be randomly, or purposely, selected for audit at the discretion of the NBCRNA. The NBCRNA audits a minimum of 5% of applications. The percentage of applications that are audited is based on the results of past auditing cycles.

Nurse anesthetists must retain copies of all documents that substantiate the information that was submitted on a nurse anesthetist's CPC/MAC application form for a period of four years after the conclusion of the CPC/MAC cycle in which a CPC/MAC application was submitted. Nurse anesthetists who have been selected for audit, and who have not previously provided all necessary audit documentation with an application, will be notified via email of their selection. Any requested audit documents must be submitted to the NBCRNA within 30 business days. Nurse anesthetists who are notified of selection for audit will receive notification of the audit result once the process has concluded. Failure to cooperate with an NBCRNA audit may result in denial, suspension, or revocation of certification or CPC/MAC compliance.

CHANGE OF NAME AND ADDRESS

It is the responsibility of every nurse anesthetist to notify the NBCRNA of a change of name, address or email address. The claim that an applicant did not receive information from the NBCRNA, or that an applicant submitted material that was not received by the NBCRNA, will not excuse the individual from eligibility denial, payment of a reinstatement/late fee, from non-retroactive CPC/MAC compliance, from non-renewal of CPC/MAC compliance, or from non-completion of the Reentry Program.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Any information or material that is received or generated by the NBCRNA in connection with testing, the certification of a candidate, the CPC/MAC compliance of a nurse anesthetist, or any NBCRNA review, disciplinary or appeal proceeding will be kept confidential and will not be released except where release is authorized by the individual or required by law. However, the following information may be disclosed: the name of the nurse anesthesia educational program attended, dates of attendance, completion date, certification eligible status, initial certification date, certification status, dates of CPC/MAC compliance, current CPC/MAC compliance status, and reportable disciplinary actions. The NBCRNA may use de-identified information from an application and any subsequent examination(s) for the purpose of statistical analysis.

The NBCRNA shares certificant name, address, certification, and CPC/MAC compliance status with the National Council of State Boards of Nursing and individual state boards of nursing. In addition, the NBCRNA will disclose any information that may, in the opinion of the NBCRNA, have an impact on patient safety to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing or individual state boards of nursing.

The NBCRNA shares alumni information (i.e., name, phone number, and USPS and email addresses) with the graduate nurse anesthesia educational program when requested, unless the graduate/certificant indicates on their NBCRNA profile page that this information should not be shared.

The NBCRNA shares certificant name, address, phone number, nurse anesthesia educational program information, certification or CPC/MAC compliance status, and CE earning period with the AANA, unless the certificant indicates on their NBCRNA profile page that addresses and phone numbers should not be shared with the AANA.

CONSENT TO INVESTIGATION

Submission of an application for certification subspecialty certification, CPC/MAC compliance, or the Reentry Program, constitutes consent to investigation and verification by the NBCRNA or its designee of the applicant's license status, reported activities completed to maintain or demonstrate certification, CPC/MAC compliance, record of practice, and other matters that may impact on the applicant's compliance with the requirements for certification, subspecialty certification, the Continued Professional Certification Program, or the Reentry program. Investigation and/or verification may be conducted either on a random basis or if, in the sole discretion of the NBCRNA, such investigation and/or verification is warranted by the facts presented by a specific situation. Failure to cooperate with an NBCRNA investigation may result in denial, suspension, or revocation of certification, subspecialty certification or CPC/MAC compliance.

NBCRNA Staff (or a designee of NBCRNA such as counsel) possesses the authority, but not the obligation, to conduct a reasonable investigation of any nurse anesthetist or examinee who may have engaged in conduct that violates any NBCRNA handbook or policy by implementing any of the following:

- Interviewing witnesses;
- Requesting and reviewing documents and data; and
- Taking any other action that NBCRNA deems appropriate under the circumstances.

If any nurse anesthetist or examinee fails to cooperate with an NBCRNA investigation, the failure to cooperate may subject the individual to the denial, suspension or revocation of certification.

