



# **Certification Toolkit**

## **Support Nurses through Board Certification**

**Updated: July 2025**

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Dear Colleague:

**Welcome to the American Board of Neuroscience Nursing (ABNN) Certification Toolkit!**

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide the information necessary to advocate for certification at all levels, from executive leadership—such as Chief Nurse Officers and chief administrative officers—to staff nurses seeking professional growth. It includes education on the benefits of certification, both for individual nurses and the organization, as well as justification for budget investment to support certification initiatives. Whether planning to increase certification as part of a long-term Magnet framework, to enhance professionalism, or to improve nurse retention and satisfaction, this toolkit serves as a valuable resource for both leadership and frontline nurses.

Certification in any field is a mark of professionalism. Community benefits – more certified nurses equals better outcomes. Nursing benefits – potential to have higher compensation if you are a certified nurse. Over the last few decades, it has become increasingly clear that nursing certification advances the profession of nursing by encouraging and recognizing professional achievement. There are now well over 930,000 nurses certified through organizations that are members of the [American Board of Nursing Specialties](#), and this number increases significantly each year. ([Impact of Nursing Certification on nurses, healthcare employers, and patients. Relias White Paper; A Position Statement on the Value of Certification in Neuroscience Nursing](#), AANN)

Certification will distinguish you among your colleagues, facilitates a sense of professional accomplishment, and is Magnet-recognized. The purpose of certification in neuroscience and stroke nursing is to promote excellence and professionalism as well as provide assurance to healthcare employers and the public that individuals possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience in neuroscience and stroke care to perform competently.

## About ABNN

### Our Goal

To recognize neuroscience specialty certifications as the standard of care and evidence-based practice based on work by ABNN.

### Who We Are

The American Board of Neuroscience Nursing (ABNN) is the independent, not-for-profit corporation established to design, implement, and evaluate a certification program for professional nurses involved in the specialty practice of neuroscience nursing and its subspecialties.

### Our Role in Certification and Assessment-Based Certificate Programs

ABNN is solely responsible for the development, administration, and evaluation of the [Certified Neuroscience Registered Nurse](#) (CNRN®) and [Stroke Certified Registered Nurse](#) (SCRN®) certification and recertification programs.

Certification provides a path for nurses to demonstrate specialty knowledge and expertise in clinical practice and as role models to others. This is accomplished through specialized scientifically developed exams incorporating neuroscience nursing clinical practice. The examination outlines are based on periodic job analysis that identify the knowledge and experiences required of a practicing neuroscience or stroke nurse.

The American Association of Neuroscience Nurses (AANN) and the American Board of Neuroscience Nursing (ABNN) have identified the needs for educational courses and assessments specific to nurses working with sub-specialty patients (i.e. epilepsy, spine, etc.). The 2 organizations approved the collaboration on the development of the [Certificate Program for the Seizure and Epilepsy Healthcare Professional](#) and the [Certificate Program for the Spine Healthcare Professional](#). AANN is solely responsible for the development of the educational content and ABNN is solely responsible for the development of the post-assessments and the certificate of added qualification.

### Our Mission and Vision

ABNN's mission is to promote and advance the practice of neuroscience nursing through specialty certification. ABNN's vision is that every person with neurological health needs receives care from ABNN certified registered nurses.

### Our Purpose

- Encourage the study of neuroscience nursing
- Promote and advance the practice of neuroscience nursing through specialty certification
- Determine minimum requirements for individuals who seek certification in neuroscience nursing and its subspecialties
- Conduct examinations for certification of qualified candidates
- Provide a mechanism for recertification in neuroscience nursing and its subspecialties.



ABNN offers 2 certification exams: Certified Neuroscience Registered Nurse (CNRN) and Stroke Certified Registered Nurse (SCRN).

### Benefits of Specialty Certification

- Professional recognition and credibility
- Distinction in the Neuroscience and Stroke specialty
- Supports career advancement and increased professional opportunities
- Benefits hospital Magnet and Magnet framework
- CNRN and SCRNC certification are effective for a period of 5 years.
- Recertification demonstrates an ABNN certified nurse's commitment to patient care and dedication to life-long learning.



