

Take Your Emergency Department to the Next Level with Board Certified Emergency Nurses

A Special Report for ED Leaders and Hospital Administrators



Nationally Recognized

Professional Practice

Better Patient Outcomes

Enhanced Collaboration

Anticipates Hazards & Promotes Safety

High Degree of Accuracy & Ethics

Greater Self-Efficacy

Critical Thinking & Superior Judgment

Advanced Skills & Expertise

Validated Specialty Knowledge



Prepared by the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN)

"Certification is the formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes."

"Specialty nursing certification is the standard by which the public recognizes quality nursing care."

- American Board of Nursing Specialties

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Executive Summary

On a good day, the emergency department (ED) is an arena of organized chaos. Your ED needs to effectively handle whatever comes through the doors and nurses are your front line. Because of the central role nurses play, optimizing their performance is critical to your success.

This white paper describes an important choice you can make concerning your emergency nursing staff that will:

- Elevate the performance and quality of your nurses in a consistent, reliable and cost-conscious way,
- Increase the satisfaction and engagement of your nurses,
- Enhance the overall effectiveness of your entire ED team, and
- Contribute to better patient outcomes.

Specifically, this report describes why it is imperative ED leaders support board certification for their emergency nurses. Among the substantial evidence demonstrating the value of nursing specialty certification is a 2017 large-scale study that strongly correlates emergency nursing specialty certification with **greater nursing self-efficacy and expertise, greater career satisfaction and superior technical performance, accuracy and ethics.**¹

The report also includes commentary from ED administrators whose hospitals and health systems are reaping the benefits of supporting certification for their ED nurses. Finally, the paper concludes with information about an easy-to-administer and cost-saving solution that encourages and facilitates board certification.

Administrator **in the Middle**



The Emergency Department is the hospital's front door. A good experience in the ED can mean repeat non-emergent patronage. Just one bad experience can mean losing a patient's business, and that of their family, possibly forever.

- Over half of the 35.4 million annual inpatient admissions in the U.S. begin in the ED.²
- More than 5x as many ED visits are treated and released from the ED as are admitted to the same hospital.²

ED administrators manage all the same relationships, processes and issues as their administrative peers. Yet the challenges ED leaders and independent freestanding center directors encounter on any given day in health care's most unpredictable, high-risk, and high-volume setting are often not well understood. Board certified nurses can be a valuable and resourceful ally.

What Patients **Expect and Deserve**

Patients and their families expect and deserve the best care you can deliver. As an administrator, your ultimate goal is to optimize patient outcomes and the patient experience. Because nurses have more contact with patients than other caregivers and provide the lion's share of patient care, they are a major driver of quality, safety, and patient experience outcomes.³

Today's health care consumers are savvier and more educated than ever. They want excellent care delivered by people who are kind, caring and compassionate. They want the best value for the dollar. And, they often have a choice where they can go. When choosing providers and facilities, consumers are seeking out standards by which they can make comparisons such as hospital ratings, safety grades and other performance- and value-based indicators like those offered by CMS's Hospital Compare.

A Harris Poll conducted on behalf of the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses found 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.***⁴

Patients trust nurses. Therefore, it is essential that you equip your nurses to deliver on that trust.

For 16 consecutive years, ***nurses have been ranked the most trusted profession.*** According to Gallup's annual poll on honesty and ethical standards, nurses topped the list of 22 professions again in 2017 with 82% of Americans describing nurses' ethics as "very high" or "high."⁵

What You Need in an ED Nurse

Knowledge

While safe, high-quality care is important for every patient, nowhere are specialized knowledge and skills, critical thinking and self-efficacy needed more than in the dynamic and fluid emergency setting.⁶

Confidence

When it comes to the emergency department, you never know who is going to come through the doors. Your nurses need to know the most current evidence-based practices across the emergency spectrum and be prepared to assess and manage patients with conditions ranging from minor to critically life-threatening. You count on your nurses to rise to the occasion around the clock regardless of the patient volume.

