

Sustaining Specialty Excellence: Why RNs Thrive Through Recertification



**BOARD OF CERTIFICATION
FOR EMERGENCY NURSING**
Excellence. Achievement. Impact.



“Earning a specialty credential is a tremendous accomplishment, and it is equally true that the full and enduring value of certification is in maintaining it.”



Certified RNs Elevate Care

Nurses who earn national board certification in their specialty achieve nursing’s highest professional distinction—a remarkable accomplishment that demonstrates advanced clinical knowledge, professionalism, and a commitment to excellence.

Importantly, through the recertification process, specialty certification provides an essential framework for continuing competence—so that RNs remain well-prepared to deliver safe, effective, ethical and exceptional care that reflects current knowledge and best practices.

In this white paper, the latest in a series from the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN), C-suite executives join bedside RNs, nurse educators, unit leaders, and physicians in explaining why and how they support maintenance of certification—to the benefit of patients, nurses, teams, and institutions’ ability to recruit and retain top nurses and build centers of specialty excellence.



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On the cover: Lina Michelon, RN, CEN, is an emergency nurse with Endeavor Health. Learn more about Lina in BCEN’s *Life as a Board Certified Emergency Nurse* video.

Rewards of Recertification:

Maintaining Specialty Certification Means Sustaining Excellence

Specialty certification empowers registered nurses (RNs) to practice at the top of their specialty.¹⁻³ Rigor, national standardization, and independent validation of clinical and professional mastery across a specialty body of knowledge are what distinguish specialty certification from other professional achievements and set it apart in a class of its own.⁴

Earning a specialty certification is a remarkable and often transformative accomplishment. However, an important aspect of specialty certification—something that perhaps isn't as well understood or appreciated as it should be—is that **the intended and full value of specialty certification** is only realized **when RNs renew and maintain their certification over time.**

This is how nurses practicing in specialty settings thrive... and how RNs optimize opportunities and options throughout their career.

A Framework for Continuing Competence

Specialty certification programs are designed with two things in mind:

- Objectively validating a nurse's specialty knowledge, skills and abilities based on standards identified by that specialty to promote optimal patient outcomes
- Creating a framework for continuing competence

Maintenance of specialty certification sets nurses on a purposeful path to reinforce and build on their specialty expertise. By staying abreast of new knowledge, trends, and evolving best practices—and continuously incorporating these advanced competencies into their bedside care, communications and roles—nurses who maintain specialty certification ensure their ongoing ability to deliver safe, effective, ethical and expert care in the ever-changing world of healthcare.

“Earning a specialty credential is a tremendous accomplishment, and it is equally true that the full and enduring value of certification is in maintaining it.”

– American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) Past President and BCEN CEO
Janie Schumaker, MBA, BSN, CEN, CENP, CPHQ, FABC



The Bedside Perspective: No matter which of the over 180 specialty certifications⁵ an RN may hold, the experiences and observations of these top emergency, trauma and transport nurses underline the importance of recertification.

Well-Prepared to Care for Your Patient Population

“Maintaining your specialty certification is on the same level as achieving it in the first place,” said **Jessica Evins, BSN, RN, CPEN**, Clinical Nurse III, NewYork-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children’s Hospital Pediatric Emergency Department. “This is how we demonstrate to our patients, their families, our colleagues, and the community that we are not just prepared to care for our patient population, but we are constantly at the top of our game.”

“Children presenting to EDs are so uniquely challenging and vulnerable,” noted **Evins**. “We owe it to these patients and their families to provide the best of the best care possible. This area of practice is so specialized that it is critical to maintain that high level of preparedness, education and care.”

Heidi Cote, BSN, RN, CEN, CPEN, Emergency Department Nurse Manager, Maine Medical Center, Portland, Maine,

agrees. “Maintaining a specialty credential, such as the Certified Emergency Nurse (CEN) for ED RNs, proves professional nurses are passionate about continuing education in an ever-changing environment. These nurses stay up to date on current practices, literature, treatment and recommendations. Likewise, Certified Pediatric Emergency Nurses (CPENs) are committed to continuously improving their readiness for pediatric medical and traumatic emergencies.”