### CNRN Certification

Earned and maintained by more than 3,700 nurses, the Certified Neuroscience Registered Nurse (CNRN®) credential represents specialized experience and knowledge in the care of patients with neurological trauma and illness. The CNRN examination is composed of 220 focused and in-depth questions representing specialized experience and knowledge in the care of patients within the specific neurological domain areas below:

- Trauma
- Cerebrovascular
- Neuro-Oncology
- Infection and Immune Complications
- Neurodevelopmental Conditions
- Neurological Disorders



### SCRN Certification

Earned and maintained by more than 7,700 nurses, the Stroke Certified Registered Nurse (SCRN®) credential formally recognizes the attainment and demonstration of a unique body of knowledge necessary for the practice of stroke nursing. The SCRNC examination is composed of 170 focused and in-depth questions representing specialized experience and knowledge in the care of patients within the specific stroke domain areas below:

- Anatomy, Physiology, and Pathophysiology of Stroke
- Hyperacute Care
- Acute Care
- Post-acute Care
- Primary and Secondary Preventative Care

### Accreditation

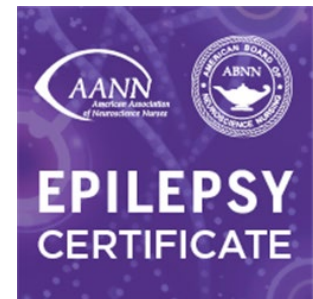
The CNRN and SCRNC certification programs are accredited by the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC), the only nationally recognized accrediting body for specialty nursing certification programs. [ABSNC accreditation](#) is a peer-review mechanism that allows nursing certification organizations to obtain accreditation by demonstrating compliance with the highest quality standards available in the industry. The CNRN and SCRNC are also Magnet-recognized.



A *certificate* program is different from a certification in that it is usually an educational offering followed by a post-assessment, that confers a document at the program's conclusion. The programs are perfect for nurses, specialists, and healthcare professionals that practice in a particular subspecialty or those looking to work on a specialty unit. AANN and ABNN jointly created two certificate programs and continue to create more based on the needs of our nurses. Those who complete all modules and pass the post-assessments receive CE and an ABNN certificate of added qualification upon completion.

### **Seizure/Epilepsy Certificate Program**

Earned and maintained by more than 3,000 nurses and healthcare professionals, the Certificate Program for the Seizure and Epilepsy Healthcare professional provides foundational knowledge to provide evidence-based care to patients who have seizures and epilepsy, who are admitted to an EMU and who are being evaluated for and/or undergoing surgery for medically refractory epilepsy. There are six core modules and two additional modules that offer additional content focused on nursing roles in Comprehensive Epilepsy Centers and EMUs. The eight-module course is recommended by the National Association of Epilepsy Centers (NAEC).



#### **Modules:**

- I. Anatomy, Physiology, and Etiology of Epilepsy
- II. Seizures
- III. Diagnosis and Assessment
- IV. Treatment
- V. Education and Self-Management
- VI. Special Populations with Epilepsy
- VII. Nursing Care in the Epilepsy Specialty Clinic
- VIII. Nursing Care in the Epilepsy Monitoring Unit

### **Spine Certificate Program**

*New in August 2025*, the Certificate Program for the Spine Healthcare Professional is an assessment-based certificate program that uses instructional design principles to deliver an online self-study educational course followed by post-assessments. This course will equip participants with the tools to safely care for patients with spinal disease or injury, while providing quality care demanded by healthcare organizations, regulatory agencies, and customers. This course provides foundational knowledge and evidence-based care for patients who have disease or injury of the spine and require medical and/or surgical treatment.



