



NBCSN
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Does your school district recognize the National Board for Certification Nationally Certified School Nurse (NCSN) credential?

A number of school districts **do** in a variety of ways. Some districts

- pay for candidates to take the exam;
- some provide a one time stipend for passing the exam;
- some provide a yearly stipend for NCSNs.

All Nationally Certified School Nurses **should** be recognized for this validation of their expertise. NBCSN has an electronic Justification Packet for you to use to work with your district to recognize the NCSN credential.

In this packet, there are a number of documents you can use to provide justification for district payment to take the exam, provide a one-time stipend for passing the exam, or provide a yearly stipend for NCSNs.

- Background Information-be prepared to discuss why national certification is important:
 - The 2020 *Journal of School Nursing* Article **U.S. School Nursing Job Analysis** *The Job Task Analysis (JTA) is performed every 5 years to determine the tasks and knowledge relevant to today's school nursing in the United States;*
 - Advocating for RN Specialty Certification *The Board for Certification of Emergency Nurses advocated for acceptance of specialty nursing certification for licensure continuing education credits;*
 - An American Academy of Nursing article on "the vital role of school nurses in ensuring the health of our nation's youth;
 - NASN Position Statement-Education, Licensure and, Certification of School Nurses;
 - The American Board for Specialty Nursing Certification Infographic;
 - Excerpts from the National Academy of Medicine *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* which can be downloaded for free at <https://www.nap.edu/download/12956> *the recommendations and actions for school health and school nursing services.*
- Information you might want to provide to your employer in a written request for funding or during a meeting to provide information.
 - American Federation of Teachers Position Statement on School Nurse Certification;
 - An informational document "About Certification and Credentialing" *can be used for employers or other funders as an explanation of NBCSN Certification;*
 - A document outlining the eligibility requirements for NBCSN certification;
 - Certification Objectives – *the practice objectives of a Nationally Certified School Nurse.*
- Strategic Analysis Action Plan Documents
 - SBAR Analysis document *Use this to develop your plan;*
 - SBAR Worksheet *Use this to document your plan for presentation;*
 - SBAR Sample *Sample plan for you to follow.*

Other funding sources for **exam fees** might be your PTO/PTA, scholarships from your state school nurse organization, or NASN.

Are you aware that at least 21 states allow the use of certification and recertification as continuing education for state RN licensure?

NBCSN's mission is to advance the health and learning of students, and wellness of the school community, through a rigorous national certification process for school nurses



About Certification and Credentialing:

The NCSN is a trademarked credential, granted to registered nurses who meet educational, employment, and other criteria, and who have successfully passed the national examination managed by the National Board for Certification of School Nurses (NBCSN). The NCSN process is accredited by the [American Board of Nursing Specialties](#), whose rigorous standards ensure that the credentialing process of the NBCSN meet or exceed industry standards for certification and that its examination is reflective of the knowledge expected of the proficient school nurse.

In addition, professional school nurses credentialed by the NBCSN are required to document a minimum of 75 hours of continuing education in school health-related issues every five years, or retake the examination, and to continue to meet employment criteria, in order to maintain the use of the NCSN credential.

While research is limited in the area of the value of nursing certification, initial studies by the ABNS using value statements indicate that certification validates a specialized knowledge and indicates a level of clinical competence and the attainment of a practice standard. ^[1] "The weighted NCSN examination gives surety that the successful candidate demonstrates excellence and experience in the areas of health appraisal, health problems and nursing management, health promotion and disease prevention, special health issues, and professional issues, including research." ^[2]

In all phases of the item development and examination review, the target is to utilize the exam format to validate the expectations of the certified school nurse, including:

- To practice safely, independently and proactively in the isolated non-health care environment,
- To apply and integrate broad areas of nursing and scientific knowledge, public health principles, and legal parameters to school populations,
- To interact and provide leadership within the broader community to promote family-centered care,
- To work with school and community stakeholders to assess, plan and evaluate community interventions for the health problems of school populations, including emergency preparations,
- To advocate effectively in the school and community setting for the health and education needs of all students, including those with physical and mental disabilities,
- To participate in research, revise and initiate policies that reflect best practices, and
- To utilize resources to become knowledgeable about national standards of practice and emerging issues of concern for the health and welfare of students and staff within the educational arena.

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For employers, certification increases consumer confidence and indicates professional growth among its employees. ³ Physicians and hospitals have identified this trend and included the certification of its professional employees as criteria to achieve "Magnet Status" for recognition in the health care industry. While the education community is quick to support the continued professional growth of its teaching staff, for the most part, has been slow to acknowledge the accomplishments of its other licensed and specialized staff, including school nurses.

