



**ACCREDITATION BOARD FOR SPECIALTY NURSING
CERTIFICATION, INC.**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE
MANUAL**

Last updated 11/2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Policy 1	Definition, Vision, Mission, Purpose, Authority, Responsibility
Policy 2	Board of Directors: Composition, Eligibility, Resignation, Vacancies
Policy 3	Nominations/Elections/Appointments
Policy 4	ABSNC Board Member Responsibilities
Policy 5	Role Description, Lead Volunteer Psychometrician and Other Volunteer Psychometricians in Review Team Pool
Policy 6	Role Description, Public Member
Policy 7	Termination of ABSNC Membership
Policy 8	Removal of Members of the ABSNC Board of Directors
Policy 9	Meetings/Quorum/Attendance at Meetings/Record Keeping
Policy 10	Voting
Policy 11	Review of and Changes to Bylaws, Policy, Procedures, and Accreditation Standards
Policy 12	Fees
Policy 13	Travel and Expense Reimbursement
Policy 14	Financial Policies
Policy 15	Duties and Responsibilities of Review Teams
Policy 16	Accreditation and Reaccreditation Application Process
Policy 18	Appeal of Accreditation Decisions
Policy 19	Annual Compliance Reporting and Reporting Major Certification Program Changes
Policy 20	Ethical Considerations, Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest, And Unauthorized Representation
Policy 21	Quality Improvement Program
Policy 22	Revocation of Accreditation Due to Misconduct/Failure to Maintain Compliance with Accreditation Standards
Policy 23	Students of Psychometricians Reviewing Accreditation Applications
Policy 26	Selling an Accredited Certification Program
Policy 27	Requests by Accredited Organizations for Extension to Submit Reaccreditation Application
Policy 28	Records Retention
Policy 29	Whistleblower

ABSNC

POLICY 1 **DEFINITION, VISION, MISSION, PURPOSE, AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY**

DATE APPROVED: **DATE REVIEWED: 5-09; 5-15; 3-17** **DATE REVISED: 2-03; 10-08; 5-09**

Policy

Section 1.1 Definition

The Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC) is an elected body responsible for decisions related to the accreditation of nursing and associated certification programs.

Section 1.2 Vision

The vision of ABSNC is *to advance excellence in health care through specialty nursing and associated non-RN certification programs.*

Section 1.3 Mission

The mission of ABSNC is *to recognize quality specialty nursing and associated non-RN certification programs through accreditation.*

Section 1.4 Purpose

The purpose of ABSNC is *to provide a mechanism for accreditation of quality specialty nursing and associated non-RN certification programs.*

Section 1.5 Authority and Responsibility of the Board of Directors

The ABSNC Board of Directors shall:

- review accreditation applications;
- make decisions relating to the initial accreditation and reaccreditation of applicant organizations' certification programs;
- periodically review, maintain, and recommend revisions to the ABSNC Accreditation Standards;
- elect the President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer of the ABSNC;
- set policies and procedures related to the work of ABSNC;
- promote ABSNC accreditation of specialty nursing and associated non-RN certification programs.

ABSNC

POLICY 2

ABSNC BOARD OF DIRECTORS: COMPOSITION, ELIGIBILITY, RESIGNATION, VACANCIES

DATE APPROVED:

DATE REVIEWED: 5-09

DATE REVISED: 9-05; 5-09, 4-13, 6-17

Policy

Section 2.1 Composition

The Board of Directors of ABSNC, Inc., shall be composed of no less than seven and no more than 10 Directors, including the officers: President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer; at least one Psychometrician; at least one Public Member; and not less than two nor more than five Directors at Large.

The Directors are elected from the body of ABSNC accredited organizations, and at least one must represent an organization that offers an accredited advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) certification examination. The majority of the Board members and the President must be RNs. An accredited organization may have no more than one representative on the ABSNC at any given time.

ABNS President or Designee

The ABNS President or designee shall serve as an ex-officio member of the board without the power to vote. The ABNS President is not required to represent an ABNS member organization with an ABSNC-accredited certification program.

Section 2.2 Eligibility for Board Positions

Directors

Only representatives of organizations with currently accredited programs are eligible for election to the ABSNC. Nominees for ABSNC RN Director must meet the following criteria: (1) minimum of a baccalaureate in nursing, advanced degree in nursing preferred; (2) at least 3 years' experience in certification; and (3) at least one representing an organization that offers an ABSNC-accredited APRN certification.

Non-RN Director nominees must meet the following eligibility criteria: (1) minimum of a baccalaureate degree, advanced degree preferred; and (2) at least 3 years' experience in certification.

If the accreditation of the organization represented by the board member expires or is denied, the member must resign from the board.

Public Member

See Policy 6 for eligibility criteria for Public Member.

Lead Volunteer Psychometrician

See Policy 5 for eligibility criteria for volunteer psychometricians, from who the Lead Volunteer Psychometrician (LVP) is chosen.

Section 2.3 Terms of Office

All members of the ABSNC shall serve a 3-year term of office. Members of the board may serve two consecutive terms and, with at least a 1-year break in service, may serve a maximum of two more terms.

POLICY 2

**ABSNC BOARD OF DIRECTORS: COMPOSITION, ELIGIBILITY, RESIGNATION,
VACANCIES (CONTINUED)**

Officers of the Board of Directors shall serve a 2-year term of office and may seek a second term. No officer may serve more than 4 years in one office.

All Board members shall assume office on July 1 following their election. Terms end on June 30.

Section 2.4 Resignation

Any member of the ABSNC may resign at any time by giving written notice to the ABSNC President or, in the case of the resignation of the President, to the Secretary/Treasurer.

Section 2.5 ABSNC Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy within the ABSNC, the Board shall appoint a qualified individual to fulfill the unexpired term created by a resignation. In the event of a vacancy among the elected members of the ABSNC, the President may choose to leave the position unfilled provided the required minimum numbers on the ABSNC are maintained.

ABSNC

POLICY 3

NOMINATIONS/ELECTIONS/APPOINTMENT PROCESSES

DATE APPROVED: 5-09

DATE REVIEWED: 5-09

DATE REVISED: 4-13; 6-15, 6-17

Policy

Section 3.1 Elections of Directors

Elections for ABSNC Director will be held annually as needed, in conjunction with the ABNS Spring Assembly.

The Directors are elected by ABSNC-accredited organizations. A representative from each accredited organization shall be eligible to vote in the election for ABSNC directors. Each accredited organization is entitled to cast one vote.

Voting by proxy is not permitted.

Section 3.2 Election of Officers

The President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer of the ABSNC are elected from among the Board of Directors by the members of the Board for a 2-year term. All members of the Board of Directors may vote in the election of officers. The Public Member may be elected to the office of Secretary/Treasurer.

Section 3.3 Appointment of Public Member

The ABSNC Board of Directors will seek candidates for the Public Member position and appoint a qualified individual to serve on the ABSNC Board of Directors for a 3-year term of office as described in this policy and Policy 6.

Section 3.4 Appointment of Lead Volunteer Psychometrician

The ABSNC Board of Directors will seek candidates for the Lead Volunteer Psychometrician position and appoint a qualified individual to serve on the ABSNC Board of Directors for a 3-year term of office as described in this policy and Policy 5.

Procedure

Elections of Directors

1. A Call for Nominations will be disseminated by the Vice President or designee to the members of ABSNC following the ABNS Fall Assembly.
2. The ABSNC Vice President is responsible for assembling a slate of candidates for the elected Director positions.

POLICY 3

NOMINATIONS/ELECTIONS/APPOINTMENT PROCESSES (CONTINUED)

- a. It is the responsibility of each ABSNC nominee to procure the employer's assurances that he or she can be available for ABSNC meetings. In addition, the nominee must ensure he or she will have continued sponsorship by the ABSNC member organization.
- b. The Vice President instructs nominees to email a complete biographical form to a designated address by the required deadline date.
3. The ABSNC Vice President or designee will prepare and distribute a slate of nominees and their biographical forms to the members of ABSNC no later than 30 days before the election.
4. Voting will occur by written ballot. Tellers appointed by the ABNS President at the beginning of the ABNS business meeting also may serve as Tellers for the ABSNC election process. Tellers will disseminate, collect, and count all ballots, and provide a verbal and written report on the election results to the ABSNC President. The ABSNC President will announce the results of the election to the Assembly.
5. Following the election, the Vice President or designee will disseminate an email to ABSNC members announcing the results.
6. The Vice President or designee will prepare and disseminate a press release for each elected candidate.