DUTY TO NOTIFY NBCRNA OF CHANGE IN COMPLIANCE WITH REQUIREMENTS

If, at any time during the certification, CPC/MAC compliance, or Reentry Program period, there is a change in an individual's continued compliance with program requirements, the individual must promptly notify the NBCRNA of the change, and the individual's status will, if appropriate, be modified accordingly. Failure to notify the NBCRNA of any such change may, at the discretion of the NBCRNA, result in disciplinary action, including, denial, suspension or revocation of certification or CPC/MAC compliance.

EVALUATION OF INFORMATION BY THE NBCRNA

The NBCRNA may consider, investigate and evaluate any information which, in its judgment, may affect an individual's compliance with the certification, CPC/MAC Program, or the Reentry Program requirements. Such information may also be referred to an appropriate outside body for further investigation. The NBCRNA shall have no obligation to investigate the professional standing of any nurse anesthetist applying for certification or CPC/MAC compliance, enrollment in the Reentry Program, or to refer any information to an outside body.

GROUNDS FOR DENIAL, SUSPENSION OR REVOCATION OF CERTIFICATION, CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION, MAINTAINING ANESTHESIA CERTIFICATION, OR SUBSPECIALTY CERTIFICATION

The NBCRNA will automatically deny, suspend or revoke an anesthetist's certification, CPC/MAC Compliance or subspecialty certification for any of the following reasons:

- Failure by the anesthetist to maintain current licensure as a registered professional nurse in at least one state or the authority to practice.
- Loss or surrender of licensure or other authority to practice nurse anesthesia in any state for any reason that, in the judgment of the NBCRNA, relates to the anesthetist's safe or ethical practice of nurse anesthesia.
- Adjudication by a court or regulatory authority that the anesthetist is mentally or physically incompetent.
- Suspension or termination from participation in a federal health care program for reasons relating to the unsafe, unlawful or unethical practice of nurse anesthesia.
- Conviction of or pleading no contest to a crime which, in the judgment of the NBCRNA, relates to anesthetist's safe or ethical practice of nurse anesthesia.
- Failure to maintain CPC/MAC compliance, when applicable.
- Failure by the nurse anesthetist to pass the subspecialty certification exam, when applicable.

The NBCRNA may, at its discretion, after due and thorough deliberation, deny, suspend or revoke an anesthetist's certification, continued certification, or subspecialty certification for any of the following reasons:

- Circumstances change so as to render one of the certifications made by the anesthetist invalid.
- Falsification of application materials, intentional misstatement of material fact or deliberate failure to provide relevant information on a NBCRNA application, or to the NBCRNA at any time, or assisting another person to do any of the above.
- Provision of false or incomplete information to the NBCRNA in connection with the credentialing process.

- Failure by the anesthetist to maintain current and unrestricted licensure as a registered professional nurse and, where applicable, authorization to practice nurse anesthesia, in all states in which the applicant practices. Anesthetists employed by the United States government must maintain licensure in one state or territory of the United States.
- Loss or surrender of licensure or authority to practice nurse anesthesia in any state for any reason other than retirement or cessation of practice unrelated to any disciplinary action or concern about possible disciplinary action.
- Cheating or assisting another person to cheat on a NBCRNA examination or assessment, or otherwise engaging in dishonest or other improper behavior at any time in connection with any NBCRNA examination or assessment.
- Dishonest or deceptive behavior related to any NBCRNA examination or assessment, database, or intellectual property, cheating on an examination or assessment administered by the NBCRNA, inappropriate use of examination or assessment questions, or assisting another individual to engage in any such conduct.
- Unauthorized use of any NBCRNA credential or other health professional designation or false claim of certification or other professional designation.
- Conviction of, or pleading no contest to, a crime.
- Documented evidence of retention, possession, copying, distribution, disclosure, discussion or receipt of any NBCRNA examination or assessment question, in whole or in part, by written, electronic, oral or other form of communication, including but not limited to emailing, texting, electronically posting, copying or printing of electronic files, and reconstruction through memorization and/or dictation before, during or after a NBCRNA examination or assessment.
- Violation of any NBCRNA policy or failure to cooperate with an NBCRNA investigation or audit.
- Engaging in unethical conduct.
- Any other conduct that, in the judgment of NBCRNA, calls into question the ability of the nurse anesthetist to serve patients in an honest, competent, and professional manner.