Natural Leaders Who Set High Standards

“In my critical access hospital, certified nurses serve us by being the expert in their personal passion,” said **Abigail Finetti, BSN, RN, CEN, CPEN, TCRN**, Staff Nurse, Lake District Hospital, Lakeview, Oregon. “They are the ones who are training the other nurses in that specialty. They keep the policies and procedures up to date. They perform case reviews and give feedback. Because our facility is not part of a bigger system, we have to do these things on our own, and being current with best practices is essential.”

“I find that certified nurses have higher professional standards for themselves,” said **Finetti**. “These are the nurses I see taking initiative professionally and wanting to grow and learn. For them, the pride of being certified is part of how they identify as a professional, and I don’t know one certified nurse who would not continue the process.”

More Opportunities & Flexibility, Plus Confidence That Calms & Inspires

“As the field of nursing continues to change, more and more nurses are moving around, working in new environments, or trying out new ventures,” said **Jessica Evins**. “Maintaining certification keeps your level of experience and expertise up to par, and facilitates your ability to try new things. It can even allow you to take some time away from the bedside, such as for maternity leave, without losing your knowledge base. Nurse burnout is a growing reality, too. Being able to be flexible in how we practice nursing can do wonders for our wellbeing, and maintaining certification can ease these transitions.”

“Being certified has given me the confidence to seek other opportunities, such as teaching and speaking at conferences,” said **Lynnette Broome, RN, CEN**, Clinical Coordinator/Advanced Team Lead, Endeavor Health, Naperville, Illinois. “Colleagues look to me as a resource and say they find a sense of calm in the chaos when they are working with me. I’ve gained so much from being certified. Keeping up my certification is important to me no matter what.”

Saving Lives & Shaping the Next Generation

Capt. Angela Leonardo, BSN, RN, CEN, TCRN, CPEN, who is a US Air Force Nurse Corps Emergency Services Nurse at the Mike O’Callaghan Military Medical Center, Nellis AFB, Las Vegas, Nevada, had this to say based on her personal experience, and this opinion does not represent or imply the endorsement by the Department of Defense:

“At a moment’s notice, I may be called to serve in an austere environment near or afar. In that moment, I will rely on my knowledge achieved from certification to potentially save many lives. My certifications are a direct reflection of who I am professionally and personally—a servant leader.” Leonardo also said, “Being certified allows me to lead by example while setting the highest standards for ED nurses, all while inspiring and directly shaping the next generation of nurses and Air Force officers.”



Maintaining your certification affirms for yourself, your employer, and most importantly your patients, that you remain committed to being the expert in your specialty...

Healthcare is ever-changing, so staying on top of new advancements is vital to maintaining proficiency.



Enhanced Expertise That’s Second Nature

“Maintaining your certification affirms for yourself, your employer, and most importantly, your patients, that you remain committed to being the expert in your specialty and keeping up with the trends,” said **Jordan Tyczka, MSN, RN, CEN, TCRN**, Director of Trauma Services, Inova Loudoun Hospital, Loudoun, Virginia. “With each year as a Trauma Certified Registered Nurse (TCRN), I have continued to build and improve on my core trauma knowledge and things have become second nature.” Added **Tyczka**: “Healthcare is ever-changing, so staying on top of new advancements is vital to maintaining proficiency. I also remember what it took to become initially certified, and I would never let that lapse!”

Research on Recertification: Motivations, Behaviors & Influencers

A proponent and funder of nursing specialty certification research, BCEN conducted a study on the motivations, behaviors and factors that influence recertification among board certified emergency nurses, including why RNs value staying certified, CE requirements, and employer attitudes and behavior.

The 2021 research consisted of 45 one-on-one interviews and a survey of over 800 RNs who had earned the Certified Emergency Nurse (CEN) credential.⁶ This more focused study was a follow-on to BCEN's large-scale Value of CEN Certification Research Study⁷ (as featured in earlier white papers in this series). The CEN is held by over 40,000 RNs practicing in the ED and in other emergency settings and roles.

