



# CLINICAL NURSE LEADER<sup>SM</sup> (CNL<sup>®</sup>)

## RECERTIFICATION GUIDELINES (February 2011)



The CNL Certification Program is managed by:  
Commission on Nurse Certification  
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 530  
Washington, DC, 20036-1120  
Phone: (202) 463-6930  
Fax: (202) 785-8320  
Website: <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/CNC>



The Clinical Nurse Leader<sup>SM</sup> (CNL<sup>®</sup>) certification is granted for a period of five (5) years and must be renewed prior to the expiration date to maintain an active status. Recertification assures the public that the nationally certified CNL has maintained current and relevant knowledge of the CNL role. The CNL Certification Program is managed by the Commission on Nurse Certification (CNC) Board of Commissioners of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

## REQUIREMENTS FOR RECERTIFICATION

### Recertification Criteria:

For CNL recertification, the following is required:

- **RN Licensure**  
Certificants must have a current unencumbered license as a Registered Nurse (RN). It is the responsibility of the certificant to notify the CNC when any restriction is placed on his/her RN license.
- **Professional Practice**  
Applicants must attest to their employment status of a minimum 2000 hours in the five year certification period. Employment may be in any of the following areas of advanced generalist practice, including: direct clinical practice, nursing administration, nursing education, research, and/or consultation.
- **Contact Hours/Continuing Education**  
Minimum of 50 contact hours that support the CNL role are required

#### Contact Hour Calculations:

- 1 CME (Continuing Medical Education unit) = 1 contact hour
- 1 CNE (Continuing Nursing Education unit) = 1 contact hour
- 1 CEU (Continuing Education Unit) = 10 contact hours
- 1 quarter credit or unit = 10 contact hours
- 1 semester credit or unit = 15 contact hours

The above is not an all inclusive list of contact hour calculations. For questions about contact hour calculations, contact the CNC.

**Recognition of Graduate Course Work:** Graduate course work must be accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

- **Outcomes and Professional Practice**  
Applicants are requested to complete a brief survey about their current role responsibilities.
- **Documentation**  
CNLs are responsible for maintaining records of their continuing education credits and may be required to substantiate these units during random audits. Certificants are encouraged to maintain an electronic portfolio. However, documentation may be submitted to the CNC electronically or in a hard copy format.

**Filing Recertification:** The recertification application should be filed with CNC no later than thirty (30) days prior to the expiration. All practice hours, contact hours, and graduate course work must be earned prior to the certificate expiration date to apply towards recertification – activities towards recertification must have occurred within the five-year recertification period.

**Certification Expiration:** CNL certification is recognized for a period of five (5) years. The actual expiration date of a CNL certificate is December 31<sup>st</sup> of the 5<sup>th</sup> complete year after certification (i.e. certification of CNLs initially certified in April 2008 expires December 31, 2013).

**Recertification Recognition:** Individuals recertified will receive a new certificate and certification card. Certification status is a matter of public record and may be released. Names of “active” CNLs will be listed in the CNL certification directory.

**Application Fee: \$295      Late Application Fee: \$345**  
Recertification fees are non-refundable. Refunds are not available to those who do not achieve recertification. The recertification fee must accompany the Recertification Application form. Failure to pay the application fee is grounds for revocation of certification.

**Standards of Conduct:** Certificants are required to adhere to the CNL Standards of Conduct. (See page 6.)

**Application Audit:** The CNC audits approximately 10% of the recertification applications received prior to the certificate expiration date. Applicants who are audited will be notified by the CNC and be required to submit documentation of professional activities listed in the application. Applications submitted for a lapsed certification are audited – supporting documentation is required.

## RECERTIFICATION PROCESS

All CNL designees must submit a completed Recertification Application and non-refundable recertification application fee by the end of their certification cycle.

1. CNC staff will notify CNLs one year prior to the date of expiration that recertification is due.
2. CNC staff will review each application to determine if the certificant has met the recertification requirements.
3. CNC staff will contact the certificant if further information is needed and a deadline will be given for submitting the additional materials.
4. If the application is incomplete, the certificant will receive a letter specifically detailing the items that are missing.
5. The certificant will have thirty (30) days after the expiration of their credential to submit the missing items.
6. If the certificant does not submit the missing items within the thirty (30) days, CNC will send a second letter informing the certificant that the recertification application is invalid, and the certification may be suspended.
7. If the certificant submits an incomplete recertification application and fails to complete the recertification application within the timeframe established by CNC, the certificant will forfeit all recertification application fees.

**Statement of Certificant Responsibility:** Each certificant must notify the CNC of mailing address, e-mail address, and name changes in writing. It is also the responsibility of each certificant to know when to apply for recertification. A copy of the recertification application is available at [www.aacn.nche.edu/CNC](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/CNC).

Send address and name changes to: Commission on Nurse Certification, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 530 • Washington, DC 20036-1120; 202-785-8320 *fax*; [cnl@aacn.nche.edu](mailto:cnl@aacn.nche.edu) *e-mail*.

