



# Recertification Handbook

\*Applications for recertification may be accepted after July 31, 2017, at the sole discretion of the NBCR NA, in special circumstances, and for a limited period of time, for individuals who failed to renew their nurse anesthetist credential and enter the CPC Program on or before July 31, 2017

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This publication contains information about NBCRNA’s Recertification Program. Participants are responsible for knowing the contents of this handbook, as well as any additional applicable NBCRNA policies (e.g. please see NBCRNA’s General Information and Policies Handbook).

All correspondence and requests for information concerning the Recertification Program should be sent to the NBCRNA at [info@nbcna.com](mailto:info@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 recertification/CPC 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 his or her 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 advance 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.

## 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 recertification and continued professional certification (CPC) 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, and the CPC Assessment
- 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 Board of Directors is composed of nurse anesthetists who hold the NBCRNA-issued CRNA credential and who are actively engaged in clinical practice or in teaching or administration of a nurse anesthesia educational program; a board-certified surgeon and a board-certified anesthesiologist, both of whom have a current working relationship with nurse anesthetists; and a representative of the public at large.

## NCCA Accreditation

The primary certification and recertification programs of the NBCRNA are accredited through April 2022 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 recertification programs of the NBCRNA are accredited through July 2022 by the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC) of the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS). 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.

# Recertification Overview

Through the recertification process, the National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA) seeks to advance the quality of nurse anesthesia care provided to patients. Specifically, the NBCRNA endeavors to ensure that nurse anesthetists are maintaining their skills and are keeping current with scientific and technological developments. The NBCRNA also strives to assure that appropriate limitations are placed on those who are known to have developed conditions that might adversely affect their ability to practice nurse anesthesia.

A nurse anesthetist who has satisfied the NBCRNA's objective criteria receives recertification. Recertification is not and cannot be a guarantee of competence to perform all nurse anesthesia procedures. Full recertification is, however, an indication that the nurse anesthetist has maintained a current license to practice, has exercised his or her skill, has participated in approved continuing education activities and is not known to have developed any impairment that could interfere with the practice of nurse anesthesia.

The NBCRNA also recognizes that some individuals who have not met the criteria for Full Recertification may nonetheless be qualified to practice, although sometimes subject to certain limitations. For this reason, the NBCRNA has created a category of interim recertification (Conditional). This category is designed to reflect the particular situations of individual nurse anesthetists and to make potential employers or colleagues aware of these situations.

Finally, the NBCRNA seeks to conduct the recertification process in a fair manner. Accordingly, it gives nurse anesthetists an opportunity to seek review and appeal of an adverse decision. Throughout the recertification process, the NBCRNA attempts to keep an individual's file confidential unless disclosure is authorized by the individual or required by law.

## Categories of Recertification

The NBCRNA recognizes two categories of recertification: Full and Interim (Conditional)

- Applicants who fulfill all recertification criteria are granted Full Recertification.
- There is one category of Interim Recertification: Conditional Recertification. The purpose of this category is to provide for those individuals who, for a specific reason and for a limited period of time, may not be in full compliance with all recertification criteria. A more complete description of this category may be found in the NBCRNA General Information and Policies Handbook on the NBCRNA website.

## Criteria for Full Recertification

In order to receive Full Recertification, an applicant must comply with all of the following requirements:

- **Initial Certification.** Receipt of initial certification by the NBCRNA or its predecessor.
- **Licensure.** Documentation of compliance with all state requirements for licensure as a registered nurse performing nurse anesthesia, including a current unrestricted license to practice as a registered professional nurse, with authority to practice nurse anesthesia if such authority is granted, in at least one state and in all states in which the applicant currently holds an active license. For those individuals employed by the United States government, “state requirements” refer to the requirements of any state or territory of the United States.
- **Continuing Education.** Documentation of completion of 40 hours of approved continuing education, as set forth in the Continuing Education Program of the AANA, within the two-year period prior to the applicant’s upcoming August 1 recertification date or, if the applicant’s recertification period is shorter than two years, within such shortened period prior to the applicant’s upcoming August 1 recertification date.

