

5 Compelling Reasons to Get (and Keep) Your Emergency Nursing Specialty Certification

A White Paper for Emergency Nurses



Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing



Overview

Nowhere are specialized knowledge and skills, critical thinking and self-efficacy needed more than in the emergency setting.

Whether you are new to emergency nursing or have years of experience under your belt, earning – and maintaining – a specialty certification in emergency nursing can have a big impact on your personal and professional success.

Backed by a growing body of evidence, including a new and rigorous large-scale study that specifically examined the value of specialty certifications for emergency nursing,[†] this white paper presents five compelling reasons to get, and keep, your emergency nursing certification:

Reason #1: Be the Best You Can Be

Reason #2: Stay Current, In-the-Know and Relevant

Reason #3: Boost Your Bottom Line and Your Career

Reason #4: Advance the Profession

Reason #5: Do It for Your Patients

Top certified emergency department (ED) nurses working in mixed care, pediatric, trauma and transport settings around the country also share their nursing career stories and best advice about certification.

The white paper concludes by connecting you with practical tips to help you navigate common obstacles to getting certified plus one quick and easy step you can take right now to begin securing your emergency nursing specialty certification.



Value of Emergency Nursing Certification Study¹

[†] The 2017 Value of CEN® Certification Research Study¹ is the first large-scale study specifically focused on the value of specialty certification for the emergency nursing profession. The rigorous study, conducted by the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) and commissioned by the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN®), went beyond a simple correlational study and used regression analysis in examining outcomes of value to individual emergency nurses and their employers. Watch for study highlights throughout this white paper.



Reason #1: Be the Best You Can Be

The personal accomplishment and satisfaction that come with being certified are hard to match.

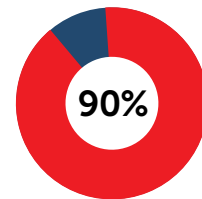
Certification is a measure of your *knowledge, skills and clinical judgment* within a nursing specialty.² It is a mark of excellence that distinguishes you as being at the top of your profession.

Certification also makes a statement about *who you are*—a dedicated individual who goes above and beyond, not because you have to, but because you are committed to being the best you can be.

Why do top ED nurses say they hold at least one specialty certification?

It is a matter of personal achievement and pride. Setting a goal to get certified and achieving it—challenging yourself and being able to say, “I did it!” – creates a powerful sense of satisfaction and accomplishment that is hard to match.

90 percent of emergency nurses said holding the CEN gives them a feeling of accomplishment and pride.¹



The accomplishment and personal satisfaction that comes with professional certification builds confidence. And that confidence contributes to greater nursing self-efficacy.

“Certification gives you a confidence that you have the knowledge and expertise you need when you are caring for patients,” says 40-year emergency nursing veteran Teresa Coyne, BSN, RN, CEN, of Memorial Hermann Katy South Emergency Room, a freestanding ER in Greater Houston. “The knowledge that comes with certification also helps you feel more confident working with your physicians and coworkers, and they definitely appreciate that you have that extra expertise.”

Multiple studies on specialty certifications concur, linking certification with enhanced feelings of personal accomplishment, personal confidence in clinical abilities and personal satisfaction.^{3,4,5}

Value of Emergency Nursing Certification Study¹

Nursing Self-Efficacy

A rigorous large-scale study on the value of the emergency nursing profession’s most widely-held certification, the Certified Emergency Nurse (CEN®), found that **holding the CEN certification is significantly and positively correlated with nursing self-efficacy.**

The first-of-its-kind 2017 study included responses from over 8,800 certified and non-certified emergency nurses and over 1,000 supervisors of emergency nurses.



Reason #2: Stay Current, In-the-Know and Relevant

Certification keeps you abreast of new information and best practices, ensuring you have the current clinical knowledge and judgment necessary to perform well in the dynamic and fluid ED environment.

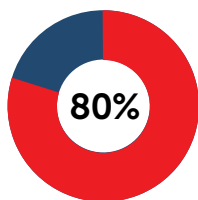
Health care is constantly changing. Staying on top of new information and best practices is more important, and more challenging, than ever. And when it comes to the emergency room, you never know who or what is going to come through the door at any given moment.

As an emergency nurse, you need to be a jill-or-jack-of-all-trades and master of some. Certification helps make sure you have your bases covered. The process of preparing to take the exam alone is an excellent way to get current on what you need to know on the job—and stay relevant to employers.

Certified emergency nurses report having more critical on-the-job knowledge.

Maintaining your emergency nursing credentials helps you stay fresh, reenergizes your passion for your profession, and puts you in the best position to bring new approaches to your team, your unit, your patients and your community.