Election of ABSNC Officers

1. Open officer positions of the ABSNC are filled annually through election by the Board of Directors before the beginning of the new fiscal year.
2. Board members elected to an officer position will have their term on the Board extended, if necessary, to allow them to serve the full term of the office to which they have been elected.
3. The ABSNC Vice President or designee will seek nominations for officer positions from the ABSNC Board of Directors in May (before the beginning of the new fiscal year) and prepare a slate of nominees.
 - a. If only one nominee has been identified for an office, he or she shall be acknowledged at the Board meeting when elections would be held as filling the officer position without election by electronic ballot.
 - b. Voting will occur by electronic ballot if more than one nominee for a given office is on the slate. The ABSNC President will appoint the Public Member and Lead Volunteer Psychometrician to serve as Tellers. The Vice President or designee will disseminate the electronic ballot and the Tellers will collect and count all ballots, and provide an electronic report on the election results to Board of Directors.
4. Following the election of officers, the Vice President or designee will disseminate an email to ABSNC members announcing the results.

POLICY 3

NOMINATIONS/ELECTIONS/APPOINTMENT PROCESSES (CONTINUED)

5. The Vice President or designee will prepare and disseminate a press release for each elected Director.

Selection and Appointment of Public Member

1. The Vice President shall oversee the process for selecting and appointing the Public Member.
2. Three months before the end of the current Public Member's term of office, the Vice President or designee will disseminate a Call for Nominations to the members of ABSNC.
3. When possible, a minimum of two nominees will be presented to the Board of Directors for consideration and interview. The Vice President and two members of the Board of Directors appointed by the President will interview the nominees. After the interviews, they will recommend a candidate for consideration and approval by the Board of Directors.
4. The Vice President or designee will notify the nominees in writing of the Board's decision.
5. Following the appointment of the Public Member, the Vice President or designee will disseminate an email to the members of ABSNC announcing the selection of the Public Member.
6. The Vice President or designee will prepare and disseminate a press release regarding the appointment of the Public Member.

Selection and Appointment of Lead Volunteer Psychometrician

1. The current Lead Volunteer Psychometrician (LVP) shall oversee the process for selecting and appointing a new LVP.
2. The process for selection shall occur at least 3 months before the end of the current LVP's term.
3. The current LVP will identify individuals from the current pool of volunteer psychometricians who serve on review teams to determine their interest in serving as the LVP.
4. The Vice President and two members of the Board of Directors appointed by the President will interview the nominees. After the interview, they will recommend a candidate for consideration and approval by the Board of Directors.
5. The current LVP will notify the nominees of the Board's decision.
6. Following the appointment of the LVP, the Vice President or designee will disseminate an email to the members of ABSNC announcing his or her selection.
7. The Vice President or designee will prepare and disseminate a press release regarding the appointment of the LVP.

ABSNC

POLICY 4

ABSNC BOARD MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

DATE APPROVED: 5-09

DATE REVIEWED: 5-09

DATE REVISED: 6-17

Policy

Section 4.1 ABSNC Members

ABSNC Board members shall be available for meetings called by the President and will perform assigned duties assigned in a professional, ethical, and timely manner. It is the responsibility of each ABSNC member to identify personal conflicts of interest and make these known to the ABSNC President.

In accordance with the bylaws, the Board of Directors shall appoint a qualified individual to fill the unexpired term created by the resignation of a Director of the Board. The Board of Directors will also appoint a qualified Director to fill the unexpired term created by the resignation of an officer of the Board.

Section 4.2 President

The President of the ABSNC shall:

- serve as its spokesperson on matters of accreditation;
- call and preside over meetings of the ABSNC;
- organize and supervise ABSNC business, including appointing teams to review accreditation applications and ad hoc committees to perform other work of the ABSNC;
- serve as an ex-officio non-voting member of the ABNS Board of Directors;
- provide a report of ABSNC activities to the ABNS Board at each meeting and to the ABNS Spring and Fall Assemblies;
- preside over the election of the incoming ABSNC President;
- appoint a Vice President or Secretary/Treasurer, if needed, in the event either position becomes vacant between meetings.

Section 4.3 Vice President

The Vice President of the ABSNC shall:

- preside over meetings and perform other duties of the President in the event of a vacancy in the position of President until a new President is elected;
- act as President in issues relating to the elected President of the ABSNC or the organization represented by the President;
- assemble a slate of nominees for the election of ABSNC Directors;
- oversee the selection of the Public Member and Lead Volunteer Psychometrician.

Section 4.4 Secretary/Treasurer

The Secretary/Treasurer shall:

- ensure minutes of meetings of the ABSNC Board of Directors are maintained;

POLICY 4**ABSNC BOARD MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES (CONTINUED)**

- ensure meeting minutes are distributed to the ABSNC Board of Directors within 30 days of a meeting;
- ensure meeting minutes are distributed to ABSNC member representatives within 30 days of Board approval;
- ensure notification of meetings, meeting minutes, Board roster with officers identified, and financial statements are provided to the registered agent of ABSNC;
- ensure all fiscal records are maintained;
- provide oversight for the fiscal affairs of ABSNC, including receipt and disbursement of funds;
- ensure an annual audit or review is performed, and relevant tax and other reports are filed;
- ensure a Directors' and Officers' liability insurance policy is maintained;
- sign checks payable to the CEO, sign checks in the absence of the CEO, and countersign checks over the designated limit;
- provide reports and interpretations of the financial condition of ABSNC to the Board of Directors and ABSNC members;
- serve as Chair of the Finance Committee;
- develop and recommend an annual operating budget to the Board of Directors, in collaboration with the Finance Committee.

Section 4.5 Public Member

See Policy 6 for role description of the Public Member.

Section 4.6 Lead Volunteer Psychometrician (LVP)

See Policy 5 for role description of the LVP.

ABSNC

POLICY 5

ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR LEAD VOLUNTEER PSYCHOMETRICAN AND
OTHER VOLUNTEER PSYCHOMETRICIANS IN REVIEW TEAM POOL

DATE APPROVED: 5-09

DATE REVIEWED: 5-09

DATE REVISED: 6-17

Policy

Lead Volunteer Psychometrician Section

5.1 Appointment

The Lead Volunteer Psychometrician (LVP) is appointed by the Board of Directors from individuals recommended by the current LVP and interviewed by the Vice President and two board members.

Section 5.2 Term of Office

The LVP shall serve a 3-year term of office. He or she may serve two consecutive terms and, with at least 1 year break in service, may serve a maximum of two more terms.

Section 5.3 Voting Rights

The LVP is a voting member of the ABSNC Board of Directors.

Section 5.4 Qualifications

The LVP must meet qualifications for volunteer psychometricians.

Section 5.5 Responsibilities

In addition to assuming responsibilities of volunteer psychometricians, the LVP must:

1. attend and participate in meetings, teleconferences, and assigned committee and ABSNC meetings as requested by the Board;
2. provide an orientation to newly appointed volunteer psychometricians;
3. serve as an interface between ABSNC and other volunteer psychometric consultants;
4. oversee the identification and recruitment of volunteer psychometricians;
5. provide education and orientation as needed to improve the knowledge of ABSNC members and the quality of decisions and processes;
6. designate an alternate psychometrician to attend meetings if unable to do so personally.

Other Volunteer Psychometric Consultants - Review Team

Pool Section 5.6 Appointment

The LVP identifies potential volunteer psychometricians to serve on the Review Team Pool and recommends their appointment to the Board of Directors.

POLICY 5

**ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR LEAD VOLUNTEER PSYCHOMETRICIAN AND
OTHER VOLUNTEER PSYCHOMETRICIANS IN REVIEW TEAM POOL
(CONTINUED)**

Section 5.7 Term of Office

Volunteer psychometricians serving in the Review Team Pool may serve indefinitely.

Section 5.8 Qualifications

All volunteer psychometricians must

1. have a willingness to serve and ability to communicate effectively, including listening and considering others' input;
2. be able to attend teleconference meetings of Review Teams;
3. be able to review accreditation applications and report findings in a timely and succinct manner;
4. be able to identify and report any personal or professional conflicts of interest regarding accreditation applications or other issues within the scope of ABSNC;
5. possess a master's degree or doctorate in psychometrics, measurement psychology, testing and evaluation, research and statistical analysis, or the equivalent;
6. have experience with credentialing program development and analysis, accreditation procedures, governance and management of nonprofit organizations, and knowledge of trends in credentialing and psychometric evaluation.
7. not be currently employed by a testing vendor.

