



## Continuing Education Program Approval Policy for AACN Chapters

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Contact Information

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## AACN Statement

The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) is committed to educational and professional development activities that help nurses care for high acuity and critically ill patients and their families. Our chapters' ongoing contributions to education and professional development benefit our community in a variety of ways.

Programs may provide participants with contact hours for:

- (1) Voluntary certification or recertification requirements, such as Synergy CERPs
- (2) Institutional continuing education requirements
- (3) Renewal of licensure (check with your state Board of Nursing)

**AACN's Continuing Education (CE) Program Approval activities are not affiliated with, or accredited by, any other nursing organization. "AACN approval" signifies that our clinical and professional experts have reviewed the program and it has met our criteria. We do not guarantee that other organizations, institutions or state boards of nursing will accept contact hours from AACN-approved programs.**

## Continuing Education

### Continuing Education (CE)

AACN CE Program Approval defines and distinguishes continuing education content in the following manner:

*Continuing Education is learning activities designed to augment the knowledge, skills, and practice of nurses and therefore enrich the nurses' contributions to quality health care and to their pursuit of professional career goals.*

Ninety-five percent (95) of the program's educational content must be patient-focused to gain AACN approval for CE.

In contrast, staff development (in-service and orientation) activities are typically designed to enhance performance in participants' current job roles, and are based on a specific facility's policies and procedures, equipment, and resources and do not, therefore, meet the definition of continuing education.

Content geared toward the use of medical devices, equipment, technology, products or in-service education is not eligible for CE.

### Self-Paced Programs

AACN does not provide CE for self-paced courses including e-learning courses.

### Ineligible Course Content

- Courses which focus upon self-improvement, changes in attitude, self-therapy, self-awareness, weight loss, and yoga.
- Economic courses for financial gain, e.g., investments, retirement, preparing resumes, and techniques for job interviews, etc.
- Courses designed for lay people.
- Orientation programs - orientation meaning a specific series of activities designed to familiarize employees with the policies and procedures of an institution.
- Courses which focus on personal appearance in nursing.

- CPR, BLS, basic EKG/dysrhythmia and IV therapy courses that are similar to those used to certify licensed vocational nurses to start IV's.

CERPs can be provided to attendees via a certificate of attendance for programs not eligible for CE.

## Planning Your Program

An AACN chapter must have the following structures in place prior to submitting a single program or a multi-content CE program.

### **Educational Design**

The AACN chapter must have a clearly defined process for assessing chapter members' educational needs. The chapter must plan, implement and evaluate continuing nursing education in accordance with adult learning principles and professional education standards and ethics.

The educational design process must include procedures for protecting educational content from bias, providing learners appropriate information and documentation related to their participation and maintaining records in a secure and confidential manner.

### **Chapters Must Have:**

#### **1. Assessment of Learner Needs**

Continuing education activities are developed in response to and with consideration for the unique educational needs of the chapter's target audience.

#### **2. Designated Nurse Planner**

(Can be the chapter educational program chair or member of the education committee).

The chapter Nurse Planner is responsible for completing the needs assessment of the targeted audience. The planner must plan, implement, and evaluate continuing nursing education in accordance with adult learning principles and professional education standards and ethics. The planner is also responsible for all record keeping associated with each educational activity. (Record keeping may be designated to a member of the education committee).

It is the responsibility of the nurse planner to clearly state through the course description, course objectives, and outline how the course content relates to the practice of nursing.

A chapter Nurse Planner must be a registered nurse with a *preferred* Bachelor of Science in Nursing. In addition, the Nurse Planner must have experience with education and adult learning principles. Demonstration of competence can be evaluated by reviewing the chapter Nurse Planner's professional portfolio.

#### **3. Effective Design Principles.**

Each educational activity should be developed with:

- a) A learning goal (purpose) and explicit measureable educational objective for the learner that are appropriate for the target audience;
- b) Gaps in knowledge, skills, practice identified based on the needs assessment which the activity is designed to address;
- c) Content congruent with the activity's learning goal (purpose) and educational objectives;

- d) Teaching and learning strategies congruent with the activity's objectives and content;
- e) Criteria for judging successful completion of an activity that are consistent with the learning goal (purpose), objectives, and teaching and learning strategies as listed above; and
- f) A method determined for verifying participation in an activity.

