



OVERVIEW OF ANCC

Nursing Skills Competency Program

A new kind of nursing accreditation



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ANCC Nursing Skills Competency Program

The American Nurses Credentialing Center's (ANCC) Nursing Skills Competency Program provides a tool for employers and individual nurses to identify educational programs that are appropriately designed to validate nursing skills and skill sets. Nurses benefit from this new method of substantiating their ability to perform a given skill, providing them a competitive edge in obtaining and retaining positions. Employers and healthcare consumers are better able to compare and judge the quality of skills validation programs that nurses attend, giving them confidence that the nurses meet competency requirements.

To find out more about ANCC Nursing Skills
Competency Accreditation, visit us online at
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Continued Competency in Nursing

Continued competency in nursing is a frequent concern for both employers and staff—what are the best ways to maintain skills in a quickly changing environment? How do we differentiate and recognize the highest quality educational programs?

There is also increasing concern among the public related to patient safety. In 1999, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) issued a report critical of this nation's healthcare delivery system.¹ The report estimated between 44,000 and 98,000 deaths occur each year in U.S. hospitals because of preventable errors. A 2004 HealthGrades Patient Safety in American Hospitals study asserts that an average of 195,000 people in the U.S. died due to potentially preventable, in-hospital medical errors in each of the years 2000, 2001, and 2002.²

These concerns have led to heightened awareness of and demand for validation of the patient care skills of healthcare workers. Patient advocacy groups increasingly influence employers of healthcare workers to assure the competency of their employees.

In late 2008, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will institute an inpatient prospective payment system (IPPS) rule that seeks to reform the diagnosis-related group system and the way the agency reimburses for services. Most significantly, the IPPS rule eliminates payments for eight conditions linked to selected nursing-related, preventable conditions and complications.³ Hospitals can save money by decreasing the likelihood of mistakes by training their nurses using an ANCC-accredited Nursing Skills Competency Program.

There are many education courses that provide skills training to nurses initially entering or re-entering the work force. However, until now there was no reliable way for the consumer, the employer, or regulatory bodies to know the appropriateness or quality of the particular courses the nurse attends.

For example, many hospitals have developed their own required skills programs for all nurses working in that hospital, or on a particular unit. These skills programs generally are not recognized by other employment sites because the information provided and the level of the skill tested by the program cannot be validated. Nurses who work in multiple sites often find they have to take multiple education and skills courses on the same topic. This is expensive for the employer and time-consuming for the nurse.

ANCC's Nursing Skills Competency Program addresses concerns regarding competency of the nurse by validating that a skills program meets national design standards. This accreditation provides a method for local, state, regional, and national regulatory bodies to require that educational programs are developed appropriately and meet the necessary requirements to validate the skills of the nurses.

ANCC's Nursing Skills Competency Program offers a national performance benchmark for selecting continuing education courses for nurses. Nurses can validate and claim continued proficiency in their specialized skills. The requirement to demonstrate skills or skill sets allows organizations to insist on programs where they are assured that nurses will walk away with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to perform their jobs.

About ANCC

The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) is the largest and most prestigious nurse credentialing organization in the world. For more than 30 years, ANCC's Accreditation Program has contributed to healthcare quality and improvement by defining standards for high performance in continuing nursing education and measuring adherence to those standards.



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What Is Accreditation?

Accreditation is a voluntary, peer review process intended to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of continuing nursing education, making it worthy of public confidence. Accrediting organizations assess educational programs to determine whether the content is designed to produce competent graduates and then offer accreditation to those programs meeting the accreditation standards.⁴ ANCC-accredited providers have demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement of their continuing nursing education programs. They adhere to rigorous standards for quality continuing education program design criteria and evaluation.

Who should apply?

The ANCC Nursing Skills Competency Program is for any organization that offers high quality education programs for nurses.

- >> **Hospitals.** Substantiate the skills of your nurses to accrediting bodies, third-party payers, and consumers.
- >> **Manufacturers or distributors of commercial healthcare products.** Communicate your commitment to not only sell products, but to ensure appropriate use by the healthcare provider.
- >> **Specialty nursing organizations.** Validate and communicate specialized nursing skills and competencies.
- >> **State nurses associations.** Enhance portability by demonstrating the nursing skills of your members through a nationally accredited course. Assist nurses entering your state to provide evidence of proficiency in the skills required by employers in your state.
- >> **Temporary staffing agencies.** Show customers that your nurses are competent in a variety of skills.
- >> **Universities and schools of nursing.** Demonstrate the skills of graduating nursing students. This is an excellent accreditation for simulation labs and nurse refresher courses.

How does an organization apply?

An organization interested in obtaining ANCC Nursing Skills Competency Accreditation must complete an application describing its nursing education program—assessment, planning, curriculum, teaching strategies, instructor qualifications, learning environment, and successful completion criteria. The organization applying for Nursing Skills Competency Accreditation is expected to meet all ANCC Commission on Accreditation (COA) educational design criteria.

The completed application is reviewed by ANCC staff and by a volunteer review panel, consisting of education design experts and also experts in the content to be taught in each applicant program. If there are any questions about the application, the submitting organization is given 30 days to address them and respond. Site visits are not required as part of the application process.

ANCC Nursing Skills Competency Accreditation is typically granted for two years, with the option to apply for renewal after the initial accreditation period.

What makes an ANCC-Accredited Nursing Skills Competency Program different from an ANCC-Accredited Continuing Nursing Education Program?

The key difference between the programs is that the ANCC Nursing Skills Competency Program accreditation is granted to an individual educational program, rather than the entity or organization providing the course. The Nursing Skills Competency Program requires that a nurse successfully demonstrate the skill or skill set and application in practice.

The focus of accreditation of nursing skills competency programs is on the course, not the provider of it. The course must be designed according to ANCC design criteria. Design criteria for the ANCC Nursing Skills Competency Program include validity and reliability requirements, as well as requirements for observation of successful use of the skill or skill sets in the practice setting.

The qualifications of the speakers and mentors/overseers must be identified, and selection of those qualifications must be defended as part of the ANCC Nursing Skills Competency Program application process.

The ANCC Nursing Skills Competency Program accredits courses validating skills or skill sets of nurses at all levels. These may be skills or skill sets specific to a particular setting or specialty area, skills that are now typically taught initially in the academic preparation of the nurse, skills needed for nurses re-entering the field, or new skills developed since the nurse's initial preparation.

Please visit www.nursecredentialing.org for more information and to download a copy of the application.

Sources

1. *To Err is Human: Building A Safer Health System*. Institute of Medicine from the National Academy of Science, 2002.
2. *In Hospital Deaths from Medical Errors at 195,000 per Year USA*. Medical News Today. August 9, 2004. Accessed at <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/11856.php> on December 18, 2007.
3. *A Summary of the Impact of Reforms to the Hospital Inpatient Prospective Payment (IPPS) on Nursing Services*. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. November 8, 2007. Accessed at www.rwjf.org on December 4, 2007.
4. *Health Professions Education: A Bridge to Quality*, Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. 2003.

The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), a subsidiary of the American Nurses Association (ANA), provides individuals and organizations throughout the nursing profession with the resources they need to achieve practice excellence. ANCC's internationally renowned credentialing programs certify nurses in specialty practice areas; recognize healthcare organizations for promoting safe, healthy work environments through the Magnet Recognition Program® and the Pathway to Excellence Program™; and accredit providers of continuing nursing education. In addition, ANCC provides leading-edge information and education services and products to support its core credentialing programs.



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