Section 5.9 Responsibilities

All volunteer psychometricians should:

1. Provide advice and direction on matters of certification and accreditation, trends and developments in certification and accreditation, and psychometric evaluation to ABSNC as requested;
2. Become thoroughly familiar with ABSNC Bylaws and policies and procedures;
3. Become knowledgeable concerning the Standards and Policies and Procedures, and apply them in an impartial manner;
4. Review accreditation applications and participate in related discussions;
5. Read, understand, and annually sign a *Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest and Unauthorized Representation Statement* form;
6. Behave in a manner consistent with the role description and the ABSNC Bylaws, Policies and Procedures;
7. Review and respond to all correspondence in a timely manner;
8. Effectively and appropriately represent the organization to others; and
9. Receive no compensation for their work but be reimbursed for reasonable, authorized expenses related to ABSNC business.

ABSNC

POLICY 6 ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR PUBLIC MEMBER

DATE APPROVED: 5-09

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DATE REVISED: 6-17

Policy

Section 6.1 Appointment

The Public Member is appointed by the Board of Directors from among individuals recommended by Board or other members and interviewed by the Vice President and two other board members. Public Member candidates who are otherwise qualified and have served previously as Public Member of other boards, including nursing certification boards, are eligible to serve.

Section 6.2 Term of Office

The Public Member shall serve a 3-year term of office. He or she may serve two consecutive terms and, with at least a 1-year break in service, may serve a maximum of two more terms.

Section 6.3 Voting Rights

The Public Member is a voting member of the ABSNC Board of Directors.

Section 6.4 Qualifications

The Public Member must

1. have a willingness to serve, and an ability to communicate effectively, including listening and considering others' input;
2. be able to attend meetings of ABSNC Board of Directors and Review Teams;
3. be able to review accreditation applications and report findings in a timely and succinct manner;
4. represent the best interests of the public and, therefore, not be a current or past employee of or consultant to any member organization or testing vendor;
5. not be (1) a nurse or other healthcare professional; (2) a current or past employee of a nursing certifying organization or the related specialty membership organization; (3) a non-nursing professional who works or worked closely with nurses in the nursing specialty environment; and (4) employee of a testing vendor. The Public Member with a background in law, marketing, or finance is preferred.
6. be able to identify and report any personal or professional conflicts of interest regarding accreditation applications or other issues within the scope of ABSNC.

POLICY 6

ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR PUBLIC MEMBER (CONTINUED)

Section 6.5 Responsibilities

The Public Member should

1. Advocate for the interests of the general public, especially in areas involving public protection and safety;
2. Advocate for the views of the users of members' services;
3. Advocate for the value of certification to the public;
4. Become thoroughly familiar with ABSNC Bylaws, policies, and procedures
5. Serve on the Appeals Board;
6. Review accreditation applications as assigned and participates in related discussions;
7. Applies the Standards and Policies and Procedures in an impartial manner;
8. Read, understands, and annually sign a *Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest and Unauthorized Representations Statement* form;
9. Behave in a manner consistent with the role description and the ABSNC Bylaws and Policies and Procedures; and
10. Attend and participate in meetings, teleconferences, and assigned committee and ABSNC meetings as assigned by the Board.

ABSNC

POLICY 7 TERMINATION OF ABSNC MEMBERSHIP

DATE APPROVED: 5-09

DATE REVIEWED

DATE REVISED: 6-17

Section 7.1 Termination

ABSNC membership shall be terminated whenever the member organization's programs cease to be accredited by ABSNC.

Section 7.2 Notification

1. When a member organization's programs cease to be accredited by ABSNC, the ABSNC Secretary-Treasurer or designee will notify the member organization's chief staff officer in writing that the organization's membership has been terminated.
2. The Secretary-Treasurer or designee shall ensure that member's listing on the website is removed.
3. The Secretary-Treasurer or designee shall inform the members of ABSNC when an organization's programs are no longer accredited.

ABSNC

POLICY 8

REMOVAL OF MEMBERS OF THE ABSNC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DATE APPROVED: 5-09

DATE REVIEWED 3-17

DATE REVISED:

Policy

Section 8.1 Removal of ABSNC Board Members

Reports of misconduct by any member of the ABSNC Board of Directors may be reported to the Board by a member organization, by an organization applying for accreditation, or by another Board member. The Board of Directors will investigate the alleged behavior as described in this policy. If the complaint is substantiated, disciplinary action may be pursued as described in this policy.

Members of the ABSNC Board of Directors may remove themselves or be removed for any of the following reasons: inability to fulfill responsibilities; loss of sponsoring organization's ABSNC accreditation during representative's term on the ABSNC; failure to comply with ethical Standards required of an ABSNC Board member; failure to disclose a potential or actual conflict of interest; and/or failure to complete duties assigned in a professional, ethical, and timely manner.

A Board member who is removed from office pursuant to this policy shall be ineligible to serve as a Director or Officer in the future.

A decision to remove the Board member occurs upon a 2/3 vote of the board, exclusive of the charged member.

During any period in which an ABSNC Board member has been requested to resign or in which removal is pending, the member will not be included in meetings or work of the Board.

ABSNC decisions made after consideration of the member's written response are final.

Procedure

1. Alleged misconduct by any member of the Board of Directors may be reported to the Board by a member organization, by an organization applying for accreditation, or by another Board member. Such complaints shall be sent in writing (sent by traceable carrier, signature required, or certified mail) to the ABSNC President or, if the complaint is against the President, to the Vice President.
2. The President will notify the Board member of the charges in writing (sent by traceable carrier, signature required, or certified mail).
3. The accused Board member will have 30 days to respond to the charges in writing (sent by traceable carrier, signature required, or certified mail) to the President (or Vice President as required).

POLICY 8 REMOVAL OF MEMBERS OF THE ABSNC BOARD OF DIRECTORS (CONTINUED)

4. If the Board member does not respond to charges within 30 days, the Board of Directors may remove the member by a 2/3 vote exclusive of the charged member.
5. The President (or Vice President, if required) will investigate the charges.
6. The President will schedule a meeting to discuss the complaint, Board member's response, and findings of the investigation with the remaining members of the Board of Directors in a manner and at a time when all members can participate.
7. The Board member against whom the complaint has been filed shall be offered the opportunity to appear in person. However, the Board of Directors may act on the complaint without the appearance of the board member against whom a complaint has been filed.
8. The President will notify the Board member of the decision relative to the complaint received (sent by traceable carrier, signature required, or certified mail) within 10 business days following the meeting of the Board of Directors.
9. The decision of the Board of Directors is final.

ABSNC

POLICY 9

MEETINGS/QUORUM/ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS/RECORD KEEPING

DATE APPROVED: 5-09

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Policy

Section 9.1 Meetings

ABSNC is an autonomous, separately incorporated body with the authority and responsibility to conduct its business as described in its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.

ABSNC conducts business through formal meetings at least once a year in the spring, and also may meet in conjunction with the ABNS Fall Assembly. Additional meetings may be called at any time with appropriate notification of ABSNC members. All meetings are called and presided over by the President and are conducted according to common principles of parliamentary procedure designed to promote fairness and participation. ABSNC business may be conducted by conference call or other electronic means.

Regular meetings of the ABSNC may be held upon no less than 30 days' written notice, which shall include the date, time, and place of the meeting. The President of ABSNC shall request agenda items from ABSNC members at least 1 month before meetings.

The ABSNC President may call special meetings of the ABSNC with at least 2 days' notice. Only business designated in the call-to-meeting shall be conducted during a special meeting.

The meeting agenda, and the date, time, and location or mode of the meeting, will be sent to members via mail or electronic means at least 5 days prior to regular meetings.

Meetings held by conference call are considered official meetings.

Section 9.2 Quorum

A quorum must be present to conduct ABSNC business. A quorum is defined for the purposes of ABSNC as a simple majority of ABSNC Board members as long as either the President or Vice President is present.

Section 9.3 Attendance at Meetings –Open versus Closed Meetings

ABSNC will hold open Board meetings using the following guidelines:

- Only representatives from member organizations may attend/audit a Board meeting;
- Requests to attend a meeting must be submitted in writing to the CEO at least 30 days before the meeting. Permission to attend meetings will be granted at the discretion of the President.
- Representatives may speak at a meeting only after they are recognized by the President;

POLICY 9 MEETINGS/QUORUM/ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS/RECORDKEEPING (CONTINUED)

The ABSNC will close its meetings when the information discussed by the Board is related to accreditation decisions or when designated an executive session.