## **The Chapter Nurse Planner Is Responsible For Assuring:**

### **1. Record Keeping**

For each provided educational activity, the following documentation must be maintained by the chapter in a secure and confidential manner for four years:

#### **a) Planning**

- Description of the target audience.
- The method and findings of the needs assessment.
- Names, titles and expertise of the activity planners and presenters.
- Signed Presenter Permissions & COI Disclosure/Resolution form Nurse Planner(s).
- Learning goal (purpose), objectives and content.
- Instructional strategies, delivery methods, learner feedback mechanisms and resources to be used.
- Methods or processes used to verify participation.
- Notice to learners identifying how successful completion will be measured.
- Marketing and promotional materials.
- Division of responsibilities among co-providers, if any.
- Means of ensuring content integrity with sponsorship or commercial support, if any.
- A signed co-provider agreement, if applicable.

#### **b) Implementation**

- Title, location and date of the educational activity.
- All evaluation tools used, including a summative evaluation.
- Participant names and addresses.
- Sample certificates of completion.
- Number of contact hours associated with official accreditation statement awarded to individual participants.

### **2. Presenter Permissions & COI Disclosure/Resolution**

Conflict of interest disclosure statements shall be obtained from all activity planners and presenters to identify the presence or absence of any potentially biasing relationships of a financial, professional or personal nature on the part of those who have an impact on the content of an educational activity. Planners and presenters must disclose the presence or absence of conflict of interest relative to each activity. To ensure you have an expressed written consent from the copyright owner, all potential conflicts shall be resolved prior to the planning, implementation or evaluation of the continuing nursing education activity. The Nurse Planner(s) must also sign acknowledging that he/she has reviewed this form.

### **3. Commercial Content**

The chapter Nurse Planner must assure that the program does not provide continuing nursing education credits when content is specific to a branded product. Commercial exhibits or advertisements cannot

influence planning or interfere with any educational activity. Product material or product-specific advertisement of any type is prohibited in or during the presentation. Educational materials such as abstracts, slides, or handouts that are part of the CE activity cannot contain any advertising, company or trade names. The program's educational content must be overwhelmingly ( $\geq 95\%$  of presentation) reflective of nursing practice, independent of commercial interest to gain approval for CE.

**Content geared toward the use of a medical devices, equipment, technology, products, or in-service education is not eligible for CE.**

Written and verbal communication containing disclosure information about CE activities supported by companies must be given to the audience. The supporting company who has significant relationships must be announced to participants **prior** to the presentation and when written materials are displayed outside of the room. The Nurse Planner must assure that the moderator makes this announcement as part of the program introduction.

#### **4. Unrestricted Educational Grants**

An unrestricted education grant from a vendor is a financial contribution the vendor provides directly to AACN and/or its Chapters. The vendor's support is acknowledged in fliers/brochures as "Supported by [vendor name]." AACN and/or its Chapters may use the unrestricted grant to pay for expenses of a specific education session. Speakers may not receive financial support directly from vendors because it violates AACN's policy which models ANCC's (American Nurses Credentialing Center) regulations.

#### **Approval Period**

Programs are granted approval for one year, which begins on the first presentation date. During the approval period, the same program may be repeated as a single program an unlimited number of times.

#### **Audits**

During the four year period in which the chapter maintains educational records random audits may occur to assist AACN in monitoring activity quality. Records must be submitted to AACN upon request. Chapters must also be able to provide participants with duplicate certificates upon request. AACN may revoke or withdraw approval for non-compliance based on routine audits. Approval may also be denied or revoked if programs are not aligned with AACN's Mission, Vision or Values.

#### **Use of AACN Logo**

AACN chapters may use the AACN logo on program materials.

#### **Advertising Language**

We must approve a program before any advertising of AACN approval can occur. There are no exceptions.