Critical Thinking

You rely on your ED nurses to rapidly and accurately assess patients, make critical decisions about immediate actions to be taken, monitor for changes and recognize when additional interventions are needed, anticipate patient and physician needs, document accurately and completely, communicate and coordinate with their team, and all the while, compassionately inform and educate patients and their families.

Quality

Board certification is a recognized way to ensure clinical competence.^{7,8} The continuous validation of knowledge and expertise that comes with certification empowers and sustains nurses' ability to perform at the very highest levels. ***The bottom line?*** When your ED nurses are board certified, you can have a higher level of confidence about the care being delivered on your watch.

Your ED physicians are board certified, so why not ensure your ED nurses are board certified too?

The Results Are In: What the Research Says

In one of the largest and most rigorous studies conducted in the emergency nursing realm¹, the CEN (Certified Emergency Nurse) credential was positively and significantly linked with *greater nursing self-efficacy, greater expertise, and superior technical performance, accuracy, and ethics as well as greater career success and satisfaction.*

The first-of-its-kind 2017 study, which focused exclusively on emergency nursing, included responses from nearly **9,000 certified and non-certified emergency RNs** and over **1,000 ED nurse supervisors**. Commissioned by the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing, the study examined outcomes of value to individual nurses and outcomes of value to employers.

Highlights of this study are featured on the next two pages.

What Supervisors Said

Certified ED Nurses Rate Higher on Every Area of Nursing Expertise¹

Nurse supervisors rated emergency nurses with a current CEN significantly higher than their non-CEN-certified peers on **all seven areas of emergency nursing expertise** evaluated:

- clinical foundations
- major trauma
- medical and surgical emergencies
- disease management
- special patient populations
- psychiatric and behavioral emergencies
- professional practice

Certified ED Nurses Have Superior Technical Performance, Accuracy and Ethics¹

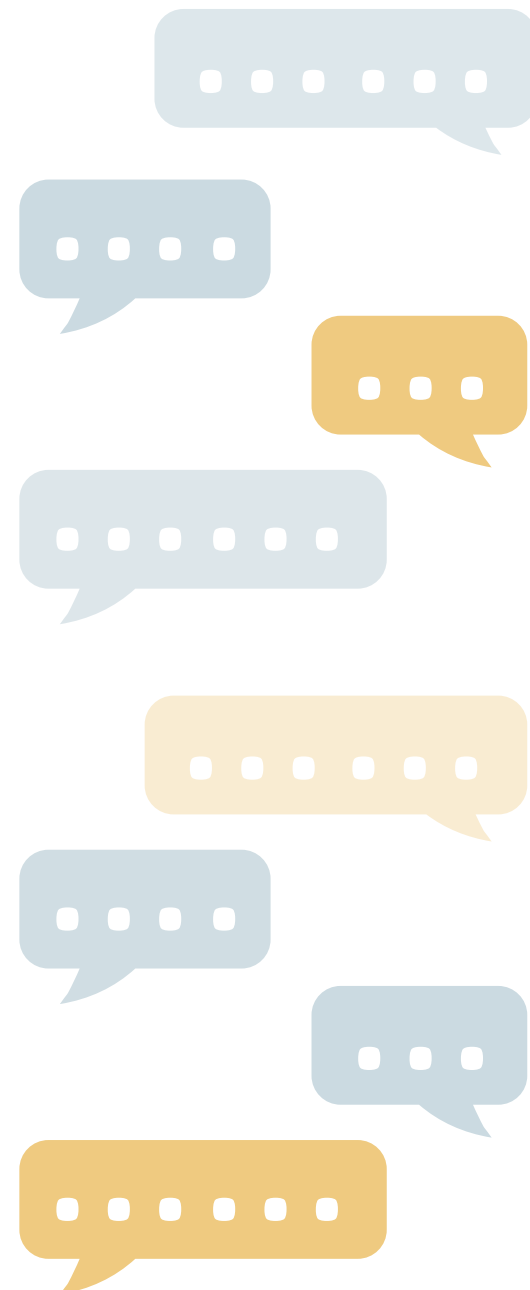
Supervisor responses also demonstrated significant positive relationships between CEN certification and multiple aspects of a nurse's **technical performance, accuracy and ethical behavior** including:

- Performs patient care with a high degree of accuracy.
- Efficiently and effectively performs the key technical aspects of her/his job within the healthcare team.
- Anticipates hazards and promotes safety in patient care.
- Remains current on new technical developments related to her/his job.
- Exhibits ethical behavior and concern for accuracy and truthfulness of information.

