AACN CERTIFICATION CORPORATION FACT SHEET

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Background
The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, the world's largest specialty nursing organization, has been serving the needs of nurses caring for acutely and critically ill patients since 1969. AACN Certification Corporation was established in 1975 as a separate entity to provide comprehensive credentialing for nurses to ensure their practice is consistent with established standards of excellence in caring for acutely and critically ill patients and their families. AACN Certification Corporation accomplishes its mission through providing certification exams and renewal programs for individuals involved in the care of acutely and critically ill patients.

Number of Certified Nurses
According to data collected by the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) in 2016, nurses in the U.S. and Canada held more than 822,278 certifications, an increase of over 64,000 certificants when compared to 2014 survey data. These certifications were granted by 26 different certifying organizations, and 130 different credentials designate these certifications. More than 98,000 acute and critical care nurses hold credentials through AACN Certification Corporation.

Exams
AACN Certification Corporation develops and administers the CCRN, CCRN-E, CCRN-K, PCCN, PCCN-K, ACNP, ACNPC-AG, CCNS, ACCNS-AG, ACCNS-P and ACCNS-N certification programs and the CMC and CSC subspecialty certification programs. These exams have been demonstrated to be legally defensible and psychometrically sound indicators of mastery of the knowledge and skills necessary to practice effectively.

The exams are administered via computer-based testing at over 175 locations across the U.S. The exams are open to nurses caring for acutely and critically ill patients who meet the eligibility requirements, which for specialty and subspecialty certifications include a specified period of clinical practice in the role being tested. APRN exam eligibility is based on graduate level education.

SPECIALTY CERTIFICATIONS

CCRN®
CCRN-E™
CCRN-K™

The CCRN certification program, introduced in 1976, is for nurses providing direct care to acutely/critically ill adult, pediatric or neonatal patients. These patients may be found in such units as: intensive care, cardiac care, combined ICU/CCUs, medical/surgical ICUs, trauma or critical care transport/flight.

CCRN-E, an extension of the CCRN certification program, was introduced in 2007 as a renewal option and in 2011 as an initial exam option. This certification is for nurses caring for acutely/critically ill adult patients in a centralized or remotely based tele-ICU area that is networked with the bedside via audiovisual communication and computer systems.

CCRN-K, also an extension of the CCRN certification program and launched in 2014, is for nurses whose non-direct care practice influences patients, nurses and/or organizations to have a positive impact on the care delivered to acutely/critically ill adult, pediatric or neonatal patients.

CCRN, CCRN-E and CCRN-K certifications must be renewed every 3 years.
The PCCN certification program, introduced in 2004, is for progressive care nurses providing direct care to acutely ill adult patients who are moderately stable with an elevated risk of instability. They require a high intensity of care and vigilance and are commonly found in areas such as intermediate care, direct observation, step-down, telemetry and transitional care units.

PCCN-K, an extension of the PCCN certification program and launched in 2016, is for nurses whose non-direct care practice influences patients, nurses and/or organizations to have a positive impact on the care delivered to acutely ill adult patients.

PCCN and PCCN-K certifications must be renewed every 3 years.

SUBSPECIALTY CERTIFICATIONS

CMC®

The CMC (cardiac medicine) certification program, launched in 2005, is for nurses who hold a nationally accredited clinical nursing specialty certification (such as CCRN, CCRN-E, PCCN, ACNPC, ACNPC-AG, CCNS, ACCNS-AG, CEN, etc.) and specialize in the direct care of adult cardiac patients. These patients are often found in CCU, medical ICU, telemetry, progressive care, heart failure clinics/home care, interventional cardiology, cardiac cath labs and/or electrophysiology units.

CMC certification must be renewed every 3 years.

CSC®

The CSC (cardiac surgery) certification program, launched in 2005, is for nurses who hold a nationally accredited clinical nursing specialty certification (such as CCRN, CCRN-E, PCCN, ACNPC, ACNPC-AG, CCNS, ACCNS-AG, CNOR, CRNFA, CPAN, etc.) and specialize in the direct care of adult cardiac surgery patients within the first 48 hours postoperatively. These patients are often found in cardiac surgery, cardiothoracic surgery, cardiovascular surgery and post-anesthesia recovery units.

CSC certification must be renewed every 3 years.

ADVANCED PRACTICE CONSENSUS MODEL-BASED CERTIFICATIONS

ACCNS-AG® ACCNS-P® ACCNS-N®

The ACCNS credentials are entry-level advanced practice certifications for clinical nurse specialists educated at the graduate level to provide advanced nursing care across the continuum of healthcare services, from wellness through acute care:

The ACCNS-AG certification program, launched in 2013, addresses the specialized needs of the adult-gerontology patient population (young adults, older adults and frail elderly).

The ACCNS-P certification program, launched in 2013, addresses the specialized needs of the pediatric patient population.

The ACCNS-N certification program, launched in 2014, addresses the specialized needs of the neonatal patient population.

ACCNS certifications must be renewed every 5 years.

ACNPC-AG®

The ACNPC-AG certification program, launched in 2013, is an entry-level advanced practice certification for acute care nurse practitioners educated at the graduate level to provide advanced nursing care across the continuum of health services to meet the specialized physiological and psychological needs of adult-gerontology patients (young adults, older adults and frail elderly) with complex acute and/or chronic health conditions.

ACNPC-AG certification must be renewed every 5 years.
ADVANCED PRACTICE CERTIFICATIONS

CCNS®

The CCNS certification program, launched in 1999, is for nurses who were educated at the graduate level as clinical nurse specialists to provide advanced nursing care to acutely and/or critically ill adult, pediatric or neonatal patients.

CCNS certification must be renewed every 5 years.

ACNPC®

The ACNPC certification program, launched in 2007, is for nurses educated at the graduate level as acute care nurse practitioners to provide advanced nursing care across the continuum of healthcare services to meet the specialized physiologic and psychologic needs of adult patients with complex acute, critical and/or chronic health conditions.

ACNPC Certification by Endorsement is available to nurses currently certified as adult acute care nurse practitioners by another accredited organization.

ACNPC certification must be renewed every 5 years.

With implementation of the Consensus Model in 2015, the CCNS and ACNPC exams are no longer available for initial certification but remain as renewal options.