

# A Health Care Consumer's Guide to **Advanced Practice Registered Nursing**



**NCSBN**

*National Council of State Boards of Nursing*

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*Certified Nurse Practitioner (CNP)*

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**Y**ou, your friends or your family may have already experienced care from an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). The more than 267,000 APRNs in the U.S. represent a powerful force in the health care system, working in a variety of settings, such as hospitals, clinics and private offices. As a vital part of the health care team, they are educationally prepared to assess, diagnose and manage patient problems, order tests and prescribe medications.



Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)

APRNs have advanced education, knowledge and skills to care for a specific population of patients, including adults, families, children and infants in one of four APRN roles: certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA); certified nurse-midwife (CNM); clinical nurse specialist (CNS); or certified nurse practitioner (CNP). Boards of nursing (BONs) in each state license and regulate the practice of APRNs.

As new health care laws become effective and newly insured individuals seek care, many individuals will find that there are not enough physicians to provide needed services. Access to care could be increased if APRNs are allowed to practice to the full extent of their education and training in all states. Research shows patients cared for by APRNs do as well as those cared for by other providers. Additionally, patients of APRNs expressed being highly satisfied with the care they received.

APRNs can provide care in places where there is a shortage of physicians and health care is badly needed. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services more than 66 million people live in areas where there is a shortage of health care professionals and one-fourth of America's population lives in rural areas with little or no access to local health care. APRNs could potentially provide much needed services and care in these areas.

## Consensus Model for APRN Regulation

The Consensus Model for APRN Regulation was introduced in 2008 to establish national standards for uniform regulation of APRNs in all jurisdictions. The APRN Consensus Model was developed by 48 APRN nursing organizations nationwide that have pledged support for these standards. This model is a way for all states to agree upon a strategy that will reduce barriers to care.

As outlined in the APRN Consensus Model, the basic requirements for every APRN in every jurisdiction include:

- Graduate education for all nurses wishing to practice as an APRN to assure the public that APRNs have achieved advanced education from an accredited program;
- Certification by a national nursing certification body verifying that APRNs have passed a psychometrically sound examination that measures competency;
- Licensure and regulation by state/territorial BONs, whose mission is to protect the public and promote patient safety by enforcing the laws and regulations of the jurisdiction's nurse practice act;
- Use of the APRN title followed by the specific role the APRN is authorized to practice (CNP, CNS, CRNA or CNM) to eliminate doubt about who is providing care and foster uniform recognition for APRNs; and
- National accreditation of all APRN programs by an accrediting organization that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

These national standards increase patient safety by ensuring that all APRNs meet the same qualifications for practice. By adopting the APRN Consensus Model, health care consumers in all jurisdictions will have access to comprehensive care by APRNs.



Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA)

## The APRN Consensus Model and You

By enacting the standards of the APRN Consensus Model, you can trust that you are receiving care from a qualified health care provider who has been certified, licensed and is regulated by a BON, thus increasing access to health care and assuring patient safety and public protection.

When nursing regulation is changed, it is usually the result of legislative or administrative revisions to a state's nurse practice act. You can make a difference in whether certain regulations are changed and ***your voice can be a vital part of making sure that access to health care is increased.*** Find out what is going on in your state and tell your legislators that you support the Consensus Model for APRN Regulation. Visit the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN®) website at [www.ncsbn.org/aprn.htm](http://www.ncsbn.org/aprn.htm) to learn more.

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Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM)

To find the board of nursing in your state/territory visit  
<https://www.ncsbn.org/contactbon.htm>.

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[communications@ncsbn.org](mailto:communications@ncsbn.org).



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