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS



The Enthusiasm Gap

Recertification is notably less enthusiastically pursued, supported and heralded by nurses and employers than initial certification.



Organizational Support is Key

While personal factors are key drivers of initial certification, a very important and statistically significant factor leading to recertification is organizational support for recertification.



The Expertise-Outcome Link

Beyond Magnet status and union contracts, employers who support recertification recognize the connection between nursing expertise and important outcomes.

Why RNs Value the CEN:

Confidence • Credibility • Career progression • Continuing education is required to maintain • Status/Recognition

Top Motivators at Time of Recertification:

Not wanting to lose their investment in earning the credential in the first place • Not wanting to retake the test • Prestige of the CEN • Belief that nurses should be certified • Accountability for obtaining CEs • Encouraged by employer

Top Barriers to Recertification:

Lack of employer support or recognition • Lack of understanding of eligible CEs/CE options • Meeting CE requirements* • Tracking CEs • Missing the renewal deadline* • Cost

(*Impacted by the pandemic)

Situational Factors Impacting Likelihood of Recertifying:

Certified RNs have badge showing certified status • One or multiple colleagues have the CEN • Employees encouraged to be certified • Employer has clinical ladder program

What Would Increase the Likelihood to Recertify:

Financial incentives (employer covers renewal fees, bonus, wage increase) rated higher than CE-related incentives (employer-funded/ provided CEs).

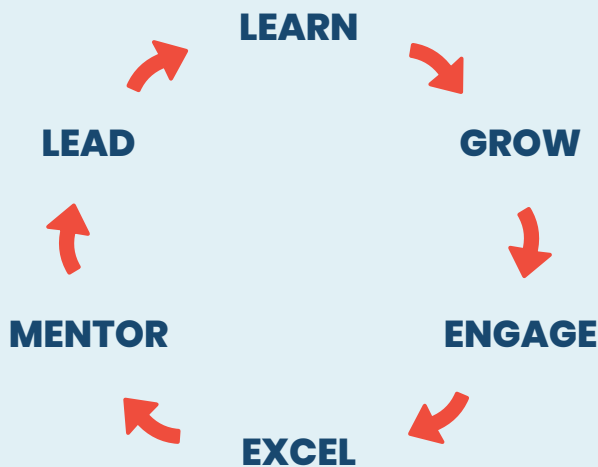
The Continuous Learning Environment:

Nurturing Nurses Who Grow, Engage, Excel, Mentor & Lead

Nurses have greater success in their daily practice and advancing their careers when they work in an environment that meets their commitment to ongoing learning with meaningful support. In fact, newer specialty certification research is focusing on organizational support as a consequential and even pivotal factor in RNs' decisions and ability to earn and maintain national board certification in their chosen specialty.⁸⁻¹⁰ Because time, cost and lack of organizational support are top barriers to maintaining a specialty credential, employer support of recertification can be make-or-break.⁶

Recertification: A Virtuous Cycle

Nurses who commit to maintaining specialty certification enter a virtuous cycle where they learn, grow, engage, excel, mentor and lead.



The overwhelming majority of nurses elect to renew their specialty credentials by acquiring continuing education (CE) credits as opposed to retaking the certification exam. As you would expect, the CE requirements are substantial, meaning that workplaces with well-resourced learning environments that robustly support and facilitate specialty CE opportunities are essential. Notably, a nurse's first renewal period is crucial (see box).

Nurse educators are the hearts and brains of institutional learning environments. Working at the nexus of evidence-based practice, research, quality improvement and patient care, they are the clinical and developmental powerhouses who design, facilitate and connect nurses with ongoing learning opportunities and resources.

In partnership with unit managers, nursing professional development pros know precisely how to help nurses stay on track for recertification and increase their organization's proportion of certified RNs. And every day, educators witness all the ways specialty certification transforms nurses and how certified nursing excellence ripples through teams, departments, institutions and communities.



Why the First Renewal is Crucial

FACT: According to BCEN data, the renewal cycle where most nurses let their specialty certification lapse, intentionally or unintentionally, is when their initial certification period ends.

