Approved Provider Process & Responsibilities

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**GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

1. All information in this document is obtained from the 2015 Primary Accreditation Approver Application Manual, published by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), and subsequent ANCC memos with criterion updates. Additional information obtained from the 2021 Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education adopted by the ANCC.
2. The person at the Montana Nurses Association (MNA) accountable for operation of the Accredited Approver Unit is the Director of Professional Development. This person holds the title of Accredited Approver Program Director (AAPD) in the approver unit.
3. Approved provider units must have the authority to plan, implement, and evaluate nursing continuing professional development activities and operate approved provider units using ANCC Accreditation Program criteria. For convenience, nursing continuing professional development will be referred to as “NCPD” in this document.
4. Approved provider units operate under the leadership of a Primary Nurse Planner, who has overall accountability for the approved provider unit and reports to the AAPD at MNA. The Primary Nurse Planner orients, updates, monitors, and evaluates nurse planners who design, develop, implement, and evaluate NCPD activities. Names and credentials of all nurse planners must be reported to MNA. All nurse planners are required to have active, unrestricted nursing licenses and a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in nursing.
5. Approved providers are authorized to plan, implement, and evaluate their own activities and award contact hours for activities that meet accreditation program criteria. They are **NOT** authorized to approve activities developed by others.
6. An ineligible company (any entity whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients) cannot be providers or joint providers of NCPD activities.
7. Employees/owners of ineligible companies cannot be planners or presenters for activities unless one or more of the exceptions apply:
   1. When the content of the activity is not related to the business lines or products of their employer/company.
   2. When the content of the approved activity is limited to basic science research, such as pre-clinical research and drug discovery, or the methodologies of research, and they do not make care recommendations.
   3. When they are participating as technicians to teach the safe and proper use of medical devices, and do not recommend whether or when a device is used.

**RESOURCES**

Refer to self-study application and activity documentation resources on the MNA web site (<http://mtnurses.org>)

**Part I: The Approval Process for an Approved Provider Unit**

*Eligibility Form*

1. Complete the ***Eligibility Form*** and submit it to the MNA Professional Development Associate. Once eligibility has been confirmed, you will receive an invitation for a virtual/telephone conference call with the AAPD and Professional Development Associate to review the application process and be sure your questions are answered.
   1. For providers already approved by MNA, six months prior to your provider expiration date, you will receive a notice from MNA advising you of the due date for your application to avoid a lapse in your approved provider status. This due date will be 3 months prior to the expiration of your current provider status.

*Submitting the Application*-Send the complete application electronically to Jennifer Hamilton at [jennifer@mtnurses.org](mailto:jennifer@mtnurses.org)

1. New applicant submission documents
   1. Provider Application-labeled as “Provider Application New”
   2. A template of a certificate that you will use once approved as a provider (should include the appropriate approved provider statement)
   3. A template of the activity information provided to learners prior to the start of the activity (should include the appropriate approved provider statement). Refer to the ***Writing to the ANCC NCPD Accreditation Criteria for Approved Providers*** for additional instructions.
   4. If your 3 required activities were not approved by MNA, please contact us for additional instructions
2. Renewing applicant submission documents
   1. Files should be labeled as listed for Returning Providers:
      1. Provider Application Returning
      2. Activity File 1 (name)
      3. Activity File 2 (name)
      4. Activity File 3 (name)
   2. Activity Files
      1. Submit three activity files representative of the work of your provider unit. These should be activities planned and implemented in the past 12 months. Consider examples related to live, web-based, enduring, or jointly provided activities as well as those receiving commercial support. Refer to the ***Writing to the ANCC NCPD Accreditation Criteria for Approved Providers*** for detailed information of activity file contents and examples.
      2. The activity file contents should include, in order:
         1. All information required on the activity documentation form
         2. Relevant financial relationship documentation and mitigation, if appropriate
         3. An agenda, if the activity is over 3 hours in length
         4. Information provided to learners prior to the start of the activity
         5. The certificate issued to learners
         6. Commercial support agreement, if applicable
         7. The summative evaluation completed by the Nurse Planner

*After Submission*

1. Once your application is received, a quantitative review will be completed, and you will have an opportunity to submit any missing documents.
2. A qualitative peer review will be conducted by two qualified nurse peer reviewers.
3. Following their individual assessments, we will schedule a virtual visit, giving you an opportunity to also share verbally about the work of your provider unit.
4. An approval decision will be made once all data has been analyzed.

*Possible Actions on a Provider Application*

1. **Approval with distinction for 3 years** – evidence supports exemplary work of the provider unit in adherence to criteria
2. **Approval for 3 years** – evidence supports the ability of the organization to adhere to criteria; may include progress reports
3. **Provisional approval for up to 1 year** – evidence supports the need for close monitoring of the organization to ensure adherence to criteria. If monitoring demonstrates that the organization is effectively meeting criteria, approval will be extended for the balance of the approval period. Failure to demonstrate adherence to criteria during the provisional approval period will result in suspension or revocation of approval.
4. **Denial** – evidence demonstrates that the applicant is not in adherence to criteria and has not recognized deficiencies or established plans to address deficiencies. An organization whose application has been denied has the right to appeal that decision. The appeal procedure is available from the AAPD upon request. Denial of an application precludes the applicant from submitting another provider application for 12 months, although individual activity applications may be submitted by the organization at any time.