Board Certification for Emergency Nurses is Important¹

Supervisors agreed or strongly agreed on the value of certification and the CEN credential:

- 92%** It is important to have professional, certified ER nurses in my organization.
- 93%** It is important for ER nurses to maintain their certification.
- 95%** The CEN is valuable to the ER nursing profession.



What **Nurses** Said

Being Certified Means Greater Self-Efficacy and Greater Career Success and Satisfaction¹

Even after controlling for level of education, years of experience, and other certifications, there was a significant positive relationship between having a current CEN and:

- Nursing self-efficacy
- Employability, higher annual pay and job advancement
- Career satisfaction

Being Certified Means Having Critical On-the-Job Knowledge and a Sense of Accomplishment and Pride¹

Emergency nurses who hold a current CEN said:

80% Being certified means being more likely to have the knowledge needed on the job.

90% Holding the CEN gives me a feeling of accomplishment and pride.



BCEN's 2017 study joins a considerable body of literature that demonstrates the intrinsic and extrinsic value of certification. Among the other recent research initiatives is a multidisciplinary effort to build the business case for a certified nurse workforce.⁹ Another relatively young but evolving and compelling area of inquiry is exploring the relationship between specialty nursing certification and patient outcomes.

What the **Research on Certification and Patient Outcomes** Says

Specialty certification is widely regarded as a contributor to improved patient outcomes.¹⁰⁻¹⁵

Multiple studies have demonstrated significant positive associations between nursing specialty certification and patient outcomes (see below). At the same time, some of these and other studies have also yielded some equivocal or mixed findings.^{16,17} Investigators are developing conceptual frameworks and standardized taxonomies to strengthen future research.^{16,18}

Statistically significant findings link certified nursing practice with positive patient outcomes including **lower total fall rates,^{11,19} lower rates of certain hospital-acquired infections,^{16,20} more accurate staging of pressure ulcers,¹⁴ increased symptom management,¹⁵ and shorter length of stay¹⁴** as well as **decreased odds of failure to rescue** and **decreased odds of death.¹³**

A landmark, large-scale study supports that certified nurses have a **higher aptitude for nurse surveillance,** with nurses reporting that certification enabled them to feel more confident in their ability to **detect complications** and **initiate early and prompt interventions,** as well as **more effectively communicate, collaborate** with other health providers, **experience fewer errors in patient care,** and receive **higher patient satisfaction ratings.¹⁰**

Take Your ED to the Next Level with Board Certified Nurses

Board certified emergency nurses are essential assets for every emergency department. Their skills and expertise make them a valued partner and ally.



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Reports from the Field: **Certification in Action**

ED leaders, freestanding center directors and hospital/health system executives who make specialty certification for their emergency nurses a priority are taking emergency care and institutional value to the next level for their patients and their families, their staff and their communities.

Here's what administrators and nurse leaders from two hospitals say about how supporting board certification for their nurses is transforming their EDs:



Houston Methodist Willowbrook Hospital, a Magnet® facility, has a 30-bed emergency department. From 2015 to 2017, Willowbrook doubled the number of board certified emergency nurses, from six to 12. Across Houston Methodist Hospital System's seven community hospitals, the number of certified ED nurses rose from 57 in 2015 to 91 in 2017, a 60 percent increase.

Joseph A. Hutchins, BSN, RN, CEN, CPEN
Director of Nursing, Emergency Services

LaToya R. Lockett, MHA/MBA, RN, CEN
Clinical Nurse Expert/Educator and RN IV, Emergency Services

Joseph: Supporting certification makes sense from many standpoints. It is the right thing to do because our patients deserve to know they are being cared for by a specialist and our nursing staff deserve to be recognized for their specialty. It also is the right thing to do from the organizational standpoint based on all the metrics that feed into that — whether that is internal and external customer satisfaction, value-based purchasing, or attracting the best employees.