It's important for specialty certified RNs to have a plan to acquire the CEs they will need for renewal. While recertification by exam is an option for nurses renewing their BCEN credentials, over a five-year period (2018-2022) less than 2% of nurses chose this option (hello, test anxiety!). When a certification expires, nurses have to retest to earn back the credential—a situation few nurses want to face.



The Educator Perspective: Three seasoned nurse educators share their tips, advice and observations.

Kristie Gallagher, DNP, RN, CEN, CPEN, TCRN, EMT-P, FAEN

Emergency Services System Educator, ProMedica

“Nurses who earn certification display higher confidence in their knowledge base and more comfort in explaining patient care to patients and their families. They demonstrate a calming presence at the bedside during critical events. They are considered a ‘go-to’ by peers when practice questions arise. Certified nurses take extra steps to master the art of emergency, trauma, flight, ground transport, and burn nursing. These are the nurses you want taking care of your family, friends and community.”

“Certification provides nurses opportunities to participate in clinical ladder programming, serve as unit educators, take on leadership roles starting with charge nurse all the way up to CNO and vice president of nursing, or be nurse entrepreneurs. Advanced certifications open many doors that nurses don’t even realize are out there.”

Kristie’s Tips for RNs:

- Keep up on CEs by attending live conferences, webinars and other virtual programming.
- Be sure to utilize the tools and materials offered by your facility.

Kristie’s Tips for Educators:

- Use your department social pages to highlight new CE programming, case studies, and tips and tricks for identifying zebras.
- Share patient presentations to keep RNs engaged.

“Nurses need certification as much as they need their stethoscope.”

Lisa Chambers, DNP, RN, CEN, CPEN, TCRN, NPD-BC

Emergency Trauma Center Clinical Educator, CHOC Children’s Hospital (Orange, CA)

“Nurses need certification as much as they need their stethoscope. As nurses become certified in my departments, I see them stand taller with more confidence and fluidity in their delivery of care. Their resiliency is boosted as their knowledge is bolstered, and their career trajectory tends to grow with them.”

“Fighting against the tide of mediocrity takes grit. Investment in nursing excellence is an investment in patient safety.”

Lisa’s Advice for RNs:

- Recertification is essential for any practicing nurse as proof of ongoing maintenance of your knowledge in your specialty. It’s as important as initial certification.

Lisa’s Advice for Administrators:

- Institute a reimbursement program for the cost of specialty certification and recertification. This has been demonstrated to increase certification rates, and this form of nurse support improves nurses’ outlook and motivation to be certified by removing the cost barrier. It is one essential piece of creating a culture that supports and increases nurses’ desire to strive for excellence.

Mary Whelan, MSN, RN, CEN

Director of Emergency Services, Doylestown Hospital (Doylestown, PA)

“Nurses who seek recertification are more engaged in workplace initiatives. Advanced continuing education content can further enhance the effectiveness of nurses as they focus on performance improvement strategies that are clinical or team-oriented.”

“Since certification is a reflection of excellence in nursing, what better way to continue to learn?!”

Mary’s Advice for Leaders:

- Connect certified nurses with engaging CE content
- Incentivize recertification as robustly as initial certification.

The Story of an Award-Winning CE Platform

Every nurse needs CEs to stay current and meet various requirements. Specialty certified RNs need continuing education to renew their credentials. For years, certified emergency, trauma and transport RNs had been telling BCEN they couldn't find enough specialty-specific CE content, and also shared their challenges with tracking CEs over time.

In 2020, BCEN introduced the anytime, anywhere BCEN Learn platform, whose immersive, high-interactivity CE courses feature high quality medical diagrams, real-life photos and videos, plus learner-driven patient and clinical scenarios, critical thinking experiences, and frequent knowledge checks with rationales to deepen and reinforce learning. The platform's built-in CE tracker helps nurses chart their progress towards recertification.

In 2021, BCEN Learn was internationally recognized with three Brandon Hall Group Excellence Awards. Since then, practice exams and exam-style games have been added to help nurses prepare for initial certification and renewal by exam.