*Receiving your Approval Decision*

1. After final review is complete, you will be notified of the approval decision. If additional information is required, the details of the required information and the due date will be specified.
2. You will receive a certificate of approved provider status once your provider unit is approved.
3. You will receive instructions for responding periodically to MNA Approver Unit monitoring activities, which is required for maintaining your approved provider status.

*Fees*

1. For new applicants representing a single organization (hospital/facility, college of nursing, public health department, etc.) who have had individual activities approved by MNA within the 12 months immediately prior to application, the initial application fee is $1,000.
2. For returning applicants and new applicants representing a single organization (hospital/facility, college of nursing, public health department, etc.) who have not had individual activities approved by MNA within the 12 months immediately prior to application, the application fee is $1,800.
3. Payment will be invoiced upon submission of the eligibility/intent to reapply information and can be paid by check or with credit card upon receipt.
4. Additional fees may be incurred for late submissions.
5. If your approval status requires additional progress report submissions, you may incur additional fees.
6. The application fee must be paid in full before a final approval decision is rendered.
7. Note: Routine monitoring projects are conducted by MNA; responses are required in order to maintain your provider status.

**Part II: Approved Provider Responsibilities**

*Using the Accredited Approver Program Director (AAPD) as a resource*

The AAPD (the Director of Professional Development at the Montana Nurses Association) is the person accountable to the ANCC Accreditation Program to ensure that approved providers are adhering to criteria and that the approver unit is appropriately providing information, guidance, and support for approved providers. Any time you have questions about provider unit operations, issues that arise with your educational activities, or considerations in relation to completing your provider application, please feel free to contact the AAPD. From time to time, you will be asked to evaluate the work of the approver unit in providing support to your provider unit to strengthen our processes.

*Primary Nurse Planner* *Reporting Requirements*

The primary nurse planner is accountable for keeping the MNA accredited approver unit apprised of changes that occur in your approved provider unit.

1. **Within 7 days**, you are required to notify MNA of:
   1. Significant changes or events that impact your ability to provide continuing education in adherence to ANCC accreditation program criteria and requirements, including eligibility (commercial interest status or change in geographic range of your target audience)
   2. Any event that might result in adverse media coverage related to the delivery of continuing nursing education
2. **Within 30 days**, you are required to notify MNA of:
   1. Change in information in your application, including name of the organization, address change, or change in business status
   2. Change in primary nurse planner or board of nursing action taken on the primary nurse planner’s license
   3. Change in nurse planners, or board of nursing action taken on a nurse planner’s license
   4. Change in ownership of the organization
   5. Indication of instability in the organization that might impact the delivery of continuing nursing education according to ANCC accreditation program criteria and requirements.

*Recordkeeping*

1. Activity files must be retained for 6 years.
2. The activity documentation form and attachments constitute the activity file.
3. After the activity, add to your file:
   1. The summative evaluation data showing the nurse planner’s analysis of the outcome and recommendations for future activities.
   2. List of participant names and number of contact hours awarded to each person
4. Add activity data to your Nursing Activity Reporting System (NARS) report as directed by MNA. Please contact the office for assistance if needed.

*Responding to monitoring requests*

Accreditation criteria require that accredited approvers monitor the activities of approved providers on a regular basis, not just at the time of submission of a new provider application every three years. Monitoring activities could occur at any time and will typically focus on one aspect of your provider unit – submitting a sample certificate, outcome statement, or “Financial Disclosure Form”, for example. Participation in monitoring activities is required. Failure to submit material as requested may result in suspension and/or revocation of provider status.

*Responding to inquiries and/or complaints*

Should a situation arise where the MNA approver unit and Accredited Approver Program Director in have a concern about your provider unit’s operations, you will be asked to provide explanations and/or evidence to address the concern. Examples may include data found on an approved provider’s web site that is not in adherence to criteria or a complaint from a learner. If you are asked to respond to an inquiry or a complaint, you will be provided with detailed information about the nature of the complaint and what is requested (although confidentiality of complainants will be maintained), as well as a specific time frame for your response. Failure to provide the required information or address the issue at hand may result in suspension and/or revocation of your provider status.

*Adhering to federal, state, and/or local laws or regulations*

Your provider unit has agreed as part of the provider application to follow all applicable local, regional, state, and national laws/rules that affect your ability to adhere to accreditation criteria. Evidence of violation of such laws/rules will result in suspension and/or revocation of your provider status. Please note that this includes copyright laws, which can present challenges for planners and presenters. Please contact MNA if you have questions about this issue.

*Issues of Nonadherence*

The MNA Approver Unit reserves the right to suspend or revoke the status of an approved provider in situations where criteria are not followed, complaints are not resolved, laws/rules are not followed, or fees are not paid. Notification of suspension/revocation will occur by certified mail or by email with read verification. If suspension and/or revocation occur, the organization must immediately cease awarding contact hours, representing itself as an approved provider, and using the approved provider statement. Suspended organizations may apply for reinstatement within 120 days of the suspension date, based on evidence of resolution of the issue(s) in question. Failure to apply for reinstatement within the 120-day limit will result in revocation of approved provider status. Organizations whose provider status has been revoked may not apply to MNA for 1 year following the date of revocation. If, after that time, the organization wishes to reapply, it would be considered a new applicant and would be required to meet all new-applicant eligibility criteria. During a period of suspension or revocation, an organization may continue to submit individual activities to MNA for approval but may not operate a provider unit. The organization whose approved provider status has been suspended and/or revoked may appeal the decision. Contact the Director of Professional Development at MNA for the appeal process.

*Thank you for your efforts in completing this application and for your commitment to quality continuing education and professional development for registered nurses.*