IMPROPER BEHAVIOR IN CONNECTION WITH NBCRNA EXAMINATIONS OR ASSESSMENTS

When applying for an NBCRNA exam or assessment, each candidate must agree to the NBCRNA waiver of liability and agreement of authorization, confidentiality and nondisclosure statements.

The consequences of violating this agreement may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Loss of eligibility to take an exam or assessment now and in the future.
- Invalidation of exam or assessment results.
- Denial, suspension or revocation of certification or subspecialty certification.
- Assessment of monetary damages.

During the exam or assessment, the performance of all candidates will be monitored. Any candidate who gives or receives assistance, or otherwise engages in dishonest or improper behavior during the exam or assessment administration, will be required to cease taking the exam and leave the test center. Test center personnel will notify the NBCRNA office of any improper behavior during the exam administration.

After reviewing a reported incident, the NBCRNA will determine whether there is reason to believe that a candidate has engaged in cheating or other improper behavior or has otherwise violated the security of the NBCRNA examination or assessment. If the NBCRNA determines that there is reason to so believe, it may, at its discretion, take any of the following actions:

- Order the candidate to retake the exam or assessment at a time and place to be determined by the NBCRNA.
- Refuse to release the test results of the candidate and, thereby, deny their current application for certification.
- Require the candidate to wait a specified period of time before reapplying to take the exam or assessment.
- Deny, suspend or revoke the candidate's eligibility to sit for the exam or assessment in the future.
- Take a combination of any of the above actions or such other action that the NBCRNA may deem appropriate in the particular circumstances before it.

IMPROPER BEHAVIOR AFTER AN NBCRNA EXAMINATION OR ASSESSMENT

The content of any exam or assessment offered by the NBCRNA, and each individual exam or assessment question, is the property of the NBCRNA, is copyrighted and is strictly confidential information. The retention, possession, copying, distribution, disclosure, discussion, or receipt of any NBCRNA exam or assessment question, in whole or in part, by written, electronic, oral, or other form of communication, including but not limited to emailing, texting, electronically posting, copying or printing of electronic files, and reconstruction through memorization and/or dictation, before, during, or after an NBCRNA exam is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, assessment of monetary damages, and legal liability. Candidates who are aware of improper behavior should report it to NBCRNA's anonymous, third-party tip line at 844-703-1790 or www.nbcna.ethicspoint.com.

PROBLEMS AT TEST CENTERS

Candidates will have access to a proctor at the test center. As a rule, if a problem occurs with the computer and a candidate must restart their exam or assessment on the scheduled day, the exam or assessment will be resumed at the point of interruption since the questions and answers are saved. However, if the exam or assessment cannot be resumed on the same day and the candidate must reschedule their exam or assessment, a new exam or assessment will be administered.

Problems related to admission or administration of the exam or assessment, including any problems related to conditions at a test center, should be reported immediately at the test center before leaving, and as soon as possible, but no later than three business days after the examination, by email to the NBCRNA office at support@nbcrna.com.

Reports to the NBCRNA should include the candidate's full name and address, as well as a description of the conditions that caused the problem(s) at the test center. After reviewing a report of a problem at a test center, the NBCRNA may, at its discretion, determine whether a new exam should be administered, or another action should be taken. Reports submitted from a nurse anesthesia educational program administrator regarding either the SEE or the NCE will be considered only if they are accompanied by the exam candidate's report. The NBCRNA will not consider notice of test administration problems that are received more than three business days after the examination date.

CONDITIONAL CERTIFICATION OR CPC/MAC COMPLIANCE

The NBCRNA recognizes that some individuals who have not met the requirements for Full Certification, or CPC/MAC Compliance may nonetheless be qualified to practice, although sometimes subject to certain limitations. For this reason, the NBCRNA has created a category of Certification, and CPC/MAC Compliance - Conditional. This category is designed to reflect particular situations of individual nurse anesthetists and to make potential employers or colleagues aware of such situations.