#### **Modules:**

- I. Introduction to Spine
- II. Spine Disorders
- III. Diagnosis and Assessment
- IV. Management and Treatment
- V. Pain Management
- VI. Education and Self-Management
- VII. Special Populations
- VIII. Quality Measures for Spine Programs



The demanding and competitive healthcare environment creates ever-increasing challenges for healthcare institutions. Patients, staff, and the community evaluate your institution's commitment to excellence in nursing. By demonstrating your investment in and commitment to leading practice in neuroscience and stroke care, you bolster your institution's image and gain a competitive edge. Certification is a testament to the outstanding caliber of your nurses, promotes your commitment to neuroscience and stroke nursing, and makes your institution more attractive to prospective nurses. In addition, certification is an indicator of quality that will reassure patients. It also may aid in attaining and maintaining Magnet Status (as awarded by the American Nurses Credentialing Center [ANCC]) and Joint Commission Certification.

The value of certification extends beyond the individual nurse and will benefit the employer in significant ways. Encouraging your nurses to earn the CNRN and SCR N certification creates a valuable competitive edge for your institution.

### **Recommendations/Resources for Nurse Leaders**

- Define Certification Philosophy and Goals in your organization
- Designate Certification Champions in your organization
- Gain support of administrative colleagues as appropriate
- Share plan with Nurse Leaders to gain input and support
- Incorporate plan and input from Shared Governance or other Nurse councils
- Develop 3-5 year Certification and recertification plan and budget
- Plan campaign for nurses with collateral materials to support, encourage and champion Certification utilizing materials from ABNN website
- Provide resources from ABNN and AANN websites to support study
- CNO can recognize each applicant with letter of acknowledgment and encouragement
- Reward and recognize each Candidate using [ABNN's Celebration Toolkit](#) which includes a sample congratulatory letter to newly certified nurses
- [Reward](#) and recognize each nurse passing the exam, consider including the full nursing department in the celebrations
- Celebrate [Certified Nurses Day](#) on March 19<sup>th</sup> each year

### **Articles Related to Nursing Certification**

- [\*\*\*AANN and ABNN Position Statement on the Value of Certification in Neuroscience Nursing\*\*\*](#) (November 2022) Lane, P.; Vyas, M.; Grigaitis-Reyes, M.
- ***ABNN's Perceived Value of Certification Tool (PVCT) Research*** Walter, S.; McNair, N.; Banat, R.; Anderson, T.; Dai, Z.; Wang, K.
  - [Click here](#) to read the *Results From the Perceived Value of Certification Tool-12 Survey: Analysis of the Perceived Value of Certification Among Stroke and Neuroscience Nurses* (October 2022)
  - [Click here](#) to read the *Evaluating the Value of Certification Among Noncertified Neuroscience Nurses* (June 2025)

- ***A Hospital-Based Neuroscience Nursing Course Designed to Improve Competence and Confidence*** Shields, L.; Perkins, L.; Clark, L.; Shields, C.

After experiencing growth in the neuroscience service line, nurse leaders identified a need for increased competencies among clinical staff. This hospital met the need by developing a unique multidisciplinary neuroscience nursing course to improve the clinical competence, confidence, and professional development of bedside nurses.

[Click here](#) to read the article from *JONA: The Journal of Nursing Administration*.

- ***Use of AANN/ABNN Seizure and Epilepsy Certificate Program to Improve Neuroscience Nurse's Knowledge and Confidence*** Bhatnagar, S.; Nelsen, A.; Eisner, M.; Ostendorf, A.

CONCLUSION: The completion of the AANN certificate program enhanced the epilepsy-related knowledge and confidence of neuroscience nurses. These educational modules help to meet accreditation requirements for epilepsy centers and provide substantial benefits for nurses.

[Click here](#) to read the article from *JNN: The Journal of Neuroscience Nursing*. (June 2025)

- ***Perceived value and barriers of nursing specialty certifications among clinical nurses in Saudi Arabia: a cross sectional study*** Alawiah T. AlSadah; Ahmad E. Aboshaiqah; Naif H. Alanazi

[Click here](#) to read the article from *Frontiers in Medicine* (February 2025)

- ***What is the Perceived Value of Certification Among Registered Nurses? A Systematic Review*** Van Wicklin, S.; Leveling, M.; Stobinski, J.