For most school nurses, the challenge to attain the NCSN credential is a voluntary, personal and professional goal. Most employers do not offer incentives for certification, but some organizations do promote and recognize certification through increasing salary and reimbursing exam fees or continuing education. These district or state rewards are closely tied to teacher compensation policies. Institutional recognition and permission to display the certification credential on a business card or name tag rank among the top three rewards described by the certified school nurse.

For information related to recognition and rewards for certified school nurses, please contact info@nbcnsn.org.

1. American Board of Nursing Specialties [Value of Certification Survey, 2006](#).
2. Dot Warner, NBCSN Board member in response to ABNS Accreditation request for information re: differentiation for nationally certified school nurse. March 2008.
3. American Board of Nursing Specialties, [Value of Certification Survey, 2006](#).



<https://www.nbcsn.org/ncsn/eligibility/>

ELIGIBILITY TO TAKE THE NCSN EXAM

Eligible candidates must

1. Submit a copy of their license as a registered nurse (RN) in one of the United States.
2. Submit an academic transcript or proof of current certification, demonstrating attainment of one of the following:
 - A bachelor's degree or higher **in nursing** or the equivalent in other countries
 - OR
 - Current certification by NBCSN as an NCSN.
3. Meet the clinical practice requirements of a minimum of 1,000 hours that have been worked within the three years prior to taking the test. 1000 hours is roughly equivalent to the hours worked by a full-time school nurse who works at least 6 hours/day for a school year of 180 days documented by a note on letterhead from your supervisor or district official. See below for more information about clinical practice requirements.
4. Complete the online application to take the certification examination for school nurses.
5. Pay the required fee.

ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

1. Baccalaureate degrees must be granted from programs, which are accredited by national, regional, or state accrediting boards of higher education through the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or listed as an accredited program by the U.S. Department of Education.
2. Registered nurses enrolled in Masters Programs (RN-MSN) that do not confer bachelor's degrees may not apply to take the NCSN Examination until completion of the graduate program.
3. Candidates with foreign educational degrees must submit validated transcripts with both general academic and professional licensure evaluation reports from an accredited foreign educational credential evaluation service indicating the degree is equivalent to an accredited program in the United States, such as those with memberships in the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES). Clinical Practice Requirements for Certification

Eligible clinical practice in school nursing means actively employed or contracted to provide a **direct** or **indirect** professional contribution to the health and education of students and their families in public or private school settings.

1. **Direct clinical practice** in school nursing is defined as involvement in the nursing process in a school setting where the nursing actions and judgments are focused on a particular student, family, school community, or group of students or their families where there is continuing professional responsibility and accountability for the outcomes of these actions.

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2. **Indirect clinical practice** in school nursing is defined as involvement that:
 1. includes clinical supervision of school nurses, education, and clinical supervision of baccalaureate/master's nursing students in school health, administration of school health services, research, consultation, or other engagement in the field of school nursing that contributes to the specialty's body of knowledge or enhances the quality of school nursing practice;
 2. entails continuing professional responsibility and accountability for the outcomes of the involvement. Compare with Handbook

Not eligible as clinical practice in school nursing includes:

1. one-to-one nursing as the nurse's sole responsibility within a school;
2. employment in the direct sales, marketing or distribution of school nursing-related products or services in pharmaceutical, technology or other school health-related industries;
3. community health screenings;
4. work in a camp setting;
5. and jobs unrelated to school nursing.

ELIGIBILITY VERSUS READINESS TO TAKE THE EXAM

The NBCSN board advises that eligibility should not be confused with readiness. While some school nurses may be prepared to take the exam after meeting the minimum eligibility criteria, others may require more clinical experience and exam preparation.

Please see the [exam preparation page](#) for suggested approaches to studying. Factors that may affect an individual's readiness include:

- level of education
- formal coursework in school nursing and education systems
- nursing experience prior to school nursing (e.g., child and adolescent primary care and public health versus adult inpatient nursing)
- exposure to child health in age ranges outside of school assignment
- continuing education
- supervision by a school nurse administrator
- on the job reference materials
- formal or informal mentoring
- professional development and professional leadership provided within the school district and state.

