

**WNA Informational Report**  
**Report on the 2017 Professional Policy Recommendations**  
**Mandatory Continuing Education for Nurses as a Condition of License Renewal**  
**Submitted by WNA Tri-Council to the WNA Membership**

Background

At the 2017 WNA Membership Assembly Dialogue Forum the members received, discussed and generated recommendations on the topic. *Mandatory Continuing Education for Nurses as a Condition of License Renewal*. WNA's Tri-Council brought this topic forward that included the results of their survey that was sent out electronically to as many Wisconsin nurses as possible. Of the 586 nurses who responded 76.05% were in favor of mandating, while only 23.95% opposed. Information was also shared regarding the status of CE for nurses throughout the U.S.

The attendees of the Dialogue Forum discussed and developed recommendations supporting mandatory continuing education for nurses as a condition of license renewal for Wisconsin. WNA's Professional Policy Committee developed and submitted a Report, *Mandatory Continuing Education for Nurses as a Condition of License Renewal*, for approval by the WNA members at the next day WNA Annual Business Meeting. (Refer to Appendix A). The members voted in favor of the Professional Policy Committee recommendations that contained the following two items:

1. Take a lead role in advocating for regulatory rule or legislative changes to implement mandatory continuing education.
2. Evaluate the evidence supporting improvement in quality of care secondary to continuing education

The WNA Board of Directors decided that before a legislative proposal could be pursued, the second recommendation, *Evaluate the evidence supporting improvement in quality of care secondary to continuing education*, needed to be completed first. The work for addressing the recommendation was assigned to WNA's Tri-Council. The Tri-Council formed a Task Force that took responsibility of achieving the work of Recommendation #2.

Task Force Strategy

The remainder of this report is to share the information that was compiled by the WNA TriCouncil. The Task Force explored the following:

1. States in the US that require CE including the frequency, the number of CE, the criteria and any specific CE content.
2. Review of National Board Accrediting Bodies requirements for CE and,
3. State of Wisconsin health professional boards CE requirements.

## Initial Findings

Currently, CE is required for nurses in 32 states across the country, meaning that Wisconsin could be viewed as behind the majority of states for this regulatory requirement. As the field of nursing is constantly changing, advancing and evolving, it is important that nurses maintain competency throughout their careers so they are able to continue to provide optimum patient care (Refer to Appendix B).

The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) requires CE as one of the standards for national board recertification. The rationale for this ANCC standard is found in their handbook which states it “provides evidence to the public that the certified individual is meeting requirements for continued competence by updating his or her knowledge and showing commitment to lifelong learning.” <sup>1</sup>(Source)

To gain information about this issue, the WNA Tri-Council conducted a search and review of states that require CE for re-licensure, use of accreditation and certification boards that use CE, and professional organizations that recognize the value of CE in the state of Wisconsin.

## Findings

### **States in the US that require CE including the frequency, the number of CE, the criteria and any specific CE content.**

The CE Task force explored the requirements per state in all 50 states. 34 states require continuing education to renew a nursing license, including all 4 of Wisconsin's Border States. As an example, Illinois requires 25 hours per 2-year recertification period. Rules associated with CE in Illinois include: maximum 12 CEU can be obtained with online resources 24 hours (i.e. webinars, videos, etc.). Nurses may only use one source per renewal period. If the program does not have an identified CE designation, 60 minutes equals 1 hour of CE.

#### *Activities that are recognized as CE.*

- Obtaining a nursing specialty certification (i.e. Clinical Nurse Specialist, Nurse Anesthetist, Nurse Midwife, Nurse Practitioner) earns 25 CEU.
- Passing a national nursing specialty exam can result in 10 CEU, with a maximum of 20 CEU earned in this way in each renewal period.
- Academic credit earns CEU, 5 CEU per semester credit and 3 CEU per quarter credit.
- Publication in journals, peer reviewed textbooks or nursing textbooks can also earn a maximum of 10 CEU per renewal period.
- Preceptorship earns CEU with a minimum of 120 hours with a ratio of 1 student/employee to 1 preceptor.
- Precepting can earn a maximum of 5 CEU per renewal period. With all of the options, no exam/publication/course may be repeated for credit in the same renewal period.

#### *Recognized Accrediting Bodies*

Depending on the CE programs or activities must be approved or offered by The American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA), The American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP), The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (AACME), The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), The American Osteopathic Association (AOA), The National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists (NACNS), The National Association for Practical Nurse Education and Service, Inc. (NAPNES), The National League for Nursing (NLN), or another state or provincial board of nursing.

## **Review of National Board Accrediting Bodies requirements for CE**

Forty-two National Board Accrediting Boards were systematically reviewed with a focus on 1.) the requirements of CE and 2.) the categories or standards surrounding the requirements.

Of the 42 Boards surveyed, 41 of them required CE as part of the recertification process. While the quantity of CEs required for recertification varies across the Boards, as does the frequency of renewal, the average amount of CE required per year is 15.

All of the Boards had a variety of ways that CE could be earned including academic study, academic teaching, conferences, presentations, publications, preceptorship, exam review and other activities.

Additionally, the majority of Boards required a designated proportion of CE be related to the specific field of nursing, e.g. Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board requires 90 CE per 5-year re-certification period, and 68 of the CEs must be specific to medical-surgical nursing. It is also noted that many of the Boards give the option of recertifying by exam, albeit some require CEU with the exam.

## **State of Wisconsin Health Related Boards**

A review of Wisconsin's State Licensing Boards in Wisconsin was also conducted.

Of the 50 professional licensing boards:

- 11 do not require CE for recertification, which includes Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses and Nurse Midwives.
- The other 39 disciplines including chiropractic radiological technician, independent social workers and dental hygienists require continued education, with requirements averaging 26.9 hours per year.

In the review, it is noted that many professions offer options for earning CE, including academic coursework and preceptorship.

## **Conclusions**

There is sufficient data about the use of mandatory CE across the US for both relicensure and national board certification.

It can be said that the majority of states that require CE for nurses, provide for many options to obtain CE which demonstrate value toward life-long learning, competency and career development.

The variety of professionals around the state, in health care and non-health care, positions that require CE further bolsters the themes of validity and rationale of mandatory CE for nurses. Nursing is growing rapidly nurses need to have the resources and education necessary to grow with these changes.

The WNA Tri-Council does not believe that it was their role to offer recommendations for next steps but rather provide the information as presented, i.e trends and patterns for national board recertification and states requiring CE and Wisconsin's licensed health professionals requiring CE as a condition of licensure.

The purpose of the Tri-Council is to seek and identify trends that impact the nursing profession. As other states, boards and professions shift towards a habit of continuing education, we feel that it is important to act and modify our practice, to provide the best patient outcomes and well-educated nurses.

---

<sup>i</sup> ANCC