

# What is certification and what is the benefit?

## *Nurse Certification Benefits Patients and Families:*

Certification provides patients and their families with validation that the nurse caring for them has demonstrated experience and knowledge in the complex specialty of critical care.

- Today's acutely and critically ill patients require heightened vigilance and extraordinarily intricate care from a team of highly skilled health professionals. Nurses confirm that patients admitted to their units are sicker than ever before. Years ago, many of these patients would not have survived long enough to be in the hospital.
- According to a November 2002 Harris Poll, consumer awareness that nurses can be certified is high — 78% of respondents knew that nurses could be certified. Awareness of nurse certification was slightly higher than all other professions we inquired about — including physicians, accountants, teachers, and mechanics.
- Americans prefer hospitals that employ nurses with specialty certification. Three in four (73%) said that, given a choice, they are much more likely to select a hospital that employs a high percentage of nurses with specialty certification.
- As healthcare has become more complex, it has become increasingly vital to assure the public that healthcare professionals are competent. Everyone in the healthcare equation — patients, employers, nurses — benefits from certification as a mark of excellence.

## *Nurse Certification Benefits Nurses:*

By becoming certified, nurses validate their expert knowledge and skills and therefore position themselves for appropriate recognition, advancement and a critical sense of confidence and achievement.

- RN licensure measures entry-level competence. Certification validates specialty knowledge, experience, and clinical judgment.
- According to Cary's study, published in 2001, nurses whose clinical judgment has been validated through certification believe that they make decisions with greater confidence. This study also found that certified nurse's overwhelmingly report that certification enabled them to experience personal growth and feel more satisfied in their work.
- As a voluntary process, specialty certification points to nurses' commitment to career development and dedication to patient care, particularly in this constantly changing environment.

## *Nurse Certification Benefits Employers:*

Nurse certification and the continuing education required to maintain it contribute to creating an environment of professionalism and a culture of retention — a critical issue given the severe nursing shortage. Certification is also a vehicle for hospitals to differentiate themselves from competitors and demonstrate to consumers that they have attracted the most skilled and experienced nursing professionals.

- The Institute of Medicine, author of the groundbreaking 2000 study on medical errors titled, *To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System*, recommends that health professional licensing bodies implement periodic reexaminations and relicensing of doctors, nurses, and other key providers. Certification provides ongoing validation of specialty experience, knowledge, and skills.
- Support for continuing education and certification are drivers of nurses' job satisfaction and have been identified as essential elements of recruiting and retaining nurses. Nurses who derive high job satisfaction from a supportive and professional workplace environment are less likely to change jobs.
- Employers play an important role in a nurse's decision to seek certification. Employers who embrace and support nurse certification are better positioned to thrive in the highly competitive healthcare market.
- Ongoing education and experience reduce a nurse's exposure to risk and better prepares them to make informed decisions that encompass a larger scope. Mercer Health & Benefits Insurance Services, a leading insurance program administrator and the world's largest insurance broker offers a 10% discount on malpractice premiums to certified acute and critical care nurses.

## Who can become certified?

- Any RN or LPN with a minimum of 2 years' experience in an area of specialty can sit for the certification examination, including per diem nurses.

## How do I become certified?

- Contact any Education Development Specialist from the Center for Education and Development x238-4020 for guidance on what certifications are appropriate for your specialty location. A grid has been created with the approved primary certifications relevant to specific locations as well as optional secondary certifications.
- Submit the application to sit for the exam through the appropriate society's website.
- Pay the National Certification Exam Fee
- Billings Clinic will reimburse nurses for up to two (2) national examinations (for example, a specialty and a sub-specialty exam, an initial specialty exam and retest, or two specialty exams). If maintaining the certification in a specialty area requires reexamination or a recertification processing fee, Billings Clinic will reimburse the fee when evidence is provided if recertification has been completed. This provision allows for up to two exams related to the RN specialty area being paid by the organization (even if the second exam is not a "designated" certification eligible for certification pay)
  - If you choose to be reimbursed for the examination, you must submit the receipt for the exam fee to the Compensation Analyst in HR through the electronic ticket.
    - Reimbursement will be available in the next paycheck.
- It is the RN's responsibility to ensure the certificate with effective dates is submitted to HR through an electronic ticket using the following steps:
  - 1. Take a picture of certification verification (make sure it has all the requirements on it)
    - a. name of nurse,
    - b. name of the specialty certification,
    - c. name of accrediting body,
    - d. and effective dates of certification
  - 2. Send the picture to your Billings Clinic email
  - 3. Open the picture attachment
  - 4. Save a copy of the picture to the desktop (remember what you name it)
  - 5. Open the Source, refer to either the Magnet or Human Resources tile
  - 6. Click on submit a service now ticket to HR
  - 7. Fill out required employee number, and contact information
  - 8. Select "Reimbursement for test/renewal, differential."
  - 9. Upload the saved file from the desktop
  - 10. Click on submit
  - 11. Delete the saved file from the desktop (right click on icon and delete)
- If you are eligible for certification differential, you must select the differential in the electronic ticket options.
  - The differential will be effective at the beginning of the next pay period after document is validated by HR. The differential is \$2.50 regardless of multiple certifications.
  - It is the responsibility of the RN who is recertifying to provide documentation on or before expiration date for certification pay to be continued.