Not Just for Certified RNs: BCEN Learn Today

For RNs at every experience level who deliver emergency, pediatric emergency, trauma, transport and burn care, or want to learn about specialty certification, BCEN Learn now hosts hundreds of clinical and leadership CE courses, free CE webinars, and more. Anyone (not just BCEN nurses) can open an account, get new course notifications, and register for any offering, including the very popular respiratory, cardiovascular, critical care, neurologic, general trauma and emerging topics content.

From advanced learning to leadership training to emergency nursing career preparation, each CE course is designed by nurse subject matter experts and is fully accessible for 1 year after purchase. Many include a downloadable, printable job aide that nurses can reference in their daily practice and share with their team. Learn more at bcen.org/learn/.



Breaking Down Barriers

Topple the top 3 barriers to recertification with these proven solutions.

Barriers	Solutions
Lack of Institutional Support & Reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require maintenance of certification for professional advancement Recertification bonus Mentorship program Visible recognition of RN certification status (on badges, departmental plaques) Celebrate recertification (unit/facility/system recognition, social shares)
Cost & Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource library Facility-funded CEs and review courses Sponsored renewal fees
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible schedules for earning CEs and exam prep (conference attendance, professional involvement, study time) On-site CEs

Leaders as Keystone Champions: Creating a Culture of (Re)Certification Support

The benefits of nursing specialty certification for nurses, patients, and organizations are well-documented.^{1-3, 5, 7, 11-12} Specialty certified RNs are bedside stars, valued collaborators, go-to resources, trusted mentors, drivers of quality improvement, and natural leaders.

Nursing certification rates vary widely across institutions, even among Magnet hospitals.⁸ But when executive and senior leadership champion specialty certification and ensure effective certification support policies and practices are in place, they elevate care and sustain centers of specialty excellence.

ROIs That Elevate Care & Promote a Stable Workforce

Research in various specialty settings shows that:

- Nurses within organizations with high certification rates deliver higher quality care and have greater patient satisfaction ratings.¹¹⁻¹²
- Certified nursing practice is associated with fewer complications, errors and near missed events, including fewer falls and hospital-acquired infections, and lower failure-to-rescue and mortality.^{1-2, 12}
- Nurses who experience their employer as being invested and involved in their professional development have higher job satisfaction and lower intent to leave.^{9, 11-12}

A specialty certified nurse workforce is a rising tide that lifts all boats—as well as a stabilizing factor in the face of healthcare’s toughest challenge, recruiting and retaining high quality professionals.



The Leadership Perspective: From CEOs and CNOs to department heads and physicians, nine leaders zero in on their key whys and ROIs of ensuring their RNs keep their specialty credentials.

Safer, Higher Quality Care at a Lower Cost

“Verifying competency and continued competency is paramount to providing competent evidence-based care that is safe and current,” said **Steven Malarchick, DNP, FNP-C, NRP, CFRN, CTRN, BCEN** Exam Construction Review Committee member. “Maintaining certification verifies a nurse’s competency reflects current practice and is a way they can maintain safety for their patients.” Malarchick, a Trans Aero MedEvac flight nurse, is affiliated with Southwest Memorial Hospital in Cortez, Colorado.

“Our goal as healthcare providers is to give the highest quality care to our patients,” said **Orie Chambers Jr, MHA, BSN, RN**, Vice President and CNO of WellSpan Ephrata Community Hospital in Ephrata, Pennsylvania. “With research showing a direct correlation between certification and patient outcomes, employers should support their nurses and team members seeking to improve the care they provide.”

“Providing safer, higher quality care to patients means that they heal more quickly, and hospitals and health systems are able to reduce the cost of providing care. RNs pursuing certification are also pursuing excellence,” said **Chambers**. “When patients see nurses continuing to pursue education, they know they are in great hands.”

“The ROI is evident in reduced medical errors, improved patient safety, decreased turnover, overall healthcare quality, and increased patient satisfaction,” said **Nelly Utebor, MSN, MBA, PHN, RN, RN-BC**, Administrative Nursing House Supervisor and Adult/Pediatric ER Trauma Nurse, Loma Linda University Health, in Loma Linda, California. “Regular recertification mitigates the risks associated with outdated practices, ensuring that nurses adhere to the latest evidence-based guidelines, hence reducing the likelihood of adverse events, malpractice claims and legal complications.”

