

# REENTRY Handbook

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*This publication contains information about NBCRNA's Reentry 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 Policies Handbook).*

*All correspondence and requests for information concerning the Reentry Program should be sent to the NBCRNA at [support@nbcrna.com](mailto:support@nbcrna.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 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. 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 and 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 and 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 they work.

## **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 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). 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.

# REENTRY PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Reentry Program is a self-directed program for nurse anesthetists whose certification and/or license or authority to practice nurse anesthesia has lapsed for four or more years and who wish to reestablish their eligibility for certification and reenter nurse anesthesia practice. The Reentry Program is available to a nurse anesthetist who has lost their certification for less than four years if that loss was a result of failing to comply with any of the CPC/MAC components on or before the end of their CPC/MAC cycle. The Reentry Program provides the opportunity for a nurse anesthetist to obtain current knowledge and skills necessary for safe nurse anesthesia practice and enables the nurse anesthetist to become CPC/MAC compliant and restore their eligibility for certification.

The Reentry Program is available to nurse anesthetists who hold a current unrestricted license to practice as a registered nurse and consists of four sequential steps, all of which must be completed within a consecutive 24-month period, starting on the date of enrollment in the Reentry Program. The following is a summary of the steps. Step One through Step Three must be completed within 12 consecutive months after Reentry Program enrollment. Step Four must be completed within 24 consecutive months after Reentry Program enrollment.

- **Step One:** Complete 100 CE credits; minimum (60 Class A and the remainder may be either Class A or B), four Core Modules (one in each of the four content areas) and provide evidence of valid BLS and ACLS certifications.
- **Step Two:** Pass the NBCRNA Reentry Examination. The Reentry Examination content is consistent with the content of the CPC Assessment (CPCA). For reference, the CPCA content outline is available on the NBCRNA website.
- **Step Three:** Successfully complete a list of NBCRNA-identified activities at an NBCRNA-recognized simulation center in order to move to Step Four of the program.
- **Step Four:** Provide evidence of nurse anesthesia employment within the 12 consecutive months following completion of Step Three of the program or by the end of the 24-month Reentry Program, whichever is shorter. Complete CPC Compliance Application.

## Recommended Self-directed Reentry Activity Timeline For Reentry Participants

STEP ONE	STEP TWO	STEP THREE	STEP FOUR
1-3 Months	3-6 months	6-12 months	12-24 months
100 CE Credits	Reentry Exam	Simulation Center	Evidence of Employment
Four Core Modules			
ACLS and BLS Certification			

# REQUIREMENTS OF THE REENTRY PROGRAM

A nurse anesthetist must fulfill all of the following Reentry Program requirements in a timely manner in order to complete the program and become eligible for full CPC/MAC compliance and reinstatement of their certification.

- A. **Steps One through Three**, including all of the following requirements, must be completed within 12 consecutive months after Reentry Program enrollment. Note: Failure to complete Steps One through Three within a 12-month consecutive time period will require the individual to restart the Reentry Program.

1. Step One:

- a. Complete 100 CE credits (minimum 60 Class A and the remainder may be either Class A or B).

Class A credits have been prior approved by a recognized approval organization. Class A credits must have an assessment and must be directly related to nurse anesthesia practice and to the delivery, or improvement, of anesthesia care for patients.

Class B credits are professional development credits, and a list of qualified Class B activities is available on the NBCRNA website for reference.

- b. Documentation of completion of four Core Modules, one module in each of the following four content areas:
- i. Airway management techniques.
  - ii. Applied clinical pharmacology.
  - iii. Human physiology and pathophysiology.
  - iv. Anesthesia equipment, technology and safety.
- c. Provide evidence of valid BLS and ACLS certifications.

2. Step Two:

- a. Pass the NBCRNA Reentry Examination. Reentry Program participants may sit for the examination up to four times within the consecutive 12-month period that is allowed for completion of Step One through Step Three requirements, provided that each exam attempt is taken no earlier than three months following a previous exam attempt.

Notes:

- 1) 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 reasonable testing accommodation. Refer to the General Policies Handbook, located on the NBCRNA website, for additional information.

2) 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 or certification.

b. After the above requirements have been completed, the nurse anesthetist must contact the NBCRNA to identify the NBCRNA-recognized simulation center where they will be completing Step Three of the program.