Some will say it is a financial burden on their organization to support certification. The financial burden is nothing compared to the rewards to the profession and to the organization.

With specialty certification, we have seen our contamination rates start to drop, in part because we also rolled out contamination education. We have seen our adherence to our sepsis bundles increase. We have also seen awareness and drive to treat other core measures increase with the increase in number of certifications.

Organizations where I have worked that did not support certification had more “renters” in their staff than “owners.” Having more certified staff at this hospital and in this ED, I have seen more investment and interest in unit-based outcomes and patient-based outcomes.

LaToya: Certification helps with staff retention and helps staff be engaged. Certification is not just about passing the test. It is about professional growth and taking care of your community. I have seen increased confidence levels at the bedside. And I have seen better quality of care, where they can anticipate what is going on with their patients and where nurses become more critical thinkers.

The biggest benefit of having certified nurses on staff is reflected in what one of my nurses told me when she was studying for the CEN: “It’s the knowledge. I had an interesting case where I would have never thought my patient had a particular condition if I hadn’t been studying for my CEN.”

Joseph: Having a certified workforce is an appeal to the organizational branding at large and for the consumerism. You want to attract people who want to work for the best employer and if you are hiring the best employees, they know when they are hired by you they are part of the crème de la crème. When you set yourself apart as a specialist, consumers understand you have been deemed an expert in your field and the services you provide. When you have a knowledgeable workforce, physicians will want to send their patients to your facility and patients will want to be treated there.

Certification means financial gains and gains in satisfaction. The financial gain for nurses at the bedside comes as individual monetary gain. For the unit, the financial gain per se is that you are providing a level of care that has been demonstrated to have better outcomes and better patient services because it is rendered by people who are specialists.

Gains in satisfaction occur for both staff and patients. When nurses feel recognized for what they know and what they do, they have that sense of self-pride and self-awareness that comes with knowing that what they are doing is the right thing to do and from being part of an expert body. Patients experience satisfaction when they know someone who really knows their stuff is taking care of them and providing them a service that is recognized and not readily available to everyone. Simply put, certification is the right thing to do for our nurses, it is the right thing to do for our patients, and it is the right thing to do for our profession.



IU Health Methodist Hospital, located in Indianapolis, IN, is a Magnet[®] facility and a Level I Trauma Center whose emergency department sees an average of 270 people a day, or 106,000 a year. In 2005, the ED’s certification rate was eight percent of eligible nurses. Today, it is 75 percent.

Scott Hilliard, DNP, RN, CEN
Director of Clinical Operations, Emergency Department

Ron Kraus, MS, RN, CEN
Clinical Nurse Specialist, Emergency Department

Scott: There are just so many wins by supporting board certification for nurses that you just cannot go wrong. It empowers the staff. It has great outcomes for your department. Certified nurses are more engaged, more willing to jump in. They are not naysayers. They are willing to make sure the department is a good, safe environment

for our patients. When you have more certified nurses, you have more engaged staff at the bedside. It just fosters an environment and a culture of safety.

I have seen a pool of staff emerge that wants to help me reach goals. For instance, we had some issues around falls, which any ED director deals with, and we took it

right to our certified nurses. They know how to identify opportunities and create change, and they were the ones to come up with the ideas to decrease falls. Last year we had a 20 percent decrease, which was double our goal of 10 percent.

We also saw our medication scanning going up and our hand hygiene going up. Now can I correlate that with a certain percentage of the staff being certified? I do not know that, but I do know it goes hand in hand. Anecdotally and looking at the whole composition of the ED, you can begin to see things going in the right direction.

Ron: A certified nurse has a better understanding of the pathophysiology. Critical thinking skills are higher, and certified nurses are able to recognize and assess at a high level. As a result, you have a better patient experience and better patient outcomes. When certified nurses come to work it is not a job, it is a profession. For me, driving some of the quality work, our certified nurses are stepping up, getting involved in the department and helping me out.

