



**ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES  
INSTRUCTIONS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC), defines certification as 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. The ultimate goal of professional certification is to assist consumers in making informed choices regarding their health-care practitioners. To that end, ABSNC provides an accreditation process for specialty nursing certification programs. ABSNC accreditation signifies compliance with rigorous standards for certification programs and is a further testament to the public of the high quality and credibility of an individual nurse's certification credential.

### **ABSNC History**

Following three years of dialogue within the nursing community to create uniformity in nursing certification and to increase public awareness of the value of quality certification to health care, the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) was incorporated in 1991. The development effort was generously supported by the Macy Foundation. Soon afterward, the ABSN created the Accreditation Council, an autonomous accrediting body within the organization. In 2007, ABNS began a process for creating a separate, autonomous body to perform the accreditation function. By 2009, the ABNS Accreditation Council was renamed the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC) and a separate corporation was established.

The ABSNC is governed by an elected Board of Directors. Each board member represents an organization with at least one accredited certification program.

The ABSNC maintains a website, [www.absnc.org](http://www.absnc.org). The website details all information regarding the governance and accreditation of the organization.

### **ACCREDITATION STANDARDS**

Each organization applying for certification must demonstrate that the nursing certification program meets all standards of ABSNC. A standard is defined as "an authoritative principle or rule that provides a model or pattern of guidance." Each standard includes a rationale providing an explanation of the meaning of the standard and its importance. The criteria for each standard can be considered the basis for making judgments about the certification program's ability to meet the standard. Additionally, required documentation for each standard is outlined.

Compliance with all standards must be demonstrated for initial accreditation and reaccreditation to be granted. Reviewers will determine if an application meets the criteria based on the documentation provided. To be approved for accreditation, certifying organizations must provide the requested evidence (e.g., policy and procedure, description/narrative) that each criterion is met.

### **WHEN IS AN ORGANIZATION READY TO SUBMIT AN INITIAL ACCREDITATION APPLICATION?**

In addition to being able to submit documentation of compliance with each standard, a certifying organization must have certification statistics data to report for at least 1 year of certification or for a minimum of 100 candidates, whichever occurs first.

## **SUBMISSION OF A LETTER OF INTENT**

An organization seeking initial accreditation from ABSNC must submit an electronic Letter of Intent to the ABSNC office at [info@absnc.org](mailto:info@absnc.org) at least 90 calendar days before application submission.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Applications are to be submitted on the ABSNC Certification Management Platform (CMS). The application process is designed to allow the applicant organization to demonstrate a certification program meets each ABSNC Standard by assessing the certification program and providing evidence of compliance with the ABSNC Standards. Additional information or clarification may be requested of the organization submitting an application. Whenever additional information is requested more than three times, the applicant organization must resubmit the application and associated fees.

Applications for initial accreditation may be submitted at any time during the year. Each application will be evaluated individually by an ABSNC Review Team. Every effort is made to complete the application review and determination of accreditation status within 45 business days after receipt of an application. When three to five applications are submitted at the same time organizations will be notified within 60 business days. All application materials will be treated confidentially.

Upon completion of the review process, individual Review Teams make a final accreditation recommendation to the ABSNC Board of Directors. Approval from two-thirds of ABSNC Board of Directors is required for accreditation approval.

## **ACCREDITATION PERIOD**

ABSNC accreditation is granted for a period of 5 years. Providing no major changes have been made to the accredited certification program, accreditation must be renewed annually by submitting the Annual Compliance Report and paying appropriate fees. Annual reports must be submitted to ABSNC to confirm continuing compliance with Standards.

Organizations must seek reaccreditation every 5 years. Renewal notices are circulated to accredited organizations 24, 18, and 12 months from the Learning Builder platform before the accreditation expiration date. Applications must be submitted no later than 6 months before the expiration date to allow time for review before accreditation expires. Expiration occurs on the last day of the renewal month.

## **RECOGNITION OF ACCREDITATION**

Upon approval of accreditation or re-accreditation, an organization's certification program is recognized with a certificate and listing on the ABSNC website [www.absnc.org](http://www.absnc.org).

Organizations with accredited programs are encouraged to communicate this achievement on their websites and on all publications. ABSNC logo art will be provided in conjunction with the recognition process.

## **APPEAL OF ACCREDITATION DECISIONS**

In instances in which accreditation is not awarded, the applicant organization will be given specific reasons for the denial of accreditation. A copy of the ABSNC "Reconsideration and Appeal of Accreditation Decision" policy and procedure will accompany notice of denial of accreditation or reaccreditation.

## **FEES**

### **Application Fee**

A non-refundable application fee via check payable to "ABSNC" or an ACH must be submitted in association with the application. At the time of application submission, details regarding application fee payment must be provided to complete the application submission process.

ABNS Regular Member organizations benefit from reduced accreditation application fees. The application fee for organizations with no approved programs is \$1000 per certification program submitted. The fee for ABNS members is \$1000 for 1 – 2 certification programs, and \$1250 for 3 – 5 certification programs. Multiple certification programs must be submitted at the same time to obtain the reduced fees. An invoice for submission of fees is [available](#).

Commencing on January 1, 2027, the fee structure for ABNS members will be \$1,000 for one (1) application. For multiple applications submitted at the same time, the fee structure will be:

- 2 applications - \$1,250
- 3 applications - \$1,500
- 4 applications - \$1,750
- 5 applications - \$2,000.

### **Annual Renewal Fees**

Upon notification of approval of initial accreditation, the applicant organization will pay annual accreditation fees within 60 days of receipt of notification of approval. These fees are prorated based on the quarter in which the application is approved. An invoice will be sent to the organization by the ABSNC office.

Annual renewal fees are based on a formula using candidate numbers as of June 30 each year. Annual renewal fees are due to ABSNC by August 1 of each year. Fees for an organization's first accreditation are prorated depending on the time of year an application is submitted.

For organizations submitting an application for reaccreditation, fees are paid annually as noted on the annual [invoice](#).

## **ACCREDITATION OF JOINTLY OWNED CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS**

ABSNC accepts applications for accreditation of certification programs jointly owned by more than one nursing certification organization. In the case of jointly owned certification programs:

- ALL accreditation standards apply to all owners.
- ALL policies and procedures adopted for the management of the program must be adopted and implemented by all owners.
- ALL owners must submit copies of policies and procedures that govern their individual functions as requested in the standards (e.g., public member; autonomy from the member organization in terms of governance, finance and certification program management).
- A copy of the agreement between owners must be provided as part of the accreditation application. Information related to financial impact may be redacted if desired by the organization.

#### **CHECKLIST FOR SUBMISSION OF ACCREDITATION APPLICATION**

- ✓ All Standards narrative and corresponding attachments have been completed and submitted, indicated as "In Review"
- ✓ Issued a payment to "ABSNC" for the appropriate application fee.