

Frequently Asked Questions: CARN and CARN-AP Testing and Re-Certification

What is a Certification in Addiction Nursing?

Addictions nursing is the specialty for nurses dedicated to the prevention, intervention, treatment, and management of addictive disorders. The Certification in Addiction Nursing is based on nurses' ability to practice within the context of the addictions nursing scope and standards of practice, the American Nursing Association's Code of Ethics, and the International Nurses Society on Addiction's (IntNSA) core curriculum. Addictions nurses can practice in many different care settings and across all nursing specialties.

Why do nurses become certified?

Nurses obtain certification for personal and professional reasons. For example, some nurses work for organizations that require certification, and many agencies offer higher salaries to certified nurses. Other nurses believe that having the certification and its credentials help to legitimize their practice and demonstrate their expertise in the field of addictions nursing. Some nurses become certified because they want to be part of a unique association of nurses who boldly celebrate their specialization in addictions nursing.

How do I know which certification is best for me?

The Certified Addiction Registered Nurse (CARN) is for RNs who have a minimum of 2,000 hours (one year) of nursing experience related to addictions as an RN. The Certified Addiction Registered Nurse – Advance Practice (CARN-AP) is for RNs who hold a Master's degree in Nursing. For both certifications, nurses may work in a variety of positions including clinical, administrative, teaching, private practice, consulting, counseling, or research roles that are addiction related. Full eligibility criteria for the CARN and CARN-AP certifications are below:

Requirements for the CARN:

- 1. RN License.** Candidates must provide evidence that they hold a current, full, and unrestricted license* as a registered nurse (RN) in the United States, its territories, or Canada. The candidate must hold full and unrestricted licenses in all jurisdictions where they practice. Non-US or Canadian nurses who meet eligibility criteria are also invited to apply for the CARN examination and **must submit evidence of equivalent licensure as an RN in the US or provide evaluations from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Students (CGFNS) or World Education Service (WES)**, which provide evidence of equivalent licensure as RN.
- 2. Clinical Experience.** The applicant must complete documentation (enclosed) verifying a minimum of 2,000 hours (one year) of nursing experience related to addictions as an RN in a staff, administrative, teaching, private practice, consultation, counseling, or research capacity. **These hours are only valid if they have been accrued within three years of your application submission.** This information must be detailed on the enclosed application and signed by a direct supervisor as verification.
- 3. Continuing Education Contact Hours.** Candidates must have completed a total of thirty (30) hours of continuing education related to addictions nursing and acquired

within three (3) years of your application submission. Contact hours must be detailed on the provided application page. Fifty-one percent of the hours must be specific to addictions nursing, while the remaining hours must be related to addictions nursing, (e.g., HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, pain management, etc.). Submitting contact hour certificates with your application is not required, but certificate documents must be made available if requested by the testing agency or certification board.

Requirements for the CARN-AP:

- 1. RN License.** Candidates must provide evidence that they hold a current, full, and unrestricted license* as a registered nurse (RN) in the United States, its territories, or Canada. The candidate must hold full and unrestricted licenses in all jurisdictions where they practice. Non-US or Canadian nurses who meet eligibility criteria are also invited to apply for the CARN examination and **must submit evidence of equivalent licensure as an RN in the US or provide evaluations from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Students (CGFNS) or World Education Service (WES)**, which provide evidence of equivalent licensure as RN.
- 2. Scholastic Documentation.** Candidates must provide evidence that you hold a Master's degree (or higher) in nursing.
- 3. Verification of Clinical Hours.** Candidates must complete documentation (enclosed) verifying a minimum of 500 hours in advanced clinical practice. These hours must be supervised, direct client contact hours spent working with individuals and families impacted by addictions and/or dual diagnoses. **Hours must be obtained within the last four years to be considered.** Hours may be earned during the candidate's Masters' program or post-Master's.
 - During Master's:** If part or all the required hours were obtained during a Master's program, the candidate must attach a transcript and highlight the itemized experience hours they wish to submit for consideration. **All experience hours must be in addictions/dual diagnosis and obtained within the last 4 years.**
 - Post-Master's:** If part or all the required hours were obtained post-Master's, the candidate must have the enclosed Verification Form completed by a direct supervisor. The Verification Form may be photocopied for distribution to multiple supervisors if needed. All experience hours must meet the above criteria under "Verification of Clinical Hours".
- 4. Verification of 1,500 Additional Hours.** In addition to the 500 directly supervised clinical hours described above, the candidate must have a minimum of 1,500 hours of nursing experience in addiction as an Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) within the last three years prior to submitting the examination application. The hours may have been worked in an administrative, teaching, private practice, consultation, counseling, or research capacity.
- 5. Continuing Education Contact Hours.** Candidates must have completed 45 contact hours of approved continuing education in addictions **within the three years prior to submitting the exam application.** Fifty-one percent of the hours must be specific to

addictions nursing, while the remaining hours must be related to addictions nursing (e.g., HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, pain management, etc.). Submitting contact hour certificates with your application is not required, but certificate documents must be made available if requested by the testing agency or certification board.