Section 9.4 Record Keeping

Official business proceedings will be recorded as minutes, which will be sent to ABSNC Board members within 30 days of an ABSNC meeting. Records of discussions and decisions relative to accreditation applications will be made on the *Review of Application Form for ABSNC Accreditation*. In addition, all letters to applicant organizations will be disseminated by the CEO and retained at the ABSNC office.

ABSNC

POLICY 10

VOTING

DATE APPROVED:

DATE REVIEWED: 5-09

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Policy

Section 10.1 Voting

Voting may be by voice, written ballot, mail, fax, or electronic as determined by the Board of Directors.

All ABSNC Board members are eligible to vote.

Section 10.2 Ballots

At the discretion of the President or by the request of any member of the ABSNC Board of Directors, a written, faxed, or mailed ballot may be used. Decisions made by fax or email ballot must be unanimous, excluding the Board member whose organization is being considered for accreditation/reaccreditation.

Procedure

1. If a written ballot is to be used during face-to-face meetings, the Vice President will make ballots available for voting as needed.

If a written ballot is requested during a conference call or other electronic meeting, the following procedure will be followed:

- a. A ballot will be prepared by the Vice President and mailed, faxed, or emailed as determined by the Board to Board members.
- b. The ballot will be returned to the ABSNC office by mail, fax, or email as determined by the Board for tally.
- c. Office staff will prepare and disseminate a teller's report via mail or email as determined by the Board of Directors, notifying Board members of the outcome of the vote.
- d. All Board votes approved via email shall be ratified at the next Board meeting and included in the minutes of that meeting.

ABSNC

POLICY 11 REVIEW OF AND CHANGES TO BYLAWS, POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

DATE APPROVED: **DATE REVIEWED: 5-09, 3-17** **DATE REVISED: 6-03; 5-09**

Policy

Section 11.1 Timetable for Review of Documents

ABSNC Bylaws and Policies and Procedures will be reviewed in even-numbered years.

ABSNC Accreditation Standards will be reviewed in odd-numbered years.

The ABSNC Secretary/Treasurer is responsible for ensuring review of these documents within the stated timetable.

Section 11.2 Approval of Changes to Bylaws

Amendments to ABSNC Bylaws must be approved by the ABSNC member organizations.

Proposed Bylaws amendments are made by the Board of Directors and sent to the members at least 30 days before a meeting at which members will be asked to vote on the amendments.

The method of voting by the ABSNC members shall be determined by the Board of Directors. If the vote takes place at a meeting of the members, then at least two-thirds (2/3) of the members present must vote in the affirmative for the proposed amendment to be approved. If the vote is conducted via mail, fax, or email ballot, at least two-thirds (2/3) of the entire membership must vote in the affirmative for approval of the measure.

Section 11.3 Approval of Changes to Policies and Procedures

All policies and procedures will be approved by the ABSNC Board of Directors.

Section 11.4 Approval of New or Changes to the Accreditation Standards

All substantive changes to the Rationale, Criteria, and Required Documentation of the Accreditation Standards shall be posted for a 30-day period of public comment by ABSNC members, ABSNC pool of volunteer psychometricians, and ABNS member organizations.

New Standards and revisions to existing accreditation Standards will be approved by the ABSNC Board of Directors after reviewing comments received during the period of public comment.

The date of implementation of new or revised Standards will be determined by the ABSNC Board of Directors.

Procedure

1. The President may appoint an ad-hoc committee to review and make suggestions for revision to the ABSNC Policy and Procedure Manual and the Accreditation Standards.

ABSNC

POLICY 12 FEES

DATE APPROVED: 5-09

DATE REVIEWED

DATE REVISED: 5-17

Policy

Section 12.1 Determination of Fees

All fees are determined by the ABSNC Board of Directors. They are reviewed periodically and revised as needed.

Section 12.2 Nonpayment of Fees

Nonpayment of dues or fees occurring 30 days following a final notice will result in an organization's loss of ABSNC membership and accreditation.

Procedures

1. Invoices for fees are disseminated by the ABSNC staff per the following timeline:
 - June 1: First fees invoice sent to chief staff officer of each ABSNC member organization, or volunteer representative if appropriate.
 - July 1: Second fees invoice sent to chief staff officer of ABSNC member organization, or volunteer representative if appropriate.
 - August 1: Fees due at ABSNC office. Fees received August 1 or after must be accompanied by a \$250 late fee.
 - October 1: Final fees invoice sent.

2. If fees are not received by the ABSNC office by November 1, accreditation will be terminated.

ABSNC

POLICY 13

TRAVEL AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

DATE APPROVED: 5-09

DATE REVIEWED

DATE REVISED: 6/17

Policy

Section 13.1 Reimbursement of Expenses

With the exception of the President, Lead Volunteer Psychometrician (LVP), and Public Member (PM), ABSNC Board members are supported financially in full by their organizations.

The ABSNC President, LVP, PM, CEO, and other designated individuals (e.g., meeting planner) will be reimbursed for travel and approved expenses related to ABSNC business.

Receipts are required for any expenditure of \$20 or more and are requested for items less than \$20 whenever possible.

The ABSNC Board of Directors will determine daily spending limit for meals, which will be reflected on the Expense Report Form instructions.

Any expense related to changing travel plans (e.g., changed airline reservation, early hotel departure) will be the responsibility of the traveler unless approved by the President.

Procedure:

1. Lodging
 - a. Lodging expenses for approved travelers will be paid for via a master account whenever possible.
 - b. Hotel reservations will be made by the national office for all meetings at pre-approved hotels with negotiated rates.
 - c. Incidental charges (e.g., room service, telephone charges) are not charged directly to the ABSNC master account and must be paid by the individual upon hotel checkout. Requests for reimbursement of such expenses should be submitted on the Expense Report Form.
 - d. Upon hotel checkout, ABSNC Board members should verify the correct number of nights has been billed. They should request a copy of the hotel bill and include it with the expense report if possible.
 - e. ABSNC will pay for lodging as follows: night before meeting, meeting days, and night of final meeting day if satisfactory departure arrangements are not feasible.

POLICY 13

TRAVEL AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT (CONTINUED)

2. Travel

- a. Economical coach service will be used for all domestic travel. Reservations should be made at least 30 days before travel whenever possible to ensure the most cost-effective fare. If it is more economical to pay for an additional night's hotel stay than a higher airfare, ABSNC will pay for the additional hotel night.
- b. If driving to ABSNC-related activities, mileage will be reimbursed at a rate consistent with IRS guidelines as approved by the Board of Directors. The total amount must not exceed the amount of an economy airline ticket.
- c. Pre-approval by the Secretary/Treasurer is required for any airfare over \$450.

3. Expense Reimbursement

- a. Expense reports must be submitted to the ABSNC office within 2 weeks following incurrence of an expense or attendance at a meeting. Receipts shall be attached to the expense report.
- b. All expense reports must be approved by the Secretary/Treasurer before reimbursement. Expense reports submitted by the Secretary/Treasurer will be approved by the President before reimbursement.

ABSNC

POLICY 14 FINANCIAL POLICIES

DATE APPROVED: **DATE REVIEWED: 5-09** **DATE REVISED: 6-03; 10-08; 5-09; 10-17**

Policy

Section 14.1 Approval of Policies

All financial policies and procedures will be approved by the ABSNC Board of Directors.

Section 14.2 Oversight of Policies

The Secretary/Treasurer of ABSNC shall be responsible for ensuring implementation of all financial policies and procedures, and shall review and report the financials to the Board of Directors at Board meetings

Section 14.3 Approval of Budget

The annual budget developed by the Secretary/Treasurer and CEO is presented to the Board of Directors by May 1 of each year and approved (or revised) by the Board of Directors.

Section 14.4 Responsibility of CEO

The Executive Director shall ensure (1) maintenance of the operating funds of ABSNC in federally insured accounts; (2) payments, on behalf of the corporation to occur in a timely manner (3) transfer of funds between accounts as deemed beneficial to the organization.

Section 14.5 Checks/Authorization of Check Signers

Any checks written against the ABSNC checking account in excess of \$5,000, with the exception of regular contractual obligations, will be approved by the Secretary/Treasurer or President.

The Board of Directors will approve check signers annually.

Section 14.6 Reporting financial status to the Board of Directors

The ABSNC checking account reconciliation and checks, Profit and Loss Statement, and Balance Sheet will be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer every month. The Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet will be sent to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will review the most current Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet at each board meeting.