Scott: I see professional certification as a way to empower bedside nurses to be more, do more. I see it as a tool and

a venue, a stepping stone that allows nurses to bloom in their profession. I think as an administrator we have a responsibility to grow staff, and professional certification is one of the best ways to do that. It is validation for the nurse and it validates for me as an administrator that they have that knowledge.

We require the CEN, which we think of as global emergency knowledge. Even though we are a trauma center, trauma nursing is an even more specialized area of knowledge, so we have them go for the CEN first. Then after they earn the CEN, if our staff want to become TCRN-certified, we do pay for both so our staff can be dual-certified, and then we maintain those certifications for them.

The days of working in a single ED for 20 years is pretty much a thing of the past, so we are focused on making sure we help every individual grow and be the best professional nurse they can be. And while that may mean seeing some nurses go out the door in a few years, why don't we grow them while we have them? If cost is an issue, I would say that it is an administrator's job to figure out how to get at that cost. That is why we went into administration, and that is our responsibility.

Why Supporting Certification is a **Win-Win-Win**

As the field reports suggest, creating a workplace culture that supports board certification offers big rewards. Research on nursing specialty certification and workplace indicators links certification status to **nurse empowerment, collaboration, and retention**, offering additional evidence that supporting certification is **a win for nurses, a win for patients, and a win for organizations**.

- 🏆 Emergency nurses who held BCEN certifications scored higher on empowerment. Empowerment increases a nurse's ability "to use skills and knowledge to transform choices into actions or outcomes."²¹ An increased sense of empowerment also enhances collaboration with the healthcare team.
- 🏆 "Research indicates ... that nurses who feel empowered within their work environments and are recognized for their knowledge and contributions are more likely to remain with an organization. Certification has the potential to increase the retention of nurses in the workforce because it validates and recognizes nurses' skills and knowledge."²²
- 🏆 "Nurse turnover can affect organizational functioning and clinical outcomes."²¹ Employment of certified nurses is linked with improved retention.^{7,10,22,23} Certification status is not an indicator of anticipated turnover or intent to leave position.²¹



"Emergency nurses should be encouraged to become certified, because certification has been linked to benefits to the nurse and to the organization."²¹

Removing the Barriers

Unfortunately, nurses consistently report specific challenges or barriers that prevent them from earning and maintaining certification. While some cite lack of time and fear of failing, the cost (exam, test prep and recertification) combined with lack of institutional reward and support create a lethal one-two punch for all too many.^{7,22-24}

“For certification to reach its full potential ... healthcare systems will need to find better ways to support nurses seeking certification and reward and recognize those who are certified.”²²

Employers are in a prime position to help lower these common barriers. Although certification does come with a price tag, institutions are putting creative cost reduction and certification support strategies in place to reap the considerable benefits of increasing their certification rates.^{12,23,25} The Johns Hopkins Hospital Department of Emergency Medicine, for instance, reduced the per nurse certification exam preparation cost by 90 percent while more than doubling their percentage of certified nurses.²⁵

“The cost savings impact ... was valuable to the department. However even more valuable was the increase in certified ED nurses and the expected positive impact on patient outcomes.”²⁵

Maximizing Your Certification Rate While Minimizing Cost

One way employers who are committed to building a certified nurse workforce can manage costs and encourage certification is by participating in BCEN’s YES YOU CAN! Get Certified Employer Exam Voucher Program. Designed with employers’ needs in mind, the program offers substantial volume-based discounts for purchases of as few as three exam vouchers at a time.

Through this program, hospitals, health systems and freestanding centers can ease the financial burden on their nurses, avoid the hassle and paperwork of paying or reimbursing for individual exam fees after the fact, and benefit from exclusive discounts. Users simply purchase the exam vouchers online, receive unique voucher numbers by email and then distribute them to nurses when they are ready to sit for the exam. The vouchers are valid for 12 months from date of purchase and there is no limit on the number of vouchers purchased.

“What I like the most is that it is a streamlined process for the employee,” said **IU Methodist Health’s Scott Hilliard**. “The team member is already stressed about taking the exam. The voucher program allows us to easily log in and schedule the test, and no money comes out of the team member’s pocket.”