***ALTERNATIVE TO DISCIPLINE POLICY:** ANCB recognizes the positive impact nurses in recovery bring to the specialty of addiction nursing. If a nurse is engaged with an Alternative to Discipline program, the following stipulations must be met to sit for the CARN or CARN-AP exam:

1. If a candidate's nursing license is surrendered or if the nurse has violated the agreement within their state for an Alternative to Discipline program for a substance use disorder-related issue, the applicant will be found ineligible to sit for the exam.
2. If the candidate has a license with restrictions and is currently in a monitoring program, a letter from the monitoring program will be required before they may sit for the exam. The monitoring program letter will need to support that the candidate's nursing license is active, the applicant is complying with their state's Alternative to Discipline program agreement, and that the monitoring program supports the candidate sitting for the exam.
3. All candidates will be expected to abide by their state nursing practice regulations and the laws of their state regarding alternative to discipline programs.

Can I hold both certifications?

No. You may only hold one certification. The CARN-AP may only be held by those with a Master's degree in nursing (MSN). However, one may have an MSN and hold a CARN.

Can a CARN provide counseling services and bill for them independently or do they have to be working under another provider?

This is determined by the Nurse Practice Act of each state as well as a given clinical facility's regulations, so this will vary depending on your practice location.

Where can I get a copy of the Scope and Standards of Addiction Nursing?

You may order it from www.nursingworld.org [Addictions Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, 3rd Edition, 2021](#)

How do I become certified as a CARN or CARN-AP?

Interested candidates must complete the certification process as delineated in the ANCB Candidate Handbook. This includes filling out the application and providing proof of licensure, continuing education contact hours, and work hours. For more information, visit the ANCB website (<https://ancb45.wildapricot.org/Certification>) or the Center for Nursing and Testing (C-NET) (<https://www.cnetnurse.com/addictions-nursing>).

Where can I find the application for certification?

The application can be found on the certification page of our website:

<https://www.cnetnurse.com/addictions-nursing>.

How is the exam scored, and do I get a score report?

Scores are available at the testing facility immediately after completing your exam. A total correct percentage is provided to candidates who pass the exam; **a passing score is defined as answering 75% of the exam questions correctly.** Candidates who do not pass will receive a total correct percentage on the exam overall and sub-scores of correct percentages in the major subject areas covered in the exam.

Where can I find the exam application periods and deadlines for application submission?

The application, examination registration deadlines can be found in the ANCB Candidate Handbook on ANCB site or the testing site: **CNET Please allow 3-4 weeks for your application to be processed.** There are no deadlines for submission and testing is offered year-round. Exam permits reflecting a 90-day testing window will be mailed to eligible candidates. Candidates will have 90 days to schedule and take the exam from the date that the permit is issued.

What can I used to prepare for the exam?

The most up-to-date list of references for the CARN exam is available here:

<https://ancb45.wildapricot.org/resources/Documents/references-carn.pdf>

The most up-to-date list of references for the CARN-AP exam is available here:

<https://ancb45.wildapricot.org/resources/Documents/references-carnap.pdf>

The Scope and Standards of Addiction Nursing 3rd Edition 2021 can be purchased from the ANCB online store or from the ANA at www.nursebooks.org

Can I apply for certification before I complete nursing school?

No. You must document that you have met the criteria, including your nursing degree, and have 2,000 hours of experience as an RN before you can apply.

What continuing education courses can I use towards the certification or my re-certification?

For the CARN, at least 51% of the required 30 continuing education (CE) hours for initial certification and the 60 CEs required for re-certification must be directly related to Addictions Nursing. This includes addictions, substances, process addictions, addictions in health care professionals, addiction psychiatry, and the treatment and/or prevention of addictions. The remaining 49% of CEs for initial certification and re-certification must be in topics related to addictions nursing, such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, medically oriented pain management, pharmacology, managing symptoms of addictions, and therapies used in addictions (motivational interviewing, etc.).