Attracting & Retaining Staff

“Every industry struggles with attracting and retaining employees, and statistics show that certified nurses report higher job satisfaction,” said Ephrata CNO **Orie Chambers**. “Higher rates of job satisfaction and engagement help reduce turnover and foster a stronger bond amongst the nursing team at your hospital or health system.”

Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital CNO and System Vice President **Tami Frost, MSN, RN**, agrees. “When our facilities support and encourage ongoing education and professional practice, we’re able to retain our staff because they don’t feel they have to go look for something more—they are getting the fulfillment they need right here.”

Building a Leadership Pipeline

“A successful leader must role model professional standards to establish trust and confidence in the team they lead,” said **Joshua McCabe, MSN, RN, CEN, NE-BC**, Director of Emergency Services, Sharp Memorial Hospital, San Diego, California. “Certification is one way a nurse leader can help to promote trust and confidence in their clinical abilities.”

“Nurses hoping to get into leadership roles tend to be high performers who want to make a larger impact on patients and their families, and in healthcare,” added **McCabe**.

“When nurses apply for leadership roles, certification is a factor in the decision to promote, and therefore something the RN candidate would want to have. Certification builds confidence and empowers nurses to lead.”

“At Sharp, we promote certification for all eligible nurses and provide learning materials, mentoring, and sponsored (free to the RN) certification. We also pay a one-time incentive to recognize nurses upon initial certification. This has helped build confidence in our nurses, and we have nurses that want to be involved in leading our ED to improved outcomes. When we have a project that needs leadership, we never have a shortage of willing leaders.”

As specialty certified RNs move into leadership roles, explains Inova Loudoun’s Director of Trauma Services **Jordan Tyczka**, the value of renewing your specialty credentials only increases ... in several important ways. “Maintaining my TCRN certification has ensured that even though I’m further away from the bedside, I am still connected to the patient and can still jump in and help whenever I’m needed. It makes the decisions I have to make as a leader more meaningful, and I am more knowledgeable to advocate for the right resources.”

Knowledgeable Collaborators

Tom Scaletta, MD, FAAEM, MAAEM, Medical Director for Emergency Medicine at Endeavor Health in Naperville, Illinois, CEO of Auscura, and Past President’s Council Representative, American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM), said:

“The Academy advocates that all patients with urgent and emergent conditions should receive care from board certified emergency physicians. Similarly, we believe that emergency nurses should be Certified Emergency Nurses or Certified Pediatric Emergency Nurses. These certifications ensure that patients receive the expert care they expect and deserve in emergencies provided by highly qualified nursing professionals.”

“More than two decades ago, the emergency physicians at Endeavor Health initiated an incentive program for our emergency nurses designed to encourage and recognize their efforts to maintain their CEN and CPEN credentials. Our institution offers a \$1000 honorarium to nurses for initial certification and \$500 for recertification. Bridging gaps in emergency knowledge, which is the goal of this program, significantly enhances our emergency nurses’ proficiency, confidence and advocacy skills, ultimately improving patient outcomes.”

“

Having certified nurses on our team improves patient care outcomes, builds professional credibility, and reassures our patients that we are committed to lifelong learning and excellent patient care.

”

Carilion Roanoke’s **Tami Frost** has observed the powerful synergies that occur when specialty certified nurses collaborate with their teams:

“Supporting maintenance of nursing certification is a game changer for our physicians and our advanced care practice providers. When they are working with staff who have a higher knowledge level, we’re able to provide more of that holistic care to patients.”

“If you have a higher level frontline at the bedside who are feeling empowered because they are knowledgeable about their practices and feeling empowered to speak up and engage in a conversation at a higher level, that means better care for the patient. The fact that our physicians value the opinion of our nurses at the bedside is huge.”