[Click here](#) to read the article from *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. (June 2020)

- ***[Impact of Nursing Certification on nurses, healthcare employers and patients](#)*** (White Paper)





## **Grants**

The [Agnes Marshall Walker Foundation \(AMWF\)](#) believes that all nurses should have access to education and the opportunity for professional development. The following grants are offered by AMWF:

- Travel Grants to AANN Annual Neuroscience Nursing Conference, AANN Stroke Care Conference, INNRS Conference – receive up to \$750 to use towards travel to the conferences
- CNRN or SCRN Certification Grants – receive funding to cover certification application fees.
- CNRN or SCRN Recertification Grants – receive funding to cover recertification application fees.
- Research Grant – receive funding for research projects that address clinical practice, educational, certification, or administrative dimensions of neuroscience nursing.
- Seizure/Epilepsy Certificate Program Grants – receive funding to cover Seizure/Epilepsy certificate program fees.
- AANN Membership Grant – receive funding for 1-year of AANN membership.

## **ABNN's Hospital Registration Program**

ABNN's [Hospital Registration Program](#) is an employer program designed to help nurses earn certification for the neuroscience and stroke specialty. Having CNRN- and SCRN-certified nurses on your staff is an excellent way to demonstrate to patients and their families that your hospital provides expert care. Additionally, the CNRN and SCRN certifications aren't only for the nurses at the bedside, but also consultants, educators, researchers, chief nursing officers (CNOs), and other roles who hold a current, unrestricted RN licensure also are eligible to take the exams.

Here are key details about the program:

- There is no minimum number of nurses required to test per year.
- There is no cost for employers to join.
- Nurses can test with no out-of-pocket fee.
- Enrolled employers pay monthly exam invoices after the nurse takes the exam. The employer receives a \$100 discount for nurses who are unsuccessful in passing the examination.
- Nurses and employers receive free, ongoing program guidance to help promote the certifications.
- Enrolled employers also can receive group discounts on AANN's online Review Courses.

*Sign up for ABNN's [Hospital Registration Program](#) today! Contact [info@abnncertification.org](mailto:info@abnncertification.org) to learn more and get started.*

***Over 55 different hospitals are participating in the Hospital Registration Program!***

**Why should a nurse Certify?**

Certification is a process consisting of preparation, study and examination and it represents:

- Demonstration and validation of requisite neuroscience specialty knowledge beyond licensure.
- Privilege of the use of a nationally recognized Neuroscience or Stroke credential
- Demonstration of commitment to learning and the specialty of Neuroscience and Stroke Nursing
- Recognition in practice setting
- Recognized as a specialty certified nurse among other national nursing certification organizations through the American Board of Nursing Specialties

**Recommendations/Resources for Nurses**

- Certification Checklists – Print the certification checklists to help keep track of your progress towards certification and for a list of helpful day of exam reminders.
  - [CNRN Checklist](#)
  - [SCRN Checklist](#)
- [Sample letter](#) requesting support from supervisor or administrator
- Grants available for education and certification and/or recertification:
  - The [Agnes Marshall Walker Foundation \(AMWF\)](#) believes that all nurses should have access to education and the opportunity for professional development. The following grants are offered by AMWF:
    - Travel Grants to AANN Annual Meeting, AANN Stroke Care Conference, INNRS Conference – receive up to \$750 to use towards travel to the conferences
    - CNRN or SCRN Certification Grants – receive funding to cover certification application fees.
    - CNRN or SCRN Recertification Grants – receive funding to cover recertification application fees.
    - Research Grant – receive funding for research projects that address clinical practice, educational, certification, or administrative dimensions of neuroscience nursing.
    - Seizure/Epilepsy Certificate Program Grants – receive funding to cover Seizure/Epilepsy certificate program fees.
    - AANN Membership Grant – receive funding for 1-year of AANN membership.
- Preparation Material\*
  - [Review Courses \(online\)](#)
  - Review Courses (live)
    - Join your [Local AANN Chapter](#) for opportunities for Live Review Courses!
    - [AANN Calendar of Events – View dates for AANN Live Review Courses](#)
      - CNRN Review Course
      - SCRN Review Course
  - [CNRN Self-Assessment Exam](#)
  - [SCRN Self-Assessment Exam](#)
- [Recertification/CE](#)

*\*ABNN does not endorse any preparation material.*

**Steps to Earning CNRN or SCR N Certification:**

1. Earn RN licensure
2. Have 1 year (or 2,080 hours) of neuroscience or stroke nursing experience in the last 3 years (indirect or direct)
3. Select your examination window:
  - **CNRN** – March, July, October windows
  - **SCRN** – February, May, September windows
4. Complete an application for the CNRN or SCR N exam in your [Certification Center](#).
5. Prepare for the exam
6. Day of Exam:
  - a. Arrive on time
  - b. Bring one form of identification with a current photograph. View the Candidate Handbook for further instructions.
  - c. You will receive your pass/fail status at the testing site.
    - i. Digital badges will be emailed to those who pass from Credly, within 2-6 weeks of the examination date.
7. Celebrate your achievement with your [Digital Badge](#), CNRN or SCR N pin and plaque available for purchase on [ABNN's website](#).

**ABNN's new Certification Center allows you to access your certification information.**

In the Certification Center you can:

- Access your current CNRN and SCR N Applications
- Schedule your exams and/or view your upcoming exam date in your **Exam Details Widget**
- View your Certification History in your **Completed Certifications**
- View your Certificate Details and Expiration Date in your **Certification Widget**
- Request a **Certificate Reprint**
- View ABNN's latest news and updates
- View testimonials from your peers
- Look-up fellow certificants in the new [Certificant Directory](#)

**Log-In To the Certification Center**

## SAMPLE Letter to Supervisor/Administrator

Fill in the information below to personalize and send to your Supervisor/Hospital Administrator to support CNRN or SCRNN certification.

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<FACILITY LETTERHEAD>

[DATE]

[CERTIFICANT'S ADDRESS]

Dear [Name],

I am proud to share that [INSERT NURSE NAME] has met the practice hour requirements and is now eligible to apply for the **[Certified Neuroscience Registered Nurse (CNRN) / Stroke Certified Registered Nurse (SCRNN)]** examination through the American Board of Neuroscience Nursing (ABNN)!

In today's demanding and competitive healthcare environment, our institution is continuously evaluated by patients, staff, and the community on its commitment to excellence in nursing. Certification serves as a powerful testament to the high caliber of our nurses, strengthens our dedication to neuroscience and stroke care, and enhances our reputation as an employer of choice for top nursing talent. Additionally, certification is a recognized indicator of quality, helping to reassure patients and their families while supporting our efforts to achieve and maintain **Magnet® status** and **Joint Commission certification**.

To further encourage certification, ABNN offers a **Hospital Registration Program**, which provides significant benefits to both our nurses and the organization:

- Eligibility extends to nurses, consultants, educators, and researchers with a current, unrestricted RN license.
- No minimum number of nurses is required to participate.
- The program eliminates out-of-pocket testing fees for nurses.
- Nurses and employers receive ongoing program support and guidance.
- Group discounts on AANN certification prep materials are available.
- Employers can enroll in the program at no cost.

The value of certification extends well beyond the individual nurse. Certified nurses demonstrate a commitment to excellence, contribute to better patient outcomes, and elevate our institution's standing in the healthcare community.

I appreciate your support for professional development and would love the opportunity to discuss how we can implement certification support for our nursing team. Investing in CNRN and SCRNN certification not only empowers our nurses but also strengthens our hospital's commitment to exceptional patient care.

## SAMPLE Letter to Supervisor/Administrator

Fill in the information below to personalize and send to your Supervisor/Hospital Administrator to support CNRN or SCR N certification.

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Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your thoughts on how we can make this opportunity a reality for our nursing staff.

Sincerely,