3. Step Three:

a. Document successful completion of the NBCRNA-identified activities listed below. These activities must be performed at a NBCRNA-recognized simulation center. Reentry Program participants should contact the NBCRNA to discuss completion and submission of any required documentation for this step of the program. A list of NBCRNA-recognized simulation centers is available on the NBCRNA website.

Reentry Program participants are responsible for contacting and negotiating completion of Step Three activities with a NBCRNA-recognized simulation center.

Note: The simulation experience is an evaluation of your nurse anesthetist clinical competence; it is not a mechanism for refreshing clinical skills.

**NBCRNA-identified activities:**

- i. Bronchospasm.
- ii. Anaphylaxis/allergy.
- iii. Unstable arrhythmias.
- iv. Myocardial infarction (while under anesthesia).
- v. Obstructed endotracheal tube.
- vi. Aspiration.
- vii. Rapid sequence induction.
- viii. Difficult intubation/advanced airway techniques.
- ix. Anesthesia machine malfunction/troubleshooting.
- x. High/total spinal.
- xi. Desaturation.
- xii. Pulmonary edema.



- xiii. Bradycardia/tachycardia.
  - xiv. Hyper/hypotension.
  - xv. Cardiac arrest.
  - xvi. Pulmonary embolism.
  - xvii. Regional anesthesia.
  - xviii. Preoperative evaluation scenarios.
  - xix. Vascular access.
  - xx. Understanding of pharmacy delivery issues (e.g., infection prevention principles associated with medication preparation and delivery, incorrect drug administration, equipment malfunction, etc.).
- b. After item simulation has been successfully completed, the nurse anesthetist must submit an application for a one-time time limited, CPC compliance period of no more than 12 months. Individuals must be approved by the NBCRNA for this CPC/MAC compliance period prior to moving on to Step Four.

The applicant must submit:

- 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 active licensure.
  - Documentation of completion of 60 Class A credits, 40 Class B credits, four Core Modules, and documentation of valid BLS and ACLS.
  - Pass the NBCRNA Reentry Examination.
  - Documentation of completion of all simulated activities within the 12 consecutive months prior to application for a 12- month CPC compliance period.
- B. Step Four: This step must be completed within the 12 consecutive months following completion of Step Three of the Reentry program, or by the end of the 24-month Reentry Program, whichever is shorter. It is the nurse anesthetist's responsibility to secure employment within the nurse anesthesia specialty and to provide the necessary documentation to the NBCRNA in order to complete Step Four of the program.
1. Evidence of completion of Step Four shall be a written employment validation letter on employer letterhead that is **sent directly to the NBCRNA by the employer** and identifies the following:
    - a. Reentry Program participant's name, address, and phone number.
    - b. Date of Hire and length of employment.
    - c. Frequency of providing nurse anesthesia services (e.g., full time or part time).
    - d. Description of the role and responsibilities specific to the nurse anesthesia specialty that the Reentry

- Program participant was hired to perform.
- e. Employer name, address, phone number.
  - f. Name, signature, title, phone number and email of a responsible individual who may be contacted at the employer to verify contents of letter.

**NOTE: Employment validation letters will not be accepted directly from the Reentry Program participant.**

- 2. Once NBCRNA receives the employment validation letter, the Reentry Program participant must submit to the NBCRNA a CPC/MAC application as well as any associated fee(s) in order to be granted full CPC/MAC compliance and be entered into a four-year CPC/MAC cycle.

**Failure to complete Step Four of the Reentry Program within the 12-month CPC/MAC compliance time period, or by the end of the 24-month Reentry Program time period, will result in termination of the CPC/MAC compliance period and will necessitate reenrollment in the Reentry Program and completion of all program requirements in order to achieve CPC/MAC compliance.**

# COMPLETION OF THE REENTRY PROGRAM

The NBCRNA will review all materials submitted as evidence of successful completion of Steps One, Two, Three, and Four of the Reentry Program and the reentry participant will be notified in writing of their completion status.

For any questions involving the Reentry Program, send an email to [support@nbcrna.com](mailto:support@nbcrna.com) or contact the NBCRNA at (855) 285-7762.