The Rising Cost of RN Turnover, the Link Between Turnover and Specialty Certification, and Promising Strategies for Increasing Certification Rates

A recent report underlines the seriousness of healthcare's top challenge—recruiting and retaining quality healthcare professionals (and specifically RNs).¹³ Several recent articles demonstrate the inverse relationship between nursing specialty certification and turnover and vacancy rates,¹² and suggest approaches and strategies for increasing specialty certification rates.⁸⁻¹⁰ Together, they offer important information and perspectives on employment practices, the need to support overall RN success and satisfaction, and how to solve the complex puzzle of increasing nurse specialty certification and recertification.

Nursing turnover and lost talent is costly, and elevated RN vacancy rates directly impact quality outcomes and the patient experience.¹³ According to the *2024 NSI National Health Care Retention & RN Staffing Report*:

- The **average cost of turnover** for a staff RN is \$56,300, up 7.5% from 2022.
- Each % change in RN turnover will cost or save the average hospital **\$262,500 per year**, for an average annual cost of **\$4.82 million**.
- The national **average turnover rate** for staff RNs is 18.4%, with emergency services, step down and telemetry experiencing the highest rates.
- The **turnover rate in emergency services** ticked up to 22.4% in 2023, which effectively means entire EDs turn over every 4½ years.
- The average **time to recruit an experienced RN** is 3 months.
- **Every RN hired** saves \$101,300 (vs. supplemental staffing).
- The **national RN vacancy rate** is 9.9%.

As the authors point out, “The value hospitals place on their people will have a direct correlation to their commitment, confidence and engagement. Enhancing culture and building programs to reinforce these values is critical to driving retention.”

Nursing specialty certification is inversely associated with turnover and vacancy rates, according to a systematic review of 15 nursing specialty certification studies that identified multiple patient, nurse and organizational outcomes associated with specialty certification (Halm, 2021).¹²

Among the recent research on organizational approaches and strategies to increase nurse specialty certification,⁸⁻¹⁰ one study (Dierkes et al, 2021) aimed to determine if there are “modifiable characteristics of nurses and hospitals associated with nurse specialty certification.”

Notable findings of this cross-sectional study of 20,454 direct care nurses across 471 hospitals include:

- Quality of the work environment was the most significant hospital-level factor associated with increased odds of certification.
- In terms of employment status, full-time nurses had the highest odds of certification.
- Certification was (independently) more common in more experienced and older nurses.
- Substantially higher odds of certification were associated with BSN-prepared nurses (71%) and nurses enrolled in a nursing degree program (47%).

The authors of this study suggest that improving hospital work environments and preferentially hiring BSN nurses hold particular promise for increasing nurse specialty certification.

Elevating Rural Care

“Rural hospitals face unique challenges in the RN workforce, such as not having the specialty resources that large, urban hospitals have,” said Childress Regional Medical Center (CRMC) CEO **Holly Holcomb, BSN, RN, CHT**. “We rely on the expertise of our specialty certified nursing staff to augment and support critical trauma and emergency care. Having certified nurses on our team improves patient care outcomes, builds professional credibility, and reassures our patients we are committed to lifelong learning and excellent patient care.”

Located in Childress, Texas, CRMC is a 2024 Chartis Top 100 Rural Hospital and has made the list for eight of the last nine years. “Nurses who maintain national certification in their specialty highlight our commitment to our community and surrounding areas to provide high quality, professional care,” said CRMC’s **Holcomb**. “Childress Regional is committed to supporting and promoting specialty certification. Nurses who earn national certification receive a 2% base pay increase. This financial investment promotes nurse satisfaction and encourages professional growth. We also offer an annual stipend that nurses can use for CEs to maintain certification and for renewal fees.”

Passionate Nurses Who Lift Up Their Teams

“The attribute of specialty certified nurses that resonates most for me is their pride in their certification. I still get chills each time a nurse lets me know they passed their exam. You can just feel their passion for their specialty,” said **Mo Minard, MS(Ed), RN, CENP, EMT-P**, Director of Nursing, Emergency Centers Farmington Hills & Livonia

Outpatient Campus, Corewell Health East-Farmington Hills, in Michigan. “I also greatly admire our certified nurses’ ability to communicate the most up-to-date information related to practice. They love to ensure their colleagues have the latest and greatest evidence from their specialty.”