Nurse anesthetists may earn continuing education (CE) credits beginning the day after an individual’s recertification application is approved.

Graduates of a program of anesthesia accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs who achieve a passing score on the National Certification Examination and are granted initial certification by the NBCRNA must earn 40 hours of approved continuing education from the date of initial certification through the applicant’s upcoming August 1 recertification date.

- **Practice.** Certification by the applicant that he or she has been or will have been substantially engaged in the practice of nurse anesthesia during the previous period prior to the applicant’s upcoming August 1 recertification date and that the record of practice is accurate.

Applicants who cannot attest to substantial practice within two years are required to certify that he or she has been or will have been substantially engaged in the practice of nurse anesthesia during the four-year period prior to the applicant’s upcoming August 1 recertification date and that the record of practice is accurate. In circumstances where the applicant has not practiced substantially within two years, but has practiced substantially within four years, the decision as to whether the individual has met the practice requirement for Full Recertification is at the sole discretion of the NBCRNA.

Substantial engagement in the practice of nurse anesthesia generally should consist of a minimum of 850 hours of practice over a two-year period. Because individual practice experiences vary, it is the responsibility of the applicant to assess whether his or her practice experience constitutes substantial engagement and to so certify.

The practice of nurse anesthesia may include clinical practice, nurse anesthesia-related administrative, educational or research activities, or a combination of two or more of such areas of practice. To be nurse anesthesia-related, activities must have as their primary objective and be directly related to the delivery of anesthesia care to patients or the improvement of delivery of anesthesia care to patients.

The decision as to whether an applicant has satisfied the practice requirement is at the sole discretion of the NBCRNA. If the NBCRNA determines that an applicant has not satisfied the

practice requirement for recertification, he or she will be referred to the NBCRNA Reentry Program.

- **Certifications by the Applicant.** Each applicant must make the following certifications:
  - That all current registered nursing licenses are in good standing, are not suspended or limited by any state, have never been surrendered or relinquished (whether voluntarily or involuntarily) and are not the subject of a pending action or investigation.
  - That all current advanced practice nursing licenses are in good standing, are not suspended or limited by any state, have never been surrendered or relinquished (whether voluntarily or involuntarily) and are not the subject of a pending action or investigation.
  - That he or she has not been adjudicated by a court or regulatory authority to be mentally or physically incompetent.
  - That he or she does not currently suffer from substance use disorder (SUD) [drug or alcohol addiction or abuse], that is impacting their practice.
  - That he or she has not been convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, a crime.
  - That he or she has not engaged in unethical conduct.
  - That she or she has been or will have been substantially engaged in the practice of nurse anesthesia as identified within the application during the period prior to his/her upcoming August 1 recertification date, and that the record of practice submitted with the application is accurate.
  - That the application and all corresponding content being submitted is accurate.
  - If the applicant does not so certify, he or she must provide full documentation of the reasons therefore with sufficient specificity to allow the NBCRNA to evaluate the possible impact of the problem or action on the applicant's current ability to practice nurse anesthesia, and to resolve the issue to the NBCRNA's satisfaction.
- **Waiver of Liability and Agreement of Authorization, Confidentiality and Disclosure Statements.** Each applicant for recertification must, by his or her signature, agree that he or she has read, understands, and intends to be legally bound by these statements.

## Application for Recertification

In order to be recertified, each applicant must submit the following materials to the NBCRNA:

- **Application and fees.** A completed, signed, electronic Recertification Application, including, but not limited to, acceptable documentation of continuing education credit and payment of all recertification fees, **must be received by the NBCRNA no later than the July 31 expiration date of the applicant's current recertification or the first date on which a nurse anesthetist is eligible to recertify.** However, to allow adequate time for processing and verification of information, application materials should be submitted to the NBCRNA at least four weeks prior to the July 31 expiration date.