80 percent of nurses with a current CEN certification said being certified means being more likely to have the knowledge needed on the job.¹



Supervisors rate certified emergency nurses higher on technical performance, accuracy, ethics and expertise.

Based on responses from more than 1,000 emergency nurse supervisors, the Value of CEN® Certification Research Study¹ found significant positive relationships between holding an emergency nursing certification (the CEN) and multiple aspects of technical performance, accuracy and ethical behavior.

CEN-certified nurses also received significantly higher ratings from their supervisors than their non-certified peers on all seven areas of emergency nursing expertise rated: clinical foundations, major trauma, medical and surgical emergencies, disease management, special patient populations, psychiatric and behavioral emergencies, and professional practice.¹

Value of Emergency Nursing Certification Study¹

Accuracy, Technical Performance & Ethics

Supervisors said **nurses holding a current CEN** are more likely to:

- Perform patient care with a **high degree of accuracy**.
- **Efficiently and effectively perform the key technical aspects** of her/his job within the healthcare team.
- **Anticipate hazards and promote safety** in patient care.
- **Remain current on new technical developments** related to her/his job.
- Exhibit **ethical behavior and concern for accuracy and truthfulness of information**.



Reason #3: Boost Your Bottom Line and Your Career

The logic is clear. The facts are in. Certification and your professional success go hand in hand.

Specialty certification puts you in prime position for professional success, growth and recognition.

As the logic model below shows, the higher knowledge, expertise and self-efficacy of certified nurses leads to higher performance. With higher performance, you can expect higher compensation, higher career advancement, better employment options and greater job security. Specialty certification also makes licensure renewal easier for nurses practicing in most states.⁶ The ultimate result? Certification means you are likely to experience higher career satisfaction, higher work engagement, higher professional commitment and higher retention.



When researchers looked at the benefits of certification for emergency nurses, the data makes it clear:
Certified emergency nurses enjoy higher pay, better opportunities and greater career success.

Value of Emergency Nursing Certification Study¹

Career Success & Satisfaction

Even after controlling for level of education, years of experience, and other certifications, the study found a significant positive relationship between **having a current emergency nursing certification**, the CEN, and:

- Higher annual pay
- Job advancement
- Employability
- Career satisfaction

SHOW ME THE MONEY

It's not always about the money, but sometimes it is.

The financial rewards for certification (and recertification) can be in the form of higher pay and bonuses, with some employers offering even bigger bonuses as you earn multiple credentials.

Specialty certified RNs also have enhanced earnings due to better opportunities for promotions, taking on added responsibilities (which are offered to them because they are certified) such as teaching classes or serving as a preceptor, or because certification advances them on a career or clinical ladder. In BCEN's major 2017 study, nurses holding the CEN credential, which is widely considered the foundational emergency nursing certification, reported earning an average of \$1,397 more per year than their non-certified peers. The chart below shows how nurses reported receiving that additional pay.

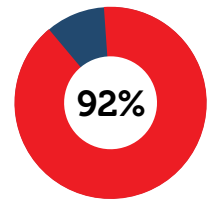


In smaller-scale research conducted from 2004–2006, BCEN collected certified emergency nurse success stories from more than 21 different organizations.⁷ Seventeen of the organizations offered monetary incentives for obtaining the CEN, and four provided monetary incentives for earning the Certified Flight Registered Nurse (CFRN)—including “yearly bonuses ranging from \$100 to \$3,000 and hourly differentials ranging from \$.50 to \$1 per hour for nurses holding certification.”⁷ The specialty certifications were also recognized as part of career or clinical ladder programs. *The 2014 Critical Care Transport Workplace and Salary Survey* found air transport team members with specialty certification earn similar levels of additional compensation.⁸

Other nurse salary surveys have shown specialty certification can mean many thousands of dollars more annually. For example, the *Medscape RN/LPN Compensation Report, 2017*, found that certified RNs earned significantly more—an average of \$7,000 annually—than non-certified nurses.⁹

Employers prefer certified emergency nurses.

92 percent of emergency nurse supervisors said it is important to have professional, certified emergency nurses in their organization.¹



Many ED employers prefer certified nurses.¹ Magnet®- and Pathway to Excellence®-designated facilities actively and strongly encourage specialty certification.^{10,11} “Hospitals and freestanding emergency centers that value nursing excellence seek out certified nurses. For educator and supervisory roles, specialty certification is highly recommended and often required,” said Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN) Executive Director, Janie Schumaker, MBA, BSN, RN, CEN, CBHQ, CENP, FABC. “CAMTS-accredited medical transport agencies, for example, require specialty certification for their flight nurses within two years of hire.”¹²

Being certified gives you instant credibility and a competitive edge.