Across Corewell Health’s over 15,000 RNs, Minard said, specialty certification is promoted during recruitment, onboarding, and consistently thereafter by leaders.

Cathlyn Robinson, MSc(A), RN, CEN, TCRN, Emergency Services Line Director of Operations with RWJBarnabas Health in New Jersey, said her system understands that knowledgeable, dedicated and specialized nurses are essential to its mission to deliver comprehensive, compassionate and innovative patient care.

“Learning, growth, taking pride in our knowledge and skills, and showing others what we really can do is invigorating. We need to support nurses to ensure they remain resilient and able to do their important jobs. We need to support nurses to love their jobs and love nursing.”

“We have found the keys to encourage BCEN certification and maintenance of certification include corporate exam purchases, study materials, free live online CEN review courses, and mentorship. ED RNs who are certified receive yearly or hourly compensation. These methods are facilitated by the collaboration of our clinical nurse educators and directors of nursing, and backed by nursing leadership’s commitment to support certification,” said Robinson.

Tying It All Together

Leaders and executives who both champion and institutionalize maintenance of certification successfully inspire and assure sustainable cultures of recertification support. Loma Linda University Health’s **Nelly Utebor** particularly recommends integrating recertification into performance metrics. “When you align recertification with performance metrics, making it a key component of professional advancement within the organization, you help ensure that recertification is integral to a nurse’s career development.”

For the remarkable RNs who commit to maintaining their hard-earned board credentials, the personal and professional rewards can be profound ... and the virtuous cycle they enter ripples out to benefit their patients, teams, units, institutions and communities. After all, it is by virtue of the recertification process that nursing specialty certification offers a powerful framework to ensure continuing competence.

When leaders at every level partner with nurse educators to sustain specialty excellence through recertification—taking care to remove barriers, provide meaningful and impactful incentives, and recognize and celebrate the national specialty certification status of these remarkable nurses—RNs working across the emergency spectrum and in every specialty truly thrive.

Roadmap to Recertification Success

Organizations keen to ensure their nurses maintain specialty certification do these 4 things:



Incentivize ongoing certification



Address the well-known barriers
of cost and time head on



Integrate specialty certification into
professional development goals
and advancement requirements



Celebrate recertification and
visibly recognize nurses' national
board certification status



BCEN Resources for Nurses, Educators and Leaders

BCEN offers a wide range of resources for emergency, pediatric emergency, trauma, flight, critical care ground transport and burn nurses committed to maintaining their specialty certifications, as well as for educators, nurse leaders and employers who support recertification.

Recertification resources:

BCEN Learn online professional development platform, featuring CE courses, free CE webinars, on-demand CE conferences, practice exams, and CE games.

BCEN Voucher Program for volume discounts on recertification.

Free **Nurse Recognition Toolkit**.

Free **Make Your Case Toolkit** for RNs.

Free **Support Your Nurse Toolkit** for educators.

BCEN Learn Live regional conferences, where RNs can earn CEs and network with certified RNs.

BCEN's **CEN Review Course: Essentials of Emergency Nursing**, for CENs earning initial certification & recertifying by exam.

BCEN Recertify page, including recertify by CE and by exam checklists.

For more, visit BCEN's resource hub at bcen.org/resources/.



When & How to Recertify

Most nursing specialty boards require RNs to renew their credentials every 3-5 years.

Emergency, trauma, transport and burn nurses holding a BCEN credential must renew every 4 years by retesting OR completing 100 contact hours of nursing CE.

CE activities that count toward BCEN renewal:

- CE courses, Webinars and Conferences
- Presentations or Lectures
- Academic Credit
- Precepting a Student Nurse
- Authoring
- Poster Presentations
- Specialty Exam Item Writing

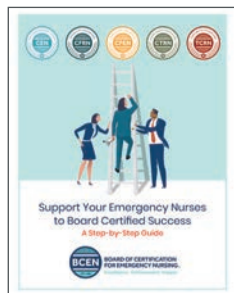
At least 75 hours must be clinical content specific to the specialty, and 50 hours must be from an accredited CE provider.

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Raising the Bar: Why Board Certification for RNs Matters

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