- **Documentation of Licensure**
  - Every applicant must submit documentation of compliance with all state requirements for licensure as a registered nurse performing nurse anesthesia, including a current and unrestricted license to practice as a registered professional nurse, with authority to practice nurse anesthesia if such authority is granted, in at least one state and in all states in which the applicant currently holds an active license. For those individuals employed by the United States government, the license may be issued by any state or territory of the United States.
  - If the applicant has practiced in more than one state during the prior two-year period, the applicant must provide appropriate documentation of licensure for the relevant time of practice in each state shown on the applicant's record of practice.
- **Documentation of Continuing Education.** Acceptable documentation of completion of 40 hours of approved continuing education, as set forth in the AANA Continuing Education Program, must be received by the NBCRNA no later than the applicant's July 31 expiration date, but preferably at least four weeks prior to the July 31 deadline.
- **Documentation of Practice.** Every applicant must submit a record of practice setting forth:
  - a list of the facilities at which the applicant has practiced clinical nurse anesthesia or performed nurse anesthesia-related administrative, educational or research services within the preceding two-year period
  - the applicant's title or role at each facility, such as "practitioner" or "educator"
  - the address of the facility
  - the name and phone number of a contact person who can verify employment at each facility
  - the inclusive dates of practice at each facility

**NOTE: After December 31, 2018, nurse anesthetists who fail to qualify to renew their credential must meet the eligibility requirements for Continued Professional Certification in order to regain their credential. See CPC Handbook for applicable requirements.**

## Effective Date of Recertification

If an applicant has complied with all recertification criteria and the NBCRNA has received and approved a complete application by the July 31 deadline, the effective date of recertification will be August 1.

If an applicant has not complied with the recertification criteria by the July 31 deadline, or the NBCRNA has not received and approved a complete application by July 31, the effective date of recertification will be the date on which the recertification criteria have been satisfied and a complete application has been received and approved by the NBCRNA. In such cases an applicant's recertification period will be shortened accordingly. The NBCRNA will not, under any circumstances, extend the July 31 expiration date for compliance with recertification criteria.

# Recertification Policies and Procedures

Please note that there are additional NBCRNA policies and procedures posted to the NBCRNA website that may apply. Nurse anesthetists are responsible for being aware of any and all applicable procedures.

## Recertification Period

Recertification historically has been effective for up to two years, but since March 1, 2016, Full Recertification may be effective for a period of up to four years, depending on the individual's date of recertification. Recertification expires four years later on July 31 for individuals who recertified between 3/1/2016 and 7/31/2017. Recertification expires automatically at the end of the recertification period unless renewed.

Interim or time-limited Recertification may be granted for a period of less than four years at the discretion of the NBCRNA.

## Late Applications

Applications that are either incomplete or received after July 31 will be subject to a reinstatement fee for lapsed recertification. This fee will be required in addition to all other applicable recertification application fees.

## New Graduates

New graduates of nurse anesthesia educational programs accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) who achieved a passing score on the National Certification Examination (NCE) and were granted initial certification by the NBCRNA on or before December 31, 2015, must comply with all of the requirements of the Criteria for Full or Interim Recertification for their first four-year period and must submit all of the materials required for CPC compliance following the end of this period. New graduates granted initial certification on or after January 1, 2016, must comply with all criteria for CPC compliance and submit all required application materials in accordance with CPC program requirements.

## Transition to the Continued Professional Certification (CPC) Program

Effective August 1, 2016, the Continued Professional Certification (CPC) program replaced the recertification program, and maintenance of certification and achievement of CPC compliance will be determined in accordance with the criteria for Continued Professional Recertification.

Current nurse anesthetists and graduates initially certified on or before December 31, 2015, entered the CPC Program on August 1 in either 2016 or 2017, depending on their last recertification date. Transition into the CPC Program will occur after completion of the last four-year recertification cycle. Individuals who were initially certified on or after January 1, 2016, immediately entered into the CPC program.

For any questions regarding the Recertification Program, please mail [info@nbcna.com](mailto:info@nbcna.com) or call 855-285-4658.

# Policies and Procedures for 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, Recertification or Continued Professional Certification (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](http://www.NBCRNA.com), or requested from the NBCRNA.