ABSNC

POLICY 14 FINANCIAL POLICIES (Continued)

Section 14.7 Selection of Accounting Firm

The CEO will recommend an accounting firm located in the vicinity of the office. On an annual basis, the ABSNC Board of Directors will approve the accounting firm annually to conduct the current year-end audit or review and prepare the tax return.

ABSNC

POLICY 15 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF REVIEW TEAMS

DATE APPROVED: DATE REVIEWED: 5-09; 6-11; 3-14 DATE REVISED: 6-03; 5-09; 6-11, 6-17, 10-17

Policy

Section 15.1 Responsibility of Review Teams

ABSNC Review Teams are responsible for (1) conducting reviews of organizational applications for initial accreditation and reaccreditation; and (2) recommending the ABSNC Board of Directors approve or deny initial accreditation and reaccreditation.

Section 15.2 Maintaining Confidentiality/Avoiding Conflict of Interest/Unauthorized Representation

Review Teams and team members shall conduct reviews conscientiously, fairly, and impartially, recusing themselves from any review if a conflict of interest is identified. All Review Team members must sign the ABSNC Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest, and Unauthorized Representation Statement annually (see Policy 20) and adhere to commonly accepted standards of ethical behavior. A Review Team member may not be assigned to review an accreditation application of an organization with a competing program.

Section 15.3 Composition of Review Teams

Review Team members may be ABSNC Board members, former ABSNC Board members, volunteer psychometricians, and non-Board member appointees from accredited organizations. As determined by the President, each member organization of ABSNC may be asked to provide a representative to serve in the pool of non-Board review team members. The qualifications for service are the same the qualifications for an ABSNC Board member.

Each ABSNC Review Team will be composed of at least a volunteer psychometrician; one member of the ABSNC Board of Directors; and one other member. At least one member of the Review Team must be an RN.

No more than one individual from the same accredited organization may serve on a Review Team.

Review teams and the Review Team Leader will be appointed by the President, in collaboration with the CEO.

Section 15.4 Review of APRN Certification Programs

When reviewing an application for initial accreditation or reaccreditation of an APRN certification program, the Review Team must contain at least one member representing an APRN certification program accredited by ABSNC and possessing at least a master's degree in nursing.

POLICY 15 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF REVIEW TEAMS (CONTINUED)

Section 15.6 Meetings

Meetings (usually held as teleconferences) of the Review Team are called at the discretion of the Team Leader with consideration for ABSNC response deadlines. The management staff provides consultation and facilitates the business of the Review Team.

Section 15.7 Orientation of New Review Team Members

The President of ABSNC will designate a mentor to ensure an orientation is provided to new Review Team Members (e.g., Review Team Leader, other experienced team members). The mentor should contact the new member soon after the application has been sent to the Review Team to ensure discussion can occur before the team's initial conference call. The mentor should describe the process of application review, review member expectations and responsibilities, and offer suggestions about completing a thorough review.

Procedure

Accreditation applications are distributed electronically to Review Team members by the management staff. Email communication will include the date application was received in the office and the date the ABSNC response is due to the applicant organization.

1. All reviewers should review all portions of the application.
2. Review Team members review the application independently, then participate in a conference call to reach consensus related to the information provided to demonstrate compliance with each Standard.
3. The management staff will contact the Review Team leader to identify potential dates for the initial conference call, and poll Review Team members to confirm the date and time for the call. The date must allow a timely response to the applicant organization as required in Policy 16 (Application for Accreditation or Reaccreditation).
4. All correspondence, including requests for additional information, will be sent to the applicant organization by the management staff. Within 5 business days of a Review Team decision, the Review Team Leader will work with the management staff to compile the Review Team's comments and requests for additional information (if applicable), and distribute a draft letter to the Review Team for feedback and revision as needed. Following this process, the management staff will email the letter by the required deadline to the applicant organization with confirmation of receipt requested. Deficit letters will be sent over the signature of the ABSNC President.
5. The initial review of an application should be completed within 45 business days of receipt of the application. If additional information is required, the review timelines outlined in Policy 16 must be followed.

POLICY 15 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF REVIEW TEAMS (CONTINUED)

6. When the review is completed, the Review Team Leader directs the management staff to prepare a written recommendation that reflects the consensus of the reviewers (to approve or deny the program's initial accreditation or reaccreditation) for presentation to the ABSNC Board of Directors. The management staff issues a request for approval via email ballot to the ABSNC, excluding any individual who represents the applicant organization. Email ballots are returned to the management staff. A vote taken by an email ballot must be unanimous in its approval. If not unanimous, a conference call will be held.

7. Following final action by the Review Team and the ABSNC, the management staff will delete electronic files used by the Review Team and ensure all documents related to the application are maintained in the archives.

8. The organization making application is responsible for all expenses related to shipping of ABSNC materials (including those for the original application).

ABSNC

POLICY 16 ACCREDITATION AND REACCREDITATION APPLICATION PROCESS AND AGREEMENTS

DATE APPROVED: DATE REVIEWED: 5-09 DATE REVISED: 6-03; 3-06; 10-06; 5-09; 6-11; 7-13, 10-16, 6-17

Policy

Section 16.1 Agreement to Abide by Policies and Procedures

Organizations making application to ABSNC agree to abide by all ABSNC policies and procedures and to facilitate any onsite visits deemed necessary by ABSNC to verify information related to accreditation or reaccreditation.

Section 16.2 Confidentiality of Applications

All application materials will be treated confidentially. Applicant information is shared among ABSNC Board of Directors, the management staff, and Review Team members only. No information in an application may be released without the expressed consent of the applicant. After an application review is completed, one copy of the application and all related correspondence will be retained by ABSNC. One copy of the application will be returned to the applicant if requested; otherwise, it will be destroyed appropriately at the completion of a review. Any other related documents or notes used by Review Team members or the management staff also must be destroyed at the completion of a review.

Section 16.3 Eligibility to Submit an Accreditation or Reaccreditation Application

Specialty nursing certification boards seeking accreditation or reaccreditation of a certification program must submit the current application. Membership in ABNS is not a requirement. To be eligible for accreditation, certifying organizations must provide evidence of compliance with each standard. In addition, each applicant must be able to provide examination statistics for at least 1 year of testing or a minimum of 200 candidates (whichever occurs first).

Section 16.4 Timeframe for Submitting an Application

Initial Accreditation: Certifying organizations seeking initial program accreditation may submit any time throughout the year. The ABSNC office should be notified via email of an organization's intent to submit an initial application at least 90 calendar days before submission.

Reaccreditation: Before accreditation expiration, the organization must apply for reaccreditation. A renewal notice is sent to accredited organizations 24 months, 18 months, and 12 months before the expiration of accreditation. Applications must be submitted 6 months before the expiration date.

An application for accreditation or reaccreditation must be based on the most current edition of the Standards posted on the ABNS/ABSNC website at the time of submission. Each application will be evaluated individually by an ABSNC Review Team. **Refer to the attached timeline for additional information about application management.**

Section 16.5 Request for Additional Information

During the application review process, the applicant organization may be contacted for additional information or clarification. Organizations are expected to respond to the request for additional information or clarification within the requested time. Failure to do so may result in a delay in accreditation decision or a lapse in accreditation. If accreditation or reaccreditation cannot be recommended by the Review Team after the third review, the organization must reapply (including payment of additional application fees).

POLICY 16 ACCREDITATION AND REACCREDITATION APPLICATION PROCESS AND AGREEMENTS (CONTINUED)

If the need for additional information causes the review of an application for reaccreditation to continue past the accreditation expiration date, the status of program accreditation will be identified as "Pending" in the column labeled "Accreditation Expiration Date" on the ABSNC website.

Section 16.6 Approval of Accreditation or Reaccreditation

The Review Team makes a recommendation regarding accreditation to the ABSNC Board of Directors, which has sole authority in rendering a final decision. Approval from two-thirds of the ABSNC Board of Directors is required for approval of an application during an official business meeting, or unanimous approval if voting by email or fax ballot.

Section 16.7 Denial of Accreditation or Reaccreditation

If accreditation or reaccreditation is denied, the applicant organization will be given specific reasons. A copy of ABSNC Policy and Procedure "Reconsideration and Appeal of Accreditation Decision" will accompany notice of denial of accreditation.

Section 16.8 Accreditation Period

Initial certification program accreditation will be granted for a 5-year period beginning on the date of application approval. The 5-year period of reaccreditation will begin with the date of previous expiration.