Education, Licensure, and Certification of School Nurses

Position Statement

NASN POSITION

It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) that every school-age child should have access to a registered professional school nurse (hereinafter referred to as the school nurse) who has a *minimum* of a baccalaureate degree in nursing from an accredited college or university and is licensed as a registered nurse through a board of nursing. These requirements constitute minimal preparation needed to practice at the entry level of school nursing (American Nurses Association [ANA] & NASN, 2017). Additionally, NASN (n.d.) supports state school nurse certification/licensure and endorses national certification of school nurses through the National Board for Certification of School Nurses.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

To respond to the increasing demands for public health nursing, the American Academy of Nursing (Kub et al., 2017) and the National Advisory Council of Nurse Education and Practice (2016) recommends that nurses attain advanced education. The *Public Health Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice* states that the minimum preparation for beginning professional nursing practice in public health is a baccalaureate degree in nursing (ANA, 2013). School nursing is founded in public health nursing and is defined as follows:

[A] specialized practice of nursing [which] protects and promotes student health, facilitates optimal development, and advances academic success. School nurses, grounded in ethical and evidence-based practice, are the leaders who bridge health care and education, provide care coordination, advocate for quality student-centered care, and collaborate to design systems that allow individuals and communities to develop their full potentials (ANA & NASN, 2017).

School nursing is further outlined in the *Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice* emphasizing evidence-based, clinically competent, quality care (NASN, 2016). A nursing baccalaureate degree best prepares nurses for school nursing practice, including the ability to lead school health programs, advocate for students and families, and provide individual and population-based care (ANA & NASN, 2017).

To enter professional registered nurse practice, nursing graduates must pass the National Council Licensure Examination for the Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN). Licensure protects the public by indicating that a nurse successfully completed an examination that demonstrated a minimal level of competency to practice.

In addition to nursing licensure, post-baccalaureate education, including school nurse licensure or certification, may be required by state departments of education to practice school nursing. Specialty certification demonstrates expertise in a focused area of practice (Coelho, 2019). Requirements for state certification and the certifying bodies vary by individual state or territory in which a school nurse practices. In 1984, NASN developed a national certification examination and established the National Board for Certification of School Nurses (2018) to promote and recognize quality practice in school nursing and to assure that certification criteria and examinations in school nursing are determined by school nurse experts.

Registered nurses in the specialty practice of school nursing require advanced skills to competently address the complex health needs of students within a school community setting (ANA & NASN, 2017). These skills are attained through a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in nursing and validated by specialized certification in school nursing.

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All position statements from the National Association of School Nurses will automatically expire five years after publication unless reaffirmed, revised, or retired at or before that time.

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RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION FOR SCHOOL NURSES AND OTHER SCHOOL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

WHEREAS, the National Board for the Certification of School Nurses (NBCSN) was formed in 1986 as an independently incorporated organization established for the purpose of developing and implementing the voluntary certification of school nurses, called Nationally Certified School Nurse (NCSN); and

WHEREAS, the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS), a nationally recognized accrediting body, granted endorsement to NBCSN in 2008, and ABNS is the standard setting body for specialty nursing certification programs and offers a very stringent and comprehensive accreditation process that meets or exceeds the standards of the certification industry; and

WHEREAS, NBCSN works in close collaboration with the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), the professional association for school nurses; and

WHEREAS, the professional scope and standards of practice for school nurses includes the following comprehensive domains:

Assessment: The school nurse collects comprehensive data pertinent to the child's health or situation.

Diagnosis: The school nurse analyzes the assessment data to determine the diagnosis and issues.

Outcomes Identification: The school nurse identifies expected outcomes for a plan individualized to the client or situation.

Planning: The school nurse develops a plan that prescribes strategies and alternatives to attain expected outcomes.

Implementation: The school nurse implements and documents the identified plan using evidence-based interventions and standard language or recognized terminology.

1. Coordination of care
2. Health teaching and health promotion
3. Consultation

Evaluation: The school nurse evaluates progress towards attainment of outcomes.

Quality of Practice: The school nurse systematically enhances the quality and effectiveness of nursing practice.

4. Demonstrates quality by documenting the application of the nursing process in a responsible, accountable and ethical manner.
5. Incorporates new knowledge into practice.
6. Participates in quality improvement practices.
7. Obtains and maintains professional certification.

Education: The school nurse attains knowledge and competency that reflects current nursing practice.

8. Participates in educational activities regularly.
9. Provides continuing education.
10. Seeks experiences that reflect current practice.
11. Uses knowledge and skills appropriate to practice or situation.