Certification validates your qualifications and competencies to current and potential employers. It creates an immediate, recognizable and credible basis for your employer and your colleagues to trust you to make decisions.

“When you apply to a new organization or move to a new city, people don’t know you. Walking in being board certified, employers have been able to assume a basic level of competence in my specialty, and I feel I have been hired because of that,” said Emily Colyer, BSN, RN, NRP, CEN, CTRN, CFRN, a critical care transport nurse at Children’s Hospital & Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska.


At the same time, certification demonstrates your dedication and commitment to your profession and increases your credibility among your coworkers.

“I knew that trying to get my first flight nurse job would be very competitive, so I earned my CFRN and CTRN before I even applied,” said Tim Hall, MSN, RN, CFRN, CTRN, CEN, currently with New Castle EMS and St. Vincent Anderson Regional Hospital in Indiana. “Being certified allowed me to market myself. I knew if I walked into the interview room never having worked a single day on a helicopter, having those certifications would speak a lot to my potential and my commitment to the job. It also set me up from day one to be able to talk with my flight team apples to apples.”

Specialty certification distinguishes you as an expert in your field and allows you to differentiate yourself, whether you are competing for a job or going after a promotion. As Jennifer Whelan, BSN, RN, CEN, a travel nurse with Aya Healthcare, says, “For three little letters, certification does speak volumes.”

CERTIFIED SUCCESS

CERTIFIED EMERGENCY NURSES FROM AROUND THE U.S. SHARE THEIR STORIES



Jennifer Whelan, a new nurse and a new **Certified Emergency Nurse (CEN®)** working her first assignment as a travel nurse in southern California, shares how getting certified early in your career sets you up for immediate and long-term success.

CEN-certified for over 35 years and currently working at a freestanding emergency center near Houston, Teresa Coyne talks about how getting certified is a source of pride and how staying certified helps renew your passion for nursing.

Andi Wright, a long-time director of a Level I Trauma Center in Virginia, shares why earning the **Trauma Certified Registered Nurse (TCRN®)** was so important to her career.

Kimberly DeNicolo, an emergency department quality coordinator at Chicago's top children's hospital, recently learned just how much her employer and colleagues value her **Certified Pediatric Emergency Nurse (CPEN®)** certification.

Indiana-based Tim Hall explains why he earned his **flight and ground transport emergency nursing specialty certifications** before he even applied for his dream job.

Emily Colyer, a critical care transport nurse based in Omaha, Nebraska, talks about the challenges and the joys of being a **Certified Flight Registered Nurse (CFRN®)** and a **Certified Transport Registered Nurse (CTRN®)**.

Click on pictures to reveal each nurse's career story, best certification advice and their thoughts and experiences on the payoffs of getting and staying certified.



Reason #4: Advance the Profession

Specialty certification advances emergency nursing and the nursing profession overall.

Specialty certification advances nursing by valuing, promoting and advancing education and clinical excellence.

While many emergency nurses who do not hold a specialty certification are excellent nurses, the overall greater knowledge, expertise, technical performance, accuracy and ethics demonstrated by certified emergency nurses elevate the practice of emergency nursing and the nursing profession as a whole.

As a certified emergency nurse, you are among the elite. You set the standard for clinical practice and patient outcomes, serve as a valued resource and collaborator, and drive the changes that advance emergency care.

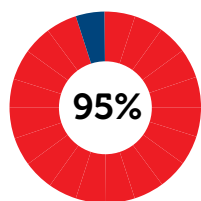
According to Sharon Vanairsdale, MS, APRN, ACNS-BC, NP-C, CEN, the 2016 National Magnet Nurse of the Year® for Exemplary Professional Practice, “Certified nurses are experts in their specialties and set the standard for quality in clinical practice and patient outcomes.”¹³

As a certified emergency nurse, you are a vital part of an influential network and a supportive community of your peers who are dedicated to emergency nursing and the nursing profession.

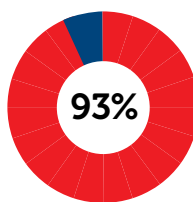
“Nurses who are certified are the type of nurses you especially want to collaborate with on your projects and throughout your professional development,” said Kimberly DeNicolo, BSN, RN, CPEN, of Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago.

As a certified emergency nurse, you are a role model and a valued mentor. Your commitment to excellence inspires other ED nurses to be the best they can be.

ED nurse supervisors agree on certification’s value to the profession¹:



95 percent say the CEN certification is valuable to the emergency nursing profession.



93 percent say that it is important for emergency nurses to maintain their certification over time by recertifying.