For the CARN-AP, at least 51% of the 45 CEs required for initial certification and the 80 CEs required for re-certification must be directly related to Addictions Nursing. This includes addictions, substances, process addictions, addictions in health care professionals, addiction psychiatry, and the treatment and/or prevention of addictions. The remaining 49% of CEs for initial certification and re-certification must be in topics related to addictions nursing, such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, medically oriented pain management, pharmacology, managing symptoms of addictions, and therapies used in addictions (motivational interviewing, etc.).

Contact hours must belong to one of the following categories:

1. Contact hours approved by an ANCC-accredited or approved provider.
2. Continuing Medical Education (CME) hours. One CME1.0 contact hours.
3. Academic courses related to addiction nursing.
4. Independent study approved for CEs (e.g., self-study and journals) may be used for 100% of contact hours required for certification renewal.
5. If a nurse is certified in more than one specialty, contact hours may be used for both specialties if the majority (at least 51%) of the submitted CEs are directly related to their area of certification.
6. Initial certification for ACLS and PALS cannot be used for contact hours for the CARN/CARN-AP unless new content is covered (credit can only be approved for the new content). BLS and basic courses do not meet the criteria for continuing education and therefore are not eligible.
7. Nurses enrolled in graduate-level courses must identify how their coursework is related to addictions nursing to qualify as CEs.

What are good sources for Continuing Education Contact Hours?

- Free CE credits can be found at: pcssnow.org, or addictiontraining.org,
- For a small membership fee free CE credits: addictionnursing.org

Many nursing journals have addictions courses (e.g., Journal of Addictions Nursing, American Journal of Nursing, RN, and Journal of Nurse Practitioners). CEs may also be found online via, NetCE.com, WesternSchools.com, MedScape.com, Quantum Units Education Online, ContinuingEducation.com, ce.nurse.com. Many other sources of CEs can be found by searching the web. A running list of CE sources is available on C-NET's website: <https://www.cnetnurse.com/addictions-nursing-ce-sites>.

How long is my certification valid?

The CARN and CARN-AP certifications are valid for a period of four years. To re-certify after four years, candidates must complete the re-certification application.

How do I obtain a receipt of my payment for the exam or re-certification?

Candidates can request an official receipt from C-NET by emailing info@cnetnurse.com. They must include their name, the test for which they registered, and their testing period.

Are IntNSA and ANCB the same organization?

IntNSA is a professional, educational, and membership organization offering educational opportunities, conferences, and an academic journal. ANCB was founded in 1989 by IntNSA to support the certification of addiction nurses and has been autonomous since 2014 due to accreditation standards requiring such autonomy of certifying organizations. ANCB offers the only national-level certification for Addictions Nursing.

How often are the certification exams offered?

Testing is available year-round at nearly 300 locations across the U.S. Once C-NET has approved a candidate's application for certification, they will receive an exam permit with instructions on how to select a testing location and time for the exam within their testing period.

Who should I contact with questions about the certifications, applications, or test administration?

C-NET handles all questions regarding applications and exam administration. Please visit <http://www.cnetnurse.com/contact-us/> or call 800-463-0786 (ext. 11) to reach them.

Can I mail my application for certification and/or re-certification?

Yes. Correspondence regarding the certifications must be mailed to:

Addictions Nursing Certifications Board (ANCB)

c/o C-NET

35 Journal Square, Suite 901

Jersey City, NJ, 07306

If I register for the exam and then am unable to take it, what are my options?

You cannot transfer testing periods or receive a refund once you have submitted your application. You must provide C-NET with documentation of any extenuating circumstances (e.g., a death in your family, a hospitalization, etc.) that prevent you from taking the exam during your originally set exam period. C-NET will evaluate and make decisions on these special circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

If my certification lapses, do I have to re-take the exam?

Yes. If you allow your certification to lapse, you may have a three-month grace period during which you must apply to re-take the certification exam. You may not use your CARN/CARN-AP credentials after your certification expires.

I'm getting ready to retire. Does ANCB offer a retired status for the certification credential?

Yes. To apply, the certified individual must complete the application for Retired Certification Status and submit a copy of their government-issued photo ID. Applicants who qualify for Retired Certification Status must have previously held their CARN/CARN-AP for at least two consecutive certification periods (eight uninterrupted years) and must not be actively practicing as nurses. Applications for Retired Certification Status must be received prior to the certification's expiration date (no later than the last day of the month in which your certification will expire). If approved, the applicant may use the Retired Certification Status to acknowledge a previously held active credential. If the applicant chooses to return to practice

and wishes to hold the active credential, they must meet the current eligibility criteria and certify by taking the examination. To obtain a Retired Status application, please contact C-NET at info@cnetnurse.com.