Criteria for Conditional Certification or CPC/MAC Compliance

Grant of Conditional Credential

Applicants who have a restricted license to practice professional nursing and, where applicable, nurse anesthesia, in any state in which the applicant currently holds an active license, or whose license is on probation or conditioned upon meeting certain requirements, may be granted Conditional Certification or CPC/MAC compliance provided that all other requirements for the credential have been fulfilled. The Conditional status will reflect any conditions imposed by the appropriate state licensure authority. Examples of a restricted license include a license to practice only under supervision or provided the individual remains in a drug-related, alcohol-related or other type of treatment, monitoring or rehabilitation program for a stated period. The Conditional Certification or CPC/MAC compliance card granted under this paragraph shall state that the Certification or CPC/MAC compliance is conditioned on the individual's compliance with the terms of their license conditions.

Conditional Credential Period

Conditional Certification or CPC/MAC compliance shall remain in effect as long as the individual complies with all terms of the conditions on their license. It shall be revoked for failure to comply. The nurse anesthetist shall be responsible for providing the NBCRNA with written documentation from the state board of nursing that they have complied with all licensure conditions for the requisite period of time.

Change in Status

Full Certification or CPC/MAC compliance may be changed to Conditional status for failure to maintain an unrestricted license to practice professional nursing and, where applicable, nurse anesthesia, in all states in which the applicant currently holds an active license.

A request to change Conditional Certification or CPC/MAC compliance to Full Certification or CPC/MAC compliance must be accompanied by official written documentation from the state board of nursing sufficient to demonstrate that any licensure condition has been removed.

The decision to change an individual's status is at the discretion of the NBCRNA.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FOR PERSONS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES

The NBCRNA complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To ensure equal opportunity for all qualified persons, a candidate with a documented disability may request a reasonable testing accommodation by submitting a written request, along with supporting documentation, to the NBCRNA with their completed online application. Supporting documentation includes the following:

1. A written personal statement identifying the basis of your need for accommodation, the specific accommodation(s) you are requesting, history of past testing accommodations given, and how a documented disability impacts your testing ability.
2. An NBCRNA Testing Accommodations Request Form completed by a qualified healthcare professional referencing an evaluation conducted within the past five years. Qualified healthcare professionals must be licensed or otherwise properly credentialed, possess expertise in the diagnosis of the disability for which the accommodation(s) is sought, and has administered an individualized assessment of the candidate that supports the need for the requested testing accommodations.

The NBCRNA Testing Accommodations Request Form can be downloaded from your application once you have indicated eligibility for ADA accommodations.

USE OF CRNA CREDENTIAL

Each nurse anesthetist who fulfills the requirements for certification or CPC/MAC compliance by the NBCRNA may use “CRNA” after their name. The term stands for Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist. CRNA is not punctuated with periods.

A nurse anesthetist who has successfully met certification or CPC/MAC compliance eligibility requirements receives a card. This card is the property of the NBCRNA and must be returned to the NBCRNA if the bearer is found to be noncompliant with the NBCRNA-specified eligibility criteria. Unauthorized use of any NBCRNA credential or false claim of certification or CPC/MAC compliance may result in denial, suspension or revocation of certification.

CREDENTIAL VERIFICATION

Credential verification is available on the NBCRNA website within the public domain at <https://portal.nbcna.com/credential-verification>.

DISCIPLINE, ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION AND APPEALS

Pursuant to NBCRNA Policies & Procedures for Discipline, Administrative Action and Appeals (“Policies”), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists, examinees, and applicants for Certification. Continued Professional Certification (“CPC”) or Maintaining Anesthesia Certification (“MAC”) (collectively “certification”) are subject to disciplinary or administrative action for engaging in conduct that NBCRNA regards as inconsistent with unrestricted recertification. The Policies sets forth the conduct that can lead to sanctions, the procedures that will govern, the sanctions that can be imposed, the appeal rights of any individual who is sanctioned, and provisions for reinstatement of certification. The Policies can be accessed on the NBCRNA website, www.NBCRNA.com, or requested from the NBCRNA.