



...Excellence in Professional Nursing

December 2011

What is a CNL[®]?

The Clinical Nurse LeaderSM (CNL) is a fast emerging nursing role developed by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

- The CNL is an advanced generalist nurse prepared at the master's level.
- In practice, the CNL oversees care coordination and actively provides direct patient care in complex situations.
- The CNL puts evidence-based practice into action to ensure patients benefit from the latest innovations in care delivery.
- The CNL evaluates patient outcomes, assesses cohort risk, and has the decision-making authority to change care plans when necessary.
- The CNL is a leader in the healthcare delivery system.

What does a CNL[®] do?

A CNL improves patient care by focusing on:

- ✓ leadership
- ✓ patient outcomes
- ✓ care environment
- ✓ management

Role functions of the CNL include:

- ✓ advocate
- ✓ team manager
- ✓ information manager
- ✓ systems analyst/risk
- ✓ anticipator
- ✓ clinician
- ✓ outcomes manager
- ✓ educator

What is CNL certification?

- CNL certification is a unique credential that recognizes graduates of Clinical Nurse Leader programs who have demonstrated accepted standards of practice.
- The CNL mark of excellence promotes safe, quality practice through ongoing requirements for personal and professional growth.

What entity oversees CNL certification?

The CNL Certification Program is managed by the Commission on Nurse Certification (CNC), an autonomous arm of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.



About CNC

The CNC name was established in October 2007; previously called the CNL Certification Advisory Board – first board members were appointed August 2007.

Mission: To oversee CNL certification activities in order to assure communities of interest that certificants have met accepted standards of practice.

CNC Goals

CNC promotes high quality patient care through the certification of qualified individuals by:

- Recognizing formally those individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the certification program and pass the examination.
- Encouraging continued personal and professional growth in one's practice.
- Providing a national standard of requisite knowledge and experience required for certification, thereby assisting communities of interest in the assessment of certificants.

CNC Governance

CNC is governed by a Board of Commissioners
– nine voting members :

- Four members from the practice setting
- Four members from the educational setting
- One consumer/public member

Why Certification?

Certification is voluntary and serves to:

- Demonstrate a commitment to the profession
- Indicate that an individual has acquired knowledge beyond RN licensure
- Recognize that an individual has demonstrated standards and knowledge of the profession
- Assure the public that the CNL is well prepared for safe practice
- Promote life-long learning through recertification requirements

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Program Facts

- CNL Certification Program piloted November 2006
- More than 1700 certified CNLs
- More than 80 schools of nursing have served as a CNL exam site
- More than 100 schools of nursing offer a CNL education program

Certification Eligibility

- Registered Nurse licensure
- Graduation from a CNL master's or post-master's program
- Waiver for faculty of existing CNL education programs (expires December 31, 2012)
- Successful completion of certification exam

Exam Site Registration

Program responsibilities:

- Review Program Checklist
- Submit the School of Nursing CNL Education Program Verification Form
- Select exam date within CNC testing period
- Submit the Site Registration form to CNC
- Notify examinee(s) of exam date/time and location

Certification Application Process

- Candidate must meet eligibility requirements
- Candidate submits application (online or hardcopy) with payment (\$345 initial fee)
- Candidate submits supporting documents – Standards of Conduct, Education Eligibility Form
- Candidate confirms exam date, time, and location with faculty contact

Certification Exam

- Computer-based
- Approximately 150 multiple choice items
- 3 hour time limit
- Administered at the school of nursing

CNL Recertification Requirements

- Recertify once every five years; submit application with payment (\$295)
- RN licensure
- Professional practice (2,000 hours of advanced general practice; employment in a CNL role is not required))
- Minimum of 50 contact hours/continuing education that support the CNL role
- Documentation (if audited)

Resource Materials

- Certification Exam Handbook
- Self Assessment Exam
- AACN White Paper on *The Education and Role of the Clinical Nurse Leader*
- CNL Job Analysis Study
- Recommended Reading List
- CNL Online Discussion Board

Resource Materials

www.aacn.nche.edu/CNL

CNC Staff

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