Professional Practice Evaluation: The school nurse evaluates one's own nursing practice in relation to professional practice standards and guidelines, relevant statutes, rules and regulations.

12. Practice reflects application of current knowledge.

13. Provides care that is age appropriate in a culturally and sensitive manner.

14. Engages in self evaluation on a regular basis.

15. Participates in formal or informal evaluation process or peer review.

Collegiality: The school nurse interacts with and contributes to the professional development of peers and school personnel as colleagues.

16. Shares knowledge and skills and provides feedback with peers and colleagues.

17. Contributes to a supportive and healthy work environment.

18. Participates in appropriate local, state and national professional associations in a membership or leadership capacity.

Collaboration: The school nurse collaborates with the client, the family, school staff and others in the conduct of school nursing practice.

19. Communicates the school nurse's role regarding client care and the delivery of that care.

20. Collaborates in creating documented healthcare plan that is focused on outcomes and decisions related to care and delivery of services.

21. Partners with others to effect positive outcomes or change.

22. Documents referrals, including provisions for continuity of care.

Ethics: The school nurse integrates provisions in all areas of practice

23. Maintains client confidentiality.

24. Serves as a client advocate assisting clients in developing skills for self-advocacy.

25. Seeks available resources to formulate ethical decisions.

26. Practices self-care, managing stress and connecting to self and others.

Research: The school nurse integrates research findings into practice.

27. Utilizes the best available evidence, including research findings to guide practice decisions.

28. Actively participates in research activities:

a. Identifies clinical problems specific to research.

b. Participates in a formal committee or program.

c. Participates or conducts research.

d. Contributes to school nursing literature.

Resource Utilization: The school nurse considers factors related to safety, effectiveness, cost and impact on practice in the planning and delivery of school nursing services.

29. Evaluates factors such as safety, effectiveness, availability of cost and benefits and impact on practice.

30. Assists the client and family in identifying and securing appropriate

and available services.

31. Delegation of appropriate tasks and assignments.

32. Assists client and school community in becoming informed consumers.

Leadership: The school nurse provides leadership in the professional practice and the profession.

33. Works to create and maintain healthy work environments.

34. Teaches others to proceed by mentoring and other strategies.

35. Willingness to create a culture in which risk taking is not only safe but expected.

36. Serves in key roles in the school and work settings by participating in committees, councils and administrative teams.

Program Management: The school nurse manages school health services.

37. Conducts school health needs assessments to identify current health problems and identify the need for new programs.

38. Develops and implements needed health programs using a program planning process.

39. Develops and implements health policies and procedures.

40. Participates in environmental and health activities; and

WHEREAS, this NCSN certification further validates the school nurse's ability to demonstrate competency at the mastery level and advanced skills that include the ability to:

practice safely, independently and proactively in an isolated, non-healthcare environment;

apply and integrate broad areas of nursing and scientific knowledge, public health principles and legal parameters to school populations;

work with school and community stakeholders to assess, plan and evaluate community interventions for the health problems of school populations, including emergency preparations;

advocate in the school setting for the health and educational needs of all students, including those with physical and mental disabilities;

participate in research, revise and initiate policies that reflect best practices;

utilize resources to become knowledgeable about national standards of practice and emerging issues of concern for the health and welfare of students and staff in the educational arena; and

WHEREAS, the NCSN not only delivers health services to students, but also participates in teaching around a range of issues such as infection control, the health implications of drug, alcohol and tobacco use, sexually transmitted diseases and other topics based on the individual or population-based needs of the students and staff; and

WHEREAS, there are other professionals, such as social workers, advanced practice nurses, counselors, therapists, etc., providing health services in the school setting, who also become certified (or have certification) within their own discipline to increase their professional expertise in child health issues and who have their own unique professional practice standards; and

WHEREAS, like other certified professionals in schools, such as teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, speech and language therapists certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, school psychologists certified by the National Association of School Psychologists, school counselors certified by the National Board for Certified Counselors, and others; school nurses certified by the NBCSN, or with advanced practice certification, are determined to be highly competent by their professional association and should be recognized, rewarded and compensated in the same way for their ability to demonstrate competence at the mastery level of practice; and

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers affirm its support of NBCSN certification, as well as other appropriate certifications, as a means of defining, promoting and recognizing high professional standards for school nurses and all school health professionals as a major development in the professionalization of their practice; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT and its affiliates encourage and support all school nurses and school health professionals who seek NBCSN certification or other appropriate certifications; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT and its affiliates, through legislative action and collective bargaining, work to make the costs of attaining appropriate certifications affordable through reimbursing fees; and

RESOLVED that the AFT and its affiliates support the concept of

negotiating salary differentials for school health professionals who attain advanced levels of education or additional certifications in their field of practice, including school nurses who become NBCSN certified, and that AFT devise and share information on productive collective bargaining and other strategies for doing so; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT and its affiliates work to encourage federal and state funding, school finance, and other incentive policies, to enable each school district to have the same means to develop, attract and reward all certified providers of school health services, so that all students and schools benefit from that expertise.