Section 16.9 Accreditation Compliance

Organizations granted an ABSNC 5-year accreditation are required to submit an annual report with payment of annual fees in order to demonstrate continued compliance with ABSNC accreditation standards. Failure to demonstrate annual compliance may result in withdrawal or revocation of accreditation for the organization's program. Annual compliance for years 2-4 of the 5-year accreditation period is required for the certification program to be eligible for ABSNC reaccreditation.

Accreditation will be continued for years 2-4 of the accreditation period based on completion of the annual report demonstrating continued compliance with ABSNC standards and payment of annual fees.

Procedure

1. Instructions for submitting an initial application and reaccreditation application are detailed in the document *Accreditation Process - Instructions and Required Documentation* (available on the ABNS/ABSNC website).
2. Accreditation applications and all supporting documentation must be submitted to the ABSNC office on two USB drives. Paper applications and documentation are not accepted. The applicant organization will receive email notification of receipt of the application by the office. ABSNC recommends the applicant organization notify the ABSNC office before sending an application and use a carrier with tracking capability.
3. The applicant organization is responsible for all expenses related to shipping of materials, including those for the original application.
4. The application Cover Sheet must be submitted as page 1 of the application.

**POLICY 16 ACCREDITATION AND REACCREDITATION APPLICATION PROCESS AND AGREEMENTS
(CONTINUED)**

5. The application and all supporting documentation **must** be submitted as a single, bookmarked PDF file. Hyperlinks also **must** be added to the application to assist reviewers in locating specific referenced information. Refer to *Accreditation Process – Instructions and Required Documentation* (available on the ABNS/ABSNC website) for specific instructions.

6. A check payable to ABSNC for the non-refundable application fee must be submitted with the application and documentation. Applications submitted without the application fee will not be processed and will not be returned. Regular member organizations benefit from reduced accreditation application fees. The application fee for non-members is \$1000 per each certification program submitted. The fee for members is \$750 for 1 – 2 certification programs, and \$1000 for 3 – 5 certification programs.

7. Multiple certification programs must be submitted at the same time to obtain the reduced fees. However, no more than five certification programs from the same organization will be reviewed in any 3-month period.

8. The applicant organization will pay initial accreditation fees within 30 days of receipt of notification of accreditation approval. An invoice will be sent to the organization by ABSNC. Initial accreditation fees are **not** prorated based on the time of year accreditation is granted.

9. Accreditation fees are based upon a formula using per candidate numbers at the time of initial accreditation application. The fees are \$0.35 for each of the first 25,000 certificants and \$0.15 for each certificant over 25,000. The accreditation fees are capped at \$15,000 per year. The application must be based on the most current edition of the Standards posted on the ABNS/ABSNC website at the time of application.

10. Additional information may be requested from the applicant organization if there are deficiencies in or questions about the application. All requests for additional information will be made via email and in writing. **Refer to the attached timeline for additional information about application management.**

11. If accreditation is denied, the applicant organization will be given specific reasons. A copy of ABSNC Policy and Procedure 18 “Reconsideration and Appeal of Accreditation Decision” will accompany notice of denial of accreditation. All communication related to non-approval will be sent by email and registered mail, return receipt requested, or by other traceable methods that require a signature.

12. Applicants with denied programs may pursue appeal according to ABSNC policy or may reapply for accreditation. If the organization elects to reapply for accreditation, a new application must be resubmitted with appropriate application fees.

13. One USB drive with the application and associated information remains the property of the ABSNC and will be archived in a secure manner in the ABSNC office with copies of any correspondence. The remaining USB drive will be returned to the applicant organization as requested at its cost or destroyed in a secure manner.

14. While the most recently approved accreditation application for each certification is retained by the office, ABSNC reserves the right to retain older applications in archives.

POLICY 16 ACCREDITATION APPLICATION PROCESS AND AGREEMENTS (CONTINUED)

Timeline



* Excludes Federal holidays

** Applicant organization may submit a letter to the ABSNC to describe special circumstances that may warrant reconsideration of deadlines.

ABSNC

POLICY 18 APPEAL OF ACCREDITATION DECISIONS

DATE APPROVED: DATE REVIEWED: 5-09; 7-13 DATE REVISED: 6-03; 5-09; 7-13; 6-17

Policy

Section 18.1 Requests for Appeal

Applicant organizations may appeal a decision made by ABSNC to deny initial accreditation or reaccreditation. All costs associated with the appeal process are borne by the requesting organization.

Section 18.2 Record Keeping and Confidentiality

Notes and records made during consideration of the application or during the appeals process are confidential. Appellant organizations do not have access to confidential notes and records made by anyone associated with ABSNC.

Section 18.3 Correspondence

All communication related to an appeal must be in writing, including email, by the appellant organization and ABSNC.

Procedure

1. An applicant organization has 30 days from the postmark date of written notification to request an appeal of the ABSNC decision to deny initial accreditation or reaccreditation. The request must contain information regarding the organization's primary contact.
2. The appeal request must be sent by registered mail, return receipt requested, or by traceable carrier, signature required, to the ABSNC address of record.
3. As part of the appeal request, the organization may present only written information and data relevant to the Standards cited by ABSNC as the reason for the decision not to accredit or reaccredit.
4. A copy of all communication related to an appeal will be forwarded immediately to the ABSNC President. The ABSNC President will immediately notify legal counsel of the appeal. Legal counsel shall advise the ABSNC during the appeal process as needed.

POLICY 18**APPEAL OF ACCREDITATION DECISIONS (CONTINUED)**

5. The ABSNC President will name an Appeals Task Force consisting of two members of the ABSNC Board of Directors not involved in the initial review of the application and the Public Member (if also not involved in initial review of the application). In addition, Appeals Task Force member must not have any conflict of interest related to the appellant organization. If the reason for denial is psychometric in nature, the ABSNC President also will appoint a volunteer psychometrician not involved in the initial review to serve on the Appeals Task Force. One member of the Appeals Task Force will be appointed by the ABSNC President to serve as the Chair.
6. Once the Appeals Task Force has been appointed, all communication from the appellant will be sent to the Chair of the Appeals Task Force.
7. Hearings will be held at a time and place mutually convenient for both parties. The hearing may be face-to-face or virtual, as determined by the Appeals Task Force.
8. The appellant organization may have its own representative and two additional persons present at the hearing.
9. The ABSNC may have legal counsel present for consultation at the hearing.
10. A record of the proceedings will be made.
11. Within 30 days of the hearing the appellant will be notified of the decision by registered mail or traceable carrier, signature required. If accreditation has been withdrawn, the appellant organization will be instructed to remove all ABSNC accreditation related references from its publicly available communications (e.g., website, candidate handbooks, etc.)
12. Within 30 days of withdrawal of accreditation, the certifying organization and any other relevant organization (e.g. membership organization) must remove all references to accreditation by ABSNC from any published materials, including websites.
 - a. The ABSNC Appeals Task Force is responsible for ensuring this is done.
 - b. If all references to accreditation by ABSNC are not removed from any published materials, including websites, within 30 days of notification, the CEO will send a follow-up letter to the certifying organization by registered mail or traceable carrier, signature required. If the requested action is not taken within 15 days of receipt of this letter, the ABSNC legal counsel will be contacted regarding next steps.

ABSNC

POLICY 19 ANNUAL COMPLIANCE REPORTING AND REPORTING MAJOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM CHANGES

DATE APPROVED:

DATE REVIEWED: 5-09

DATE REVISED: 6-03; 5-09; 3-12

Policy

19.1 Remaining in Compliance with ABSNC Standards

Accredited certification programs must remain in compliance with the ABSNC Standards for the full 5-year accreditation term. Organizations with accredited programs will demonstrate ongoing adherence to accreditation standards through the annual report.

Section 19.2 Reporting Changes

ABSNC is to be informed in writing of any changes to an accredited certification program that may affect compliance with Accreditation Standards. The ABSNC CEO will receive, copy, and forward the program change reports to the ABSNC President and Lead Volunteer Psychometrician. If the report poses concerns relative to an organization's continuing compliance with Standards, the report may be sent to the full ABSNC Board of Directors for review and possible action.

Section 19.3 Failure to Submit Annual Compliance Report/Failure to Demonstrate Continued Compliance

ABSNC reserves the right to withdraw accreditation in the event an organization does not respond to requests for information within 30 days or when changes to certifications prevent the program from meeting accreditation Standards.

Section 19.4 Making major program changes

When organizations with accredited certification programs are planning a major program change, such as in program structure, eligibility, bylaws, public membership on the board, or other changes that relate directly to the Accreditation Standards, notice is to be given to the ABSNC within 30 days of the change.