Reason #5: Do It for Your Patients

Certification promotes consumer confidence and contributes to better patient care, better patient outcomes and higher patient satisfaction.

When you introduce yourself as a certified emergency nurse, your patients and their families instantly know they are being cared for by a specialist who is knowledgeable, competent and committed to the highest standards in their field.

That's a powerful and comforting assurance at a time of great uncertainty.

The ultimate goal of specialty certification, in fact, is to promote the best patient outcomes.

The American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) defines certification as “the formal recognition of specialized knowledge, skills and experience demonstrated by achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes.”¹⁴

Emergency nursing specialty certification promotes and supports high quality patient care by validating mastery of a complex body of knowledge and clinical competence across the emergency nursing spectrum¹⁵ so emergency nurses can practice safely, effectively and ethically. Quality nursing care and safe and ethical practice, in turn, drive better patient outcomes and higher patient satisfaction.¹⁶

The Link Between Certification and Patient Outcomes – Evolving Research

Nursing specialty certification has long been considered to be a contributor to positive patient outcomes.¹⁷ As such, the relationship between specialty nursing certification and patient outcomes is an active and evolving area of research.¹⁸⁻²⁰

Statistically significant findings link certified nursing practice with positive patient outcomes including lower total fall rates,²¹ lower rates of infection,²² more accurate staging of pressure ulcers,¹⁸ increased symptom management,¹⁹ and shorter length of stay.¹⁸ Studies are also looking at whether certification is linked with fewer medication errors.²³

A landmark, large-scale study supports that certified nurses have a higher aptitude for nurse surveillance, which includes detecting complications and initiating early interventions, effective communication, fewer errors in patient care, and higher patient satisfaction.¹⁹

Some of these studies, as well as others,²⁰ have also yielded equivocal or mixed findings. Researchers are identifying ways to strengthen future studies.^{24,25}

Being certified means being accountable for meeting patient and consumer trust with professionalism and excellence.

Nurses provide the lion's share of patient care and play a leading role in educating and advocating for their charges. A 2017 Gallup poll²⁶ rating the most honest and ethical professions lists nurses as the top profession for the 16th consecutive year. More than eight in 10 (82 percent) Americans describe nurses' ethics as “very high” or “high.”

“Patients and their loved ones do notice and appreciate when the care they receive is being delivered by a certified emergency nurse,” Emily Colyer, BSN, RN, NRP, CEN, CTRN, CFRN, a critical care transport nurse at Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

Andi Wright, MSN, RN, CEN, TCRN, Program Director, Trauma Services, Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital sums it up this way: “Being certified is another way of saying I care enough about taking care of patients who come to the ED or the trauma center that I want to make sure I am as prepared and well-equipped as possible with critical knowledge and skills.”



Conclusion

Do it for you. Do it for the profession. Do it for your patients.

Getting and keeping your emergency nursing certification offers a host of personal and professional benefits. Among them are personal accomplishment and pride, staying current, boosting your career, advancing the profession, and delivering the best quality care to your patients so they have the best possible outcomes. As top emergency nurses have attested, you can pick the right certification and the right time for you, overcome your fears, map out a plan, and join the elite ranks of certified emergency nurses.

So, go ahead and take the plunge. As the saying goes: Come on in, the water's fine!

If you've never been certified before, get started today by checking out our [Top Tips for Tackling Common Obstacles to Getting Certified](#) and take a [quick and easy, no obligation first step](#) toward becoming a certified emergency nurse.

If you are already certified or your certification has expired, we invite you to [update your account](#), learn about our new [recertification by CE attestation option](#) and check out our [tips for tackling common obstacles](#) to getting and staying certified.



About BCEN

We published this white paper to share the latest and most compelling information about the value of emergency nursing specialty certification so you can make the most of your personal potential and your career. Wherever you are on your certification journey, consider us a resource for you. You can reach us at 877-302-BCEN (2236) or bcen@BCENcertifications.org.

The nonprofit 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 46,000 BCEN certifications are currently held by registered nurses who specialize in emergency, flight, critical care ground transport, pediatric emergency and trauma nursing.

BCEN's signature certification, the Certified Emergency Nurse (CEN®), is held by over 35,000 nurses (and counting) and is considered the foundational emergency nursing certification. Depending on where you work and how you aspire to grow your capabilities and your career, the Certified Pediatric Emergency Nurse (CPEN®), Certified Transport Registered Nurse (CTRN®), Certified Flight Registered Nurse (CFRN®) and the newest, the Trauma Certified Registered Nurse (TCRN®), may also be right for you. 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. Follow BCEN on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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