Joseph Hutchins of Houston Methodist agrees: “The program has helped us meet our goals by allowing us to expand the number of nurses who have certification accessible to them. Because you pay for a bulk number of keys at a discounted rate in advance, this prevents the organization from paying full price on the back end and prevents the nurse from having to pay for it out of pocket.

The Yes You Can program has also been something we have used as a tool, a sort of carrot, to entice interest and support our nurses going for the CEN. They know certification is available to them and they know there won’t be any impact on them for trying.”

Bringing It All Together



The case for supporting certification for emergency nurses is clear and compelling.

When your emergency nurses are board certified, they have the skills and knowledge to more safely deliver the highest quality of care and improve patient outcomes and the patient experience.

Certified emergency nurses are invested in their profession and their practice. As a result, they inspire, mentor and meaningfully contribute to the engagement, satisfaction and overall effectiveness of your entire ED team.

Board certified emergency nurses are also a ready resource for you — helping you tackle your most stubborn problems and successfully resolve day-to-day issues as they arise.

To support employers committed to helping their ED nurses excel by earning and maintaining their emergency nursing specialty certifications, BCEN designed the YES YOU CAN! Get Certified Employer Exam Voucher Program. This easy-to-administer program is a hassle-free, contract-free tool you can use to encourage and facilitate certification while leveraging significant cost savings.

Using our [savings calculator](#) you can determine your discount right now. Learn more about the [employer exam voucher program](#) by contacting us at bcen@BCENcertifications.org or 877-302-BCEN (2236).



About BCEN

The Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN®) develops robust certification exams fostering empowered nurses across the emergency spectrum who contribute noticeably to patient care, safety and outcomes.

More than 47,000 BCEN certifications are currently held by registered nurses who specialize in emergency, flight, critical care ground transport, pediatric emergency and trauma nursing. BCEN believes emergency, transport and trauma nursing practice are dynamic, fluid and continually evolving. Therefore, the attainment of competence is a continuous activity.

BCEN's foundational emergency nursing certification, the Certified Emergency Nurse (CEN®), is held by over 35,000 nurses. BCEN also awards the Certified Pediatric Emergency Nurse (CPEN®), the Certified Transport Registered Nurse (CTRN®), the Certified Flight Registered Nurse (CFRN®) and the newest, the Trauma Certified Registered Nurse (TCRN®).

The CEN, CFRN, and CPEN certifications are accredited by the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC), the only accrediting body specifically for nursing certifications. Learn more at BCENcertifications.org and follow BCEN on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Benefits of Certification Checklist

Would Your ED Benefit by Having Board Certified Nurses?

Drawing largely on the work of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Standing Committee on Credentialing Research in Nursing, the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) developed the following list of benefits of specialty certification²⁶ during its multidisciplinary National Convening: Building the Business Case for Certification.⁹

Which of these benefits of nursing certification would take your ED to the next level?