Notice must be in writing and should include a general description of the changes and any anticipated effect on compliance with the Standards. ABSNC will determine if further evaluation is necessary.

It is the responsibility of the ABSNC to give constructive feedback to the organization about how the proposed changes may affect accreditation.

If further evaluation is necessary, the originating organization will provide ABSNC with additional information, including but not limited to the following:

- a. A description of the certification changes and planned implementation dates;
- b. An assessment of how the changes will affect the current certification candidates; and
- c. An evaluation of how a new product affects compliance with accreditation Standards.

POLICY 19

**ANNUAL COMPLIANCE REPORTING AND REPORTING MAJOR CERTIFICATION
PROGRAM CHANGES (CONTINUED)**

19.5 Late Fees/Incomplete Compliance Reports

ABSNC will charge an accredited organization a \$500 fee if the compliance report is submitted late (after October 31) or the application is incomplete when submitted.

Procedure

1. All organizations with accredited certification programs will be emailed an annual compliance report for their accredited certification programs – specific to RN, non-RN, APRN, and Portfolio certification programs – in July of each year. Each report details the specific information required to be reported. The annual report must be submitted to the ABSNC office electronically no later than October 31.
2. The CEO will email the annual reports received to the ABSNC President and Lead Psychometrician for review.
3. Representatives from programs not demonstrating compliance will receive notification of deficits no later than January 15 following the annual report due date of October 31. The organizations will have 30 days to submit an action plan to ABSNC to correct deficiencies and regain compliance with the standards. The plan must be completed no later than October 31 of the year of notification, in other words by the due date for the next compliance report. Programs not in compliance at that point will lose accreditation.
4. At the completion of the review of compliance reports, the ABSNC President will send an email report summarizing any issues raised in the annual compliance reports to the ABSNC Board of Directors.

ABSNC

POLICY 20 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS, CONFIDENTIALITY, CONFLICT OF INTEREST, AND UNAUTHORIZED REPRESENTATION

DATE APPROVED:

DATE REVIEWED: 5-09

DATE REVISED: 6-03; 5-09

Policy

Section 20.1 Conduct

Members of the ABSNC Board of Directors and non-Board Review Teams must conduct themselves in a manner that justifies the trust of the public and those organizations that make application to the ABSNC.

Members of the ABSNC Board of Directors and non-Board Review Teams are held to a standard of conduct consistent with professionalism, and as described in this Policy and Procedure and the *ABSNC Confidentiality, and Conflict of Interest and Unauthorized Representation* form. Failure to maintain these Standards of conduct may result in removal from the ABSNC Board of Directors and non-Board Review Team pool.

Section 20.2 Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest and Unauthorized Representation Form

Newly elected ABSNC board members, volunteer psychometricians, and appointed non-Board Review Team members are required to sign the *ABSNC Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest and Unauthorized Representation* form before their first ABSNC board meeting or first review. All volunteers will re-execute the form annually in January.

Procedure

1. Application information will remain confidential and will be discussed only in the context of ABSNC reviews among the ABSNC Board of Directors or non-Board Review Team members. No reviewer may disclose or release information contained in an application or the names of the members of a Review Team.
2. The application review process and discussion between Review Team members is confidential. The Review Team will share only pertinent data and recommendations with the full ABSNC Board of Directors and applications will not be discussed outside the ABSNC.
3. ABSNC members or non-Board Review Team members will not be assigned to take part in the review of applications from their own organization or organizations for which any cause for questions of conflict of interest might arise. Because only individual ABSNC board members and non-Board Review Team members have full knowledge of their relationships, it is the responsibility of the individual member to recuse themselves from the review of any application in which there is potential for conflict of interest and to notify the ABSNC President in the event their circumstances change relative to their eligibility to remain a member of the ABSNC Board of Directors or non-Board Review Team members or to review specific applications.
4. Members of the ABSNC Board of Directors and non-Board Review Teams have a responsibility to destroy all notes and related materials in a manner that protects the organization making application. After an application review is completed, one application will be retained by ABSNC and all others returned to the applicant organization. All notes held by individual reviewers will be destroyed.

POLICY 20 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS, CONFIDENTIALITY, CONFLICT OF INTEREST, and UNAUTHORIZED REPRESENTATION (CONTINUED)

5. Members may be removed from the ABSNC Board of Directors or non-Board Review Teams for substandard performance, ethical breaches, or for any fundamental conflict of interest with the purposes of ABSNC.

6. An individual ABSNC board member or non-Board Review Team member who possesses information that might affect the response of ABSNC to a current applicant organization, is honor bound to disclose this information in writing to the ABSNC President. The President, in turn, will determine whether or not an investigation should take place. If an applicant organization is denied accreditation based on the investigation, the applicant organization may employ the Reconsideration and Appeal of Accreditation Decisions Policy and Procedure process.

ABSNC
CONFIDENTIALITY, CONFLICT OF INTEREST, AND UNAUTHORIZED REPRESENTATION STATEMENT

As a member of ABSNC Board of Directors or non-Board Review Team, individuals may be subjected to three situations that are of particular concern and which are addressed in this document. These situations include (1) coming in contact with information regarding other organizations' certification programs, tests, or circumstances, or information about individuals that must be kept confidential; (2) occasions in which their personal interests, or the interests of other organizations with which they are involved may appear to be in conflict with the best interests of the ABSNC and/or the American Board of Nursing Specialties; and (3) acting outside their authority. The purpose of this statement is to clarify and establish an agreement regarding the individual's responsibility in these matters and to avoid any assumption or appearance of conflict of interest, unauthorized representation, or breach of confidentiality.

Therefore, as a condition of being elected to serve on the ABSNS Board of Directors or appointed as a non-Board Review Team member, you agree to the following:

1. **Confidentiality** - Confidentiality refers to the responsibility not to divulge information given in the belief that it will be kept secret (not be disclosed). Information must be kept confidential and not disclosed at any time and under any circumstances, other than as directed by the Board of Directors.
 - a. You will not disclose or cause to be disclosed to anyone outside of the ABSNC Board of Directors, non-Board Review Team, or staff, any confidential information related to any certification program, unless otherwise directed by the ABSNC Board of Directors
 - b. Upon expiration of ABSNC board member or non-Board Review Team terms, all confidential materials that have been acquired during the course of your term must be promptly destroyed.
 - c. Information related to accreditation applications, such as test items, scoring decisions, pass rates, etc. will not be discussed or disclosed outside of the ABSNC Board of Directors and non-Board Review Teams.
 - d. Documents obtained as part of an accreditation application or reaccreditation application must be stored in a secure location while in the possession of the ABSNC board member or non-Board Review Team member and must be returned to the applicant organization as directed by the Review Team Leader when action on the application is completed.
2. **Conflict of Interest** - A conflict of interest refers to an incompatibility between one's obligation to the good of the organization and one's self-interest.
 - a. Members of ABSNC Board of Directors or non-Board Review Team members will not engage in actions that may constitute actual, apparent, or potential conflict of interest with the mission and activities of the ABSNC or American Board of Nursing Specialties.

- b. Duality of interest, or possible conflict of interest on the part of any member of the ABSNC Board of Directors or non-Board Review Team members shall be fully disclosed to the President, prior to engaging in any discussion, taking part in any decision making, or entering into any formal relationship that involves a potential or actual conflict.
 - c. No member of the ABSNC Board of Directors or non-Board Review Team will take part in any decision or action of ABSNC or the American Board of Nursing Specialties in which he/she may have a financial or other material interest except when authorized by the Board after full disclosure of the facts.
 - d. All right, title and interest in any information or material developed, conceived, or created relating to any component of the ABSNC will be assigned to ABSNC, including any and all copyrighted information, unless a specific written agreement exists prior to its development.
3. **Unauthorized Representation** - Unauthorized representation refers to presenting oneself, or allowing another to present you, as having authority to represent ABSNC in a manner that exceeds that set forth in the Bylaws, Policy and Procedure, or job descriptions of the ABSNC or the ABSNC that is specifically approved by the Board of Directors, or the CEO of ABSNC acting in their behalf.
- a. No individual may act, or speak on behalf of ABSNC except as specifically authorized or approved by the Board of Directors, or CEO. Public communication regarding ABSNC is the exclusive prerogative of the Board of Directors and CEO.
 - b. Members of ABSNC or non-board Review Team members will not reference their participation with respect to ABSNC in a false, misleading, or deceptive manner.
 - c. No individual may use the logo or any terminology that implies sponsorship, endorsement, or approval of ABSNC without prior approval of the Board of Directors or CEO.