Chapters may publish the following statement after approval has been granted:

*"The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses is approved by the California Board of Registered Nursing, Provider Number 01036. This program has been approved for \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Hours, Synergy CERP Category \_\_\_\_\_, File Number \_\_\_\_\_."*

Statements such as "Approval is pending" or "This program has been submitted to AACN for CE approval," may NOT be used.

## **CE Certificate**

The instructor or program coordinator is responsible for validating attendance and distributing certificates to each registrant at the conclusion of the program in return for a completed program learning evaluation.

AACN requires a participant of any educational activity to attend the full day of sessions offered in order to earn CE contact hours. CE should not be awarded to a participant who attends partial or a limited number of sessions offered per day.

A complete certificate must contain the following items before distributed by the chapter Nurse Planner, instructor or program coordinator:

1. The name of the participant.
2. The name/address of the provider.
3. The title/date of the educational activity.
4. AACN-approved program number.
5. The number of contact hours awarded.
6. Synergy CERP Category.
7. The official accreditation statement (which stands alone on a separate line).
8. Signature of chapter Nurse Planner, instructor or program coordinator.

Chapters may use their own certificates or download the template from our website. You can insert the required program and participant information in the template. If chapters use their own certificate, all of the information noted above must be included.

## **Synergy CERP Category Types**

In January 2010, the AACN Program Approval department adopted the AACN Certification Corporation Synergy Continuing Education Recognition Points (CERP) categories for CE contact hours and CERPS for CCRN<sup>®</sup> recertification.

Please review our [AACN Certification](#) website for more details.

Category A	Category B	Category C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clinical Inquiry</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advocay / Moral Agency</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaboration</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clinical Judgement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Caring Practices</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• System Thinking</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Response to Diversity</li></ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilitation of Learning</li></ul>	

## **List Rental**

List Rental services can support chapters in recruiting local members to educational events. As an AACN chapter, you are entitled to 4 complimentary label orders per fiscal year (July 1 – June 30).

List Rental can be used one of two ways:

- 1) If the chapter will advertise AACN CE approval, the chapter must first go through the CE Program Approval process before submitting a List Rental request. Once approved, the Chapter may submit a List Rental request.

The List Rental processing timeframe is ten (10) business days, plus an additional seven (7) business days for mailing of labels. Consequently, educational programs must be planned with a minimum of thirty-seven (37)

business days prior to the implementation date of the educational activity in order to meet both the Program Approval and List Rental timeframe requirement.

- 2) If the chapter already has CE approval through another organization, the education committee must factor a maximum of seventeen (17) business days for List Rental processing and mailing of labels.

As with Program Approval, List Rental services require a complete application form along with a final draft of the mailer in order to ensure smooth processing.

Click here to access the online [List Rental order form](#). Or you can email the department for more information at [listrental@aacn.org](mailto:listrental@aacn.org).

### **Resources**

To help you submit in a timely manner we recommend using the following online resources:

- 1. Educational Session Timeline**

A great resource to help you schedule and keep track of up and coming deadlines such as: contracts, budgets, speaker agreements, venue reservation, advertisement, evaluations, brochures, travel plans, conference room set up, etc.

- 2. Submission Checklist**

Will help you successfully complete the required documentation. Applications must be complete & adhere to the Guidelines to be eligible for Approval by AACN otherwise they will not be considered.

### **Restrictions**

- AACN approval is not an implied endorsement of the educational content
- Under no circumstances will programs be granted tentative approval
- Applications cannot be approved retroactively

## **Submission Policies**

### **Submission Deadlines**

Applications are processed the business day after we receive them.

Our office will be closed on the following days. Please plan your timelines accordingly:

<b>2014 Holidays</b>	
Memorial Day	May 26
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	Sept 1
Thanksgiving Holiday	November 27 & 28
Christmas Holiday	December 24, 25, 26 & 31
New Years	January 1, 2015

### **Submission Types**

Complete applications and corresponding fees, must be received in order to begin processing and review.

- 1. Standard Submission**

The application must be submitted 20 business days prior to the implementation date of the educational activity.

## 2. Rush Service

The application must be submitted 10 business days prior to the implementation date of the educational activity. There is an additional \$60 fee for rush service. Applications received less than 10 business days prior to the educational activity (regardless of whether a rush service payment has been included) will not be reviewed and the contact person will be notified via e-mail.