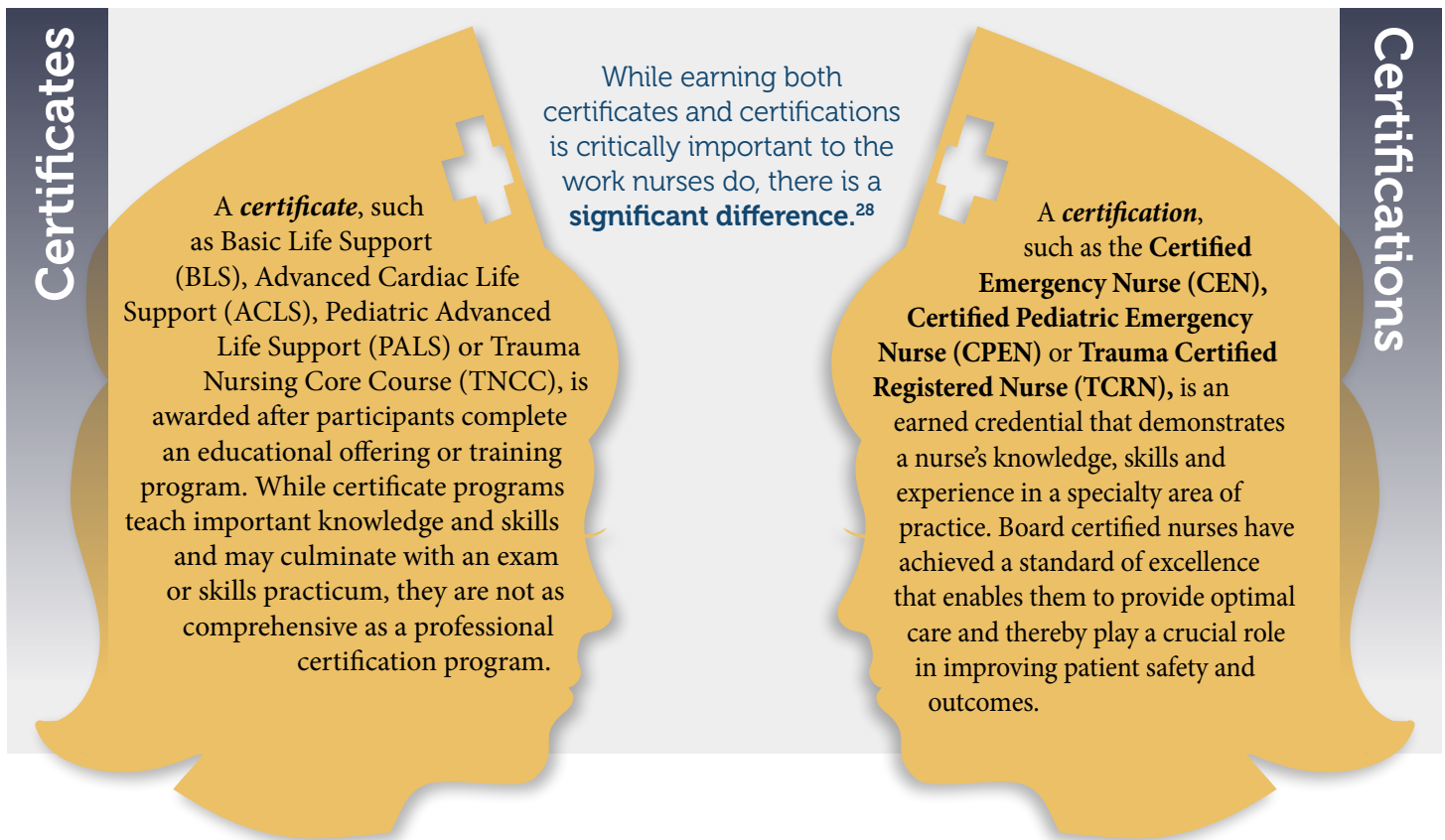
- Advances safety
- Clarifies and defines the roles and work of health care providers and other team members
- Improves organizational culture
- Improves job satisfaction, empowerment and confidence
- Improves processes of care
- Improves quality of care
- Improves recruitment and retention, employability, and job prospects
- Is recognized as validation of knowledge in the specialty
- Provides a measurable ROI
- Provides professional support
- Shapes future practice



The **American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)** has voiced its support for specialty certification for emergency nurses. ACEP adopted the following policy statement in 2006 and renewed it again in February 2018:

“The American College of Emergency Physicians supports the efforts of the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) and the Board of Certification of Emergency Nursing (BCEN) regarding defining standards of emergency nursing care and the provision of resources, support and incentives for emergency nurses to be able to readily obtain Certified Emergency Nurse (CEN) certification.”²⁷

Deciphering the Alphabet Soup: Certificates vs. Certifications



Also, professional *certifications* are nationally recognized and portable, are awarded by a third-party organization, and have strict eligibility requirements. Individuals are required to pass a rigorous, standardized exam in order to earn this mark of distinction. The exam is legally defensible and psychometrically sound, and is grounded in national studies of nursing roles and responsibilities, thereby ensuring the exam is relevant to the clinical practice specialty area. The recertification process requires nurses to demonstrate they are maintaining their level of expertise.

The top *certification* programs are accredited by an outside agency — such as the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC), which is the only accrediting body specifically for nursing certification — that likewise sets rigorous standards and advocates for consumer protection.



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