Your signature on this document confirms understanding and acceptance of these conditions. I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the above conditions.

Signature

Date

ABSNC

POLICY 21

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

DATE APPROVED:

DATE REVIEWED: 5-09

DATE REVISED: 6-03; 5-09

Policy

Section 21.1

The ABSNC will maintain a quality improvement program (QIP).

Procedure

1. The QIP will consist of the following three components: (a) processes focused on education of ABSNC board members and non-board Review Team members; (b) processes intended to improve and/or measure inter-rater reliability, and (c) attention to improving elements of ABSNC's work, particularly those from which any issue has arisen.
2. All members of the ABSNC Board of Directors and non-board Review Team members who have not had previous experience in reviewing accreditation applications will receive a formal orientation, conducted by a board member(s) appointed by the President, the CEO, and the Lead Volunteer Psychometrician, as appropriate.
3. Consistency of Review Team decisions will be evaluated by the Board of Directors every 2 years in even years to assess the congruence of various assessors' evaluations of applications to Standards. If remediation or improvement in standard clarity is indicated, action will be taken by the next meeting to begin correction.
4. As issues arise that indicate a potential for improving the quality of the ABSNC's processes, the issue will be studied and corrective action taken when indicated.
5. Following the completion of an accreditation and reaccreditation process, the staff will send the applicant organization a link to a Survey Monkey to evaluate the accreditation process.
6. The ABSNC President and CEO will review the evaluation feedback to determine if a potential for improvement of the accreditation process is indicated. The CEO will summarize the feedback received between each ABSNC meeting and disseminate to the Board of Directors.

ABSNC

POLICY 22

REVOCATION OF ACCREDITATION DUE TO MISCONDUCT/FAILURE TO MAINTAIN COMPLIANCE WITH ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

DATE APPROVED:

DATE REVIEWED: 5-09; 7-13

DATE REVISED: 6-03; 5-09; 7-13, 6-17

Policy

Section 22.1 Maintaining Compliance

Organizations accredited through the ABSNC are required to continue to meet all the applicable requirements from one accreditation period to the next. Accreditation may be suspended or revoked if continued compliance with Standards does not occur.

Section 22.2 Misconduct

Accreditation may be suspended or revoked if an accredited organization is found to have engaged in the following types of misconduct:

1. Falsification of information on the initial accreditation and/or reaccreditation application;
2. Failure to maintain compliance with any of the accreditation Standards;
3. Nonpayment of fees;
4. Failure to submit the required annual compliance report;
5. Falsification of any information requested by ABSNC;
6. Misrepresentation of ABSNC accreditation.

Section 22.3 Submitting a Complaint

Any individual or organization may submit information to ABSNC alleging noncompliance with any one of the Standards or misconduct.

ABSNC may also initiate an investigation if it suspects that noncompliance or misconduct has occurred.

Section 22.4 Confidentiality

ABSNC is specifically authorized to share the complainant's information, including his or her name and all the documentation regarding the complaint, with the accredited organization involved in the complaint in order to complete its investigation.

Procedure

The following procedures describe the process that ABSNC will use to consider all complaints and take appropriate disciplinary action, including suspension or revocation of accreditation.

POLICY 22

REVOCAION OF ACCREDITATION DUE TO MISCONDUCT/FAILURE TO MAINTAIN COMPLIANCE WITH ACCREDITATION STANDARDS (CONTINUED)

1. Complaint

- a.** Complaints must be submitted in writing to ABSNC at the address of record. Only written, signed complaints will be considered. The complainant's name will not be disclosed to anyone other than ABSNC board members. and, to the extent necessary, to fully investigate the complaint, to the board about which the complaint has been made.
- b.** A complaint should include the following:
 - (1) The name and contact information of the person initiating the complaint;
 - (2) A statement of the alleged misconduct or noncompliance;
 - (3) Reasons why misconduct or noncompliance warrants disciplinary action.
- c.** All supporting documentation must accompany the written request.
- d.** Upon receipt of a complaint, the organization accused of noncompliance or misconduct will be notified that a complaint has been filed against them. The notice will include the basic facts of the complaint, identify the alleged violation, provide a copy of the procedures to be followed regarding the complaint, and request any specific information that should be provided.
- e.** The accredited organization may submit a written response and supporting documentation within 30 days of receiving the notification by ABSNC.
- f.** The accredited organization may request the opportunity to appear in person or by teleconference before the ABSNC Board of Directors.

2. Investigation and Decision:

- a.** The ABSNC Board of Directors will investigate the complaint and may seek additional information. If the written response from the accredited organization is considered satisfactory by the ABSNC Board of Directors, the matter will be considered closed and the organization and complainant will be so notified.
- b.** The ABSNC Board of Directors will consider complaints against an accredited organization either at a regularly scheduled meeting or by telephone conference. ABSNC will review the written record of the complaint and all supporting documentation. ABSNC will review the written record, and the organization against whom the complaint has been made will have an opportunity to appear in person or by telephone to make a presentation and allow ABSNC to ask questions.

POLICY 22

**REVOCAION OF ACCREDITATION DUE TO MISCONDUCT/FAILURE TO
MAINTAIN COMPLIANCE WITH ACCREDITATION STANDARDS (CONTINUED)**

- c. The ABSNC Board will investigate complaints that an accredited organization has not complied with ABSNC standards when making a decision to grant or deny an individual its certification credential. However, the ABSNC Board may not, and will not, review whether or not the accredited organization properly denied any individual certification so long as the accredited organization followed its ABSNC approved, accredited process.
 - d. Written notification stating the decision of the ABSNC Board of Directors will be sent to the organization within 30 days following the meeting at which the complaint and any investigative results are heard. Notice will also be sent to the individual who initiated the complaint stating only that appropriate action has been taken.
 - e. If found to be noncompliant, the accredited organization will be given 90 days to bring the certification program into compliance.
 - f. If found to have engaged in misconduct, ABSNC will determine whether the organization's accreditation should be suspended or revoked.
3. Requesting a Hearing with Appeals Board
- a. Within 30 days of receipt of communication from ABSNC that the ABSNC Board of Directors upholds the decision to withdraw accreditation status for failure to maintain compliance, or to suspend or revoke accreditation, the certifying organization may request an Appeal as described in Policy 18.
4. Staff will post on the ABSNC website the names of organizations who have had accreditation revoked due to misconduct or who have failed to maintain compliance with accreditation standards.

ABSNC

POLICY 23

STUDENTS OF PSYCHOMETRICIANS REVIEWING ACCREDITATION
APPLICATIONS

DATE APPROVED: 10/2009

DATE REVIEWED:

DATE REVISED: 6-17

Policy/Procedure

1. Requests by volunteer psychometricians to allow their students to review accreditation applications as an educational experience will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
2. The volunteer psychometrician must submit a written (electronic) request to the ABSNC the email address of record.
3. ABSNC staff will email a request to the staff of the applicant organization using the attached form.
4. If the applicant organization denies the request, the ABSNC staff will inform the psychometrician via email.
5. If the applicant organization grants permission, the ABSNC staff will inform the psychometrician via email and include the ABSNC Policy 20 *Ethical Considerations, Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest and Unauthorized Representation*. The student(s) must sign the enclosed form and return it to the ABSNC office no later than 10 business days from the date of the email.
6. ABSNC staff will notify the Board of Directors of any action taken.

ABSNC

POLICY 26

SELLING AN ABSNC-ACCREDITED CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

DATE APPROVED:

3-12

DATE REVIEWED:

DATE REVISED: 10-16

Policy

Section 26.1

If a nursing certifying organization sells an ABSNC-accredited RN or non-RN certification program, accreditation is not portable.

Section 26.2

So certificants are not unduly penalized, ABSNC will grant a 6-month grace period of accreditation to the purchasing organization. To avoid the lapse of accreditation, the purchasing organization must submit an initial accreditation application for the program within 3 months of the purchase.

Section 26.3

Compliance with all ABSNC Standards must be demonstrated by the organization purchasing a program. The narrative and supporting documents must reflect the purchaser's practices, policies, and procedures, as well as those of the testing vendor.

Section 26.4

If the accredited program was jointly owned and one organization has gained sole ownership, the new owner must submit its policies and procedures in all areas of the previous accreditation application in which jointly held policies and procedures were submitted. In addition, the new owner must submit its policies and procedures to address any functions performed solely by the previous owner. A table can be used to cross-walk the relevant standards with the new owner's policies and procedures. The timeline described in section 26.2 must be followed. This process applies **only** to jointly owned programs for which one organization relinquishes its co-ownership