For all program approvals, we recommend you submit your application in advance if you wish to include the CE information in your promotional materials.

**Blackout Period:** Large conferences defined by those having 300 or greater participants by non-AACN organizations with an event date 90 business days prior to or 30 business days following AACN's National Teaching Institute and Critical Care Exposition® will not be considered for program approval.

AACN's 2014 National Teaching Institute and Critical Care Exposition® will be held in Denver, May 19-22. Blackout dates for 2014 are: February 17, 2014 – June 27, 2014.

### **Application Status**

Due to the high volume of applications, it is difficult for us to respond to repeated requests for an application's status. Please expect processing to take the requisite 10 or 20 business days and plan programs accordingly.

### **Notice of Results**

If an application has met all requirements, we will notify the contact person of the approval number and contact hours by email.

### **Processing Fees**

Fees are based on the number of contact hours per program. Do not count repetition of the same program when calculating contact hours.

Program Fee Schedule	
Contact Hours	Fee
1.0 – 8.0	\$20
8.10 – 16.0	\$30
16.10 – 24.0	\$40
24.10 +	\$50

### **Contact Hours and Calculation**

The time frame is the estimate of time needed to present the content and accomplish the learning objectives. It can include time for disclosure, question and answer period, completion of participant feedback or other tools, or completion of pre/post tests and review responses, it does not include registration, introductions, breaks, time to walk between rooms, or viewing of exhibits.

**One contact hour is equal to 50 minutes of program or class time. Class time is calculated by minutes, divided by fifty (50), and rounded down to the nearest tenth (1.2, 1.3, etc.)**

***Example: 260 minutes of class time ÷ 50 = 5.2 CE***

## **Posters**

Due to potential commercial bias within posters, CE approval has been discontinued however you can offer CERPs. The chapter Nurse Planner, instructor or program coordinator will need to issue a separate CERP certificate of attendance which can be found on the CE website under the 'Resources' header.

Number of Posters	CERP Credit
10	0.5 CERP
11 - 20	1.0 CERP
21 - 30	1.5 CERPs
30+	2.0 CERPs

*There is a minimum of ten (10) posters.*

*There is a maximum of two (2) CERPs that can be awarded.*

## **Processing Fee Payment Options**

If submitting multiple applications, please submit separate payment for each application.

### **1. Online payment**

Our secure website offers the convenience of paying online and receiving an instant receipt for records and reimbursement. Using this method of payment also decreases the processing timeframe. We accept Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover.

### **2. Checks**

If paying by check, make payable to AACN, reference 'Program Approval Application' and the title of the program.

The processing fee and rush fee (an additional \$60, if applicable) is required at time of submission and must be included with the application.

## **Submission Methods**

### **1. Email**

If you paid online, please email a complete application to [Programapproval@aacn.org](mailto:Programapproval@aacn.org).

### **2. Mail**

If you are paying with a check, please mail a complete application to:

**AACN**

**Attn: Program Approval**

**101 Columbia**

**Aliso Viejo, CA 92656**

To ensure your mailed application has been received, we recommend that you track your package via UPS or FEDEX. It is not necessary to submit your application both via e-mail and regular mail.