**Certification Status:** Certificants are categorized as follows:

- a. **Active** – Certificant meets certification/recertification requirements.
- b. **Active/Lapsed** – Certificant has not satisfied recertification requirements and certification has expired. Recertification applications will still be accepted by the CNC during the lapsed period which is up to three (3) months after the expiration date. However, all applications submitted during this time, will be audited and a portfolio along with documentation of continuing education will be required.
- c. **Inactive** – Certificant is no longer employed or has retired. The certificant is responsible for notifying the CNC in writing of employment status.
- d. **Suspended** – Allowing a lapse in certification greater than three (3) months of the expiration date without completing and submitting the necessary documents for recertification or without notifying CNC of a change in employment status will result in automatic nullification of the CNL certification.

**Reinstatement:** Individuals who do not meet the recertification criteria or who allow a lapse in certification greater than three (3) months will be required to re-take the CNL Certification Examination for re-instatement, pay the appropriate fee at the time of reapplication, and successfully pass the examination (multiple choice and simulation). The exam application form is posted at <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/CNC/reqdocs.htm>.

**Application Status:** Approval of an application may be deferred if the application is incomplete or if the information submitted requires clarification or documentation. If a recertification application is deferred, the specific reason(s) for that action will be made available to the certificant in writing. Certificants who have their recertification deferred will be given the opportunity to submit additional requested materials within thirty (30) days. If material is not submitted as requested, the certification may be suspended if not received within three (3) months of the date of notification.

Approval of recertification may be denied by the CNC and revoked for non-compliance with recertification policies including any of the following:

- Failure to maintain eligibility requirements
- Failure to maintain RN license in good standing
- Falsification of documentation
- Failure to pay recertification fee
- Providing false or misleading information
- Misrepresentation of CNL status
- Conviction of a felony
- Cheating on the CNL examination

Applicants denied recertification will be notified in writing of the specific reason.

**Non-Discrimination:** The CNC does not discriminate on the basis of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, disability, or national origin.

## APPEALS PROCESS

A certificant who disagrees with a CNC ruling regarding the certificant's specific recertification status may appeal that ruling to the CNC Appeals Committee. This appeal must be in writing and must be sent to the CNC Director within 30 days of the date of notice of the initial recertification ruling, stating the reasons for the disagreement.

The CNC Appeals Committee has the final authority in ruling on all recertification application appeals.

**Extension Requests:** Requests for extensions of recertification deadlines will not be granted.

## CNL PROGRAM INFORMATION

For more information regarding CNL certification and recertification, contact:  
Tracy Lofty, MSA, CAE  
Director, Commission on Nurse Certification  
Telephone: 202-463-6930, x242 · E-mail: [tlofty@aacn.nche.edu](mailto:tlofty@aacn.nche.edu)  
[www.aacn.nche.edu/CNC](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/CNC)

## CLINICAL NURSE LEADER (CNL) STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The Standards of Conduct applies to Clinical Nurse Leaders (CNL) certified and recertified by the Commission on Nurse Certification (CNC) of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. The CNL must demonstrate ethical behaviors in the provision of safe, humanistic health care and maintain competencies through continuing education. The principles outlined below encapsulate a core set of values and behaviors required of the CNL:

**Altruism** is a concern for the welfare and well being of others. In professional practice, altruism is reflected by the CNL's concern for the welfare of clients, other nurses, and colleagues.

- Demonstrate understanding of cultures, beliefs, and perspectives of others;
- Advocate for clients, particularly the most vulnerable;
- Take risks on behalf of clients and colleagues; and
- Mentor other professionals.

**Accountability** is the right, power, and competence to act. Accountability includes the autonomy, authority and control of one's actions and decisions. Professional practice reflects accountability when the CNL evaluates individual and group health care outcomes and modifies treatment or intervention strategies to improve outcomes. The CNL also uses risk analysis tools and quality improvement methodologies at the systems level to anticipate risk to any client and intervenes to decrease the risk.

- Evaluate client care and implement changes in care practices to improve outcomes of care;
- Serve as a responsible steward of the environment, and human and material resources while coordinating care;
- Use an evidence-based approach to meet specific needs of individuals, clinical populations or communities;
- Manage, monitor and manipulate the environment to foster health and health care quality; and
- Prevent or limit unsafe or unethical care practices.

**Human Dignity** is respect for the inherent worth and uniqueness of individuals and populations. In professional practice, human dignity is reflected when the CNL values and respects all clients and colleagues.

- Provide culturally competent and sensitive care;
- Protect the client's privacy;
- Preserve the confidentiality of clients and health care providers; and
- Design care with sensitivity to individual client needs.

**Integrity** is acting in accordance with an appropriate code of ethics and accepted standards of practice. Integrity is reflected in professional practice when the CNL is honest and provides care based on an ethical framework that is accepted within the profession.

- Provide honest information to clients and the public;
- Document care accurately and honestly;
- Seek to remedy errors made by self or others; and
- Demonstrate accountability for own actions and those of other health care team members under the supervision of the CNL.

**Social Justice** is upholding moral, legal, and humanistic principles. This value is reflected in professional practice when the CNL works to assure treatment under the law and access to quality health care.

- Support and promote availability and access to health care;
- Support fairness and non-discrimination in the delivery of care; and
- Encourage legislation and policy consistent with the advancement of nursing care and health care.