

**Notice of Board Recognition of the American Association of Critical Care Nurses
Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Examination According to Board Policy**

Summary of Request: The American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) requests that its Acute Care Nurse Practitioner national certification examination be recognized by the Texas Board of Nursing as meeting the certification requirements for Acute Care Nurse Practitioners based on Board Policy. This agenda item is prepared for the purpose of providing information to Board members regarding this new examination.

Historical Perspective: Rule 221.4(c) requires applicants for licensure as advanced practice registered nurses who completed their programs on or after January 1, 1996 to obtain national certification in the advanced practice role and population focus area (specialization). The rule further requires that the certification be in a role and population focus area that is congruent with the advanced practice registered nurse's educational preparation. As new certification examinations have been developed, certifying bodies have requested that the Board recognize these examinations as meeting this requirement.

Because the Board requires national certification for legal entry into advanced practice, it has an obligation to verify that each examination is psychometrically sound and legally defensible. In addition, when substantive complaints regarding an examination are received, the Board has an obligation to investigate the issue. In October 2003, the Board adopted criteria for review of national certification examinations for the purpose of providing benchmarks to be used for evaluation of these examinations. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) also has certification review criteria that are substantially equivalent to those adopted by the Board. Additionally, the NCSBN has expertise with regard to test construction and psychometric analysis that neither Board members nor Board staff have. As a result, the Board adopted a policy to accept national certification examinations approved by NCSBN for advanced practice registered nurses in July 2005. A copy of the policy is provided as attachment A.

In 2007, the AACN began offering a new certification examination for acute care nurse practitioners. Previously, the only examination available for this advanced practice category was offered by the American Nurses Credentialing Center. In March 2009, staff learned that the AACN's acute care nurse practitioner examination was determined to be in compliance with the NCSBN's review criteria (see attachment B). Therefore, based on the Board's policy, this examination meets the requirements for national certification for acute care nurse practitioners.

Pros and Cons: The new examination allows acute care nurse practitioners to have a choice in certification processes. There are no negative implications.

Staff Recommendation: This agenda item is provided for information purposes only. No action is necessary as this is addressed in Board Policy.

**Policy Regarding the Acceptance of APRN National Certification Examination Reviews
Performed by NCSBN**

Rule 221.4(b) requires that applicants for authorization to practice as an advanced practice nurse obtain national certification in their advanced role and specialty if they completed their advanced educational program on or after January 1, 1996. The Board of Nurse Examiners (Board) recognizes specific certification examinations for specific roles and specialty areas. The Board has an obligation to the public it serves and to its licensees to verify that each certification examination tests for entry level competence in the particular advanced practice role and specialty. Therefore, the Board must have a process in place whereby each examination is reviewed for initial recognition and on a recurring basis in order to be certain the certification process continues to meet the criteria set forth by the Board in the "Criteria for Evaluation of National Certification Examinations for Recognition from the Board of Nurse Examiners," adopted in October 2003.

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) also has a review process in place for advanced practice certification examinations. The NCSBN's examination review criteria have been reviewed and determined to be substantially equivalent to the evaluation criteria adopted by the Board. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Board to recognize certification examinations that have previously been reviewed and approved by the NCSBN in lieu of completing a separate evaluation. This shall include both review of new examinations as well as recurrent reviews of existing examinations.

The Board reserves the right to complete its own review of any certification examination at any time. Factors that may trigger a review include but are not limited to the following:

- Unusually high or low pass rate
- New examinations that have not yet and/or will not be reviewed by NCSBN
- Substantive concern from the community of interest related to the quality of the examination content or the certification process

Should the NCSBN review an examination as a result of any of the aforementioned factors, the Board may elect to accept the NCSBN's review in lieu of completing its own evaluation.



111 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 2900
Chicago, IL 60601-4277

312.525.3600
www.ncsbn.org

January 23, 2008

Carol Hartigan, Certification Program Strategist
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses Certification Corporation
101 Columbia
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656-4109

Dear Ms. Hartigan:

Over the past year, the APRN Advisory Panel has been communicating with you regarding your organization's new examination. We had an initial meeting with you in March 2007 during which the APRN Committee reviewed the AACN's new Acute Care Nurse practitioner examination. As a result, the APRN Committee determined that your new examination met the NCSBN criteria to the extent to which it had been developed. During its January 2008 meeting, the APRN Committee carefully reviewed the completed examination and determined that the Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Certification Program does meet the NCSBN's APRN certification program criteria.

The NCSBN's APRN criteria were developed in response to the concerns of boards of nursing regarding the suitability of APRN certification examinations for licensure purposes. APRN licensure allows individuals the ability to practice independently or in collaboration with physicians including prescriptive authority, diagnosing and treating illness. For this reason, the criteria were developed.

The APRN Advisory Panel continues to monitor those programs that have been designated as having met the NCSBN criteria. Areas monitored include but are not be limited to: content of exams, sub-specialization, stopping the exam without notification to applicants, failure to publish a job analysis, failure to notify boards of nursing regarding changes in exams, etc.

APRN certification programs, designated as having met the NCSBN's criteria, are expected to supply a brief annual report and to respond to complaints received by the NCSBN from boards of nursing. If a complaint is received, NCSBN will notify the certification program of the complaint and ask for a meeting and/or written response. If a resolution is not reached, information regarding the concern will be made available to boards of nursing.

Again, congratulations on meeting the NCSBN's APRN criteria for certification programs. We wish you success on your new certification examination. Please let me know if you have any questions. I can be reached at (312) 525-3646 or nchornick@ncsbn.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Chornick".

Nancy Chornick, PhD, RN CAE
Director of Practice and Credentialing

Cc: APRN Committee