(2010)

Please note that a newer resolution, or portion of a resolution, may have superseded an earlier resolution on the same subject. As a result, with the exception of resolutions adopted at our most recent AFT convention, resolutions do not necessarily reflect current AFT policies.

ABOUT US

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PROMOTING THE MEANING AND VALUE OF NCSN CERTIFICATION

EASY-TO-USE STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATING THE WIDER COMMUNITY

We invite everyone to implement the following easy-to-use strategies for educating the wider community about the meaning and value of NCSN certification-to both you and to our stakeholders (school nurses, faculty, school administrators, school boards, parents, and legislators).

When you receive notification of certification or recertification:

1. Share your NCSN certification/recertification letter with school administrator(s) to highlight your accomplishment, the rigorous requirements for certification and the equivalency of NCSN with other national certification programs for nursing specialties.
2. Display your NCSN certificate in a prominent place.
3. Write a short article for your school newsletter(s) announcing that you have earned certification or recertification.
4. Write a press release about your accomplishment and send it to your local newspaper.
5. Use NCSN certification to support your request for a salary differential and/or promotion.

In your daily practice:

1. Have your credentials printed on your name badge (e.g., BSN, RN, NCSN).
2. Use your credentials whenever you sign your name (charting and sending communication to family members, faculty and staff).
3. Print business cards with your credentials-and use them.
4. Wear your certification pin proudly every day.
5. Introduce yourself to students and their families both as a registered nurse and as a nationally certified school nurse.
 1. You can say, “My name is _____, and I’m an RN and a certified school nurse.”
6. Give a presentation to your parent teacher association to raise awareness of the knowledge and experience needed to become nationally certified in school nursing and outline the benefits to students and the school community.
7. Offer to provide educational presentations that highlight school nurse knowledge and expertise (faculty development, school nurse development, etc.).

To help your colleagues to become NCSNs:

1. Offer to help your colleagues study for the NCSN certification examination.
2. Know and share the eligibility requirements to take the exam.
3. Encourage and support colleagues to earn their BSN.

Additional Resource: Suggested Sound Bites



School nursing is a nationally recognized nursing specialty. How often has a student, family member, school administrator, or colleague asked, "What does certification mean?" And how often have you wished you had just the right phrase to respond?

Consider using these phrases when asked, "What does certification mean?"

1. Thanks for asking. It means I've invested time and effort to demonstrate my expertise in school nursing."
2. "NCSN is recognized as a nationally accredited credential that validates my specialized knowledge and expertise as a school nurse."
3. I've met the highest national standards for school nursing care."
4. "Professional recognition of expertise in my nursing specialty."
5. "Recognition of my professional commitment to lifelong learning and quality care."
6. "I've met nationally recognized standards for providing excellence in school nursing care."
7. "I've taken an extra step to demonstrate my commitment to providing the best possible care for our students and school community."

If you have any strategies for gaining recognition that you have found particularly effective, or have any favorite answers for this question, please e-mail or post them to us so we can share them with your NCSN peers across the country:

- **Email:** info@nbcnsn.org
- **Twitter:** [@NCSNBoard](https://twitter.com/NCSNBoard)

Thank you!





Certification Objectives

Expectations of the Certified School Nurse The Nationally Certified School Nurse (NCSN) is expected:

- To practice safely, independently, and proactively in the isolated **non-healthcare** environment,
- To apply and integrate broad areas of nursing and scientific knowledge, public health principles, and legal parameters to school populations,
- To interact and provide leadership within the broader community to promote family-centered care,
- To work with school and community stakeholders to assess, plan and evaluate community interventions for the health problems of school populations, including emergency preparations,
- To advocate effectively in the school and community setting for the health and education needs of all students, including those with physical and mental disabilities,
- To participate in research, revise, and initiate policies that reflect best practices, and
- To utilize resources to become knowledgeable about national standards of practice and emerging issues of concern for the health and welfare of students and staff within the educational arena.