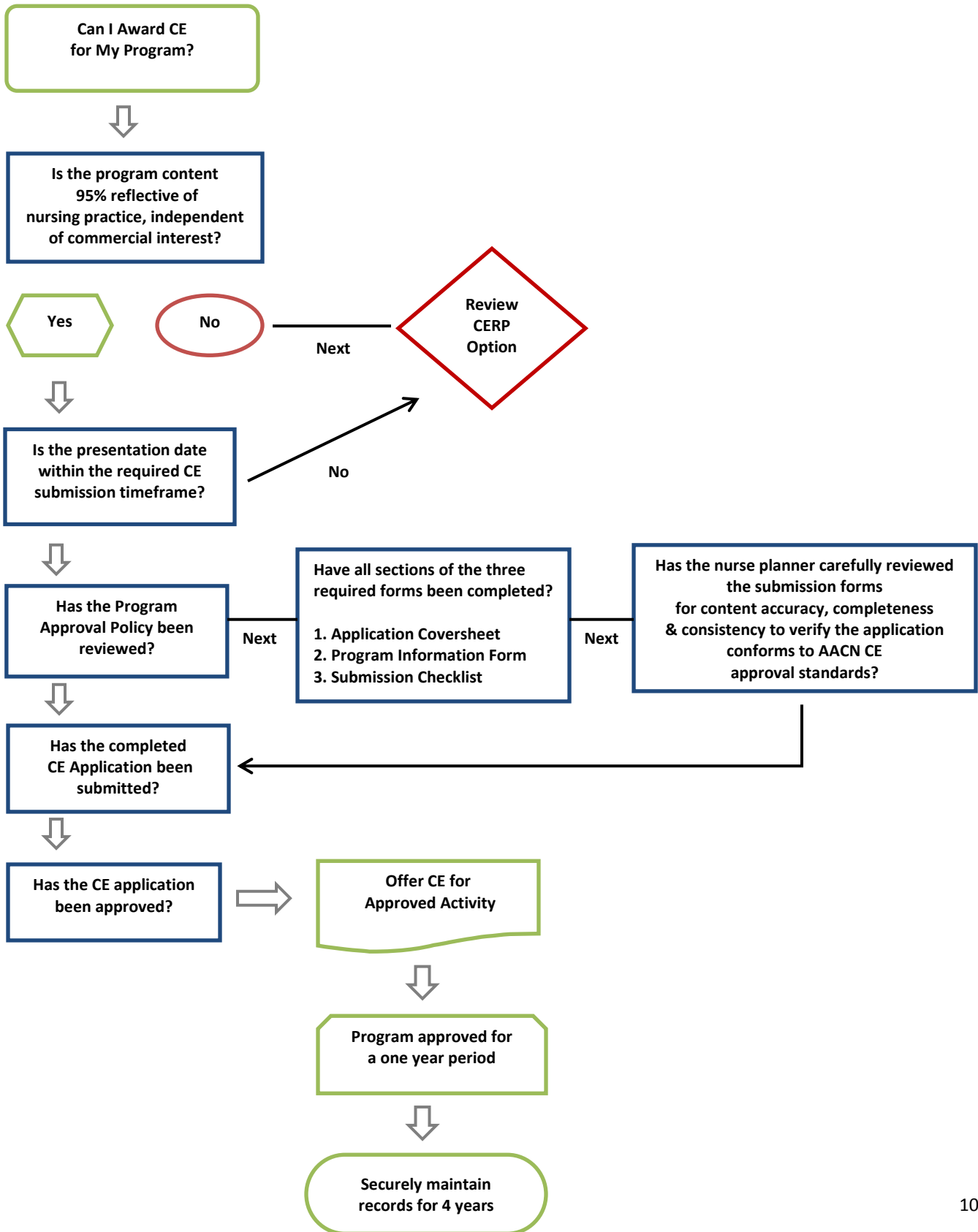
## **Incomplete or Denied Application**

If an application is incomplete or denied approval, applicants will be notified via e-mail.

The application may be resubmitted based on the following conditions:

- Verify you have included all of the required information (please refer to the submission checklist form).
- All applications are considered new and will be subject to corresponding fees and submission deadlines.

# CE Flowchart



## Continuing Education Recognition Points (CERPs)

Our credentialing division – AACN Certification Corporation – recognizes CERPs as encompassing a wide spectrum of continuing education activities performed by nurses in high acuity and critical care, and fulfill educational requirements for certification.

CERP is NOT the equivalent of a CE or CME. CERP is solely an AACN designation for nurses to fulfill education requirements to maintain AACN certifications.

One CERP equals 60 minutes of continuing education (30 minutes = 0.5 CERP).

By awarding CERPs instead of traditional Continuing Education credit, chapters can offer a wider range of sessions that do not qualify for CE.

State boards of nursing and other certification organizations may also recognize CERPs as meeting continuing education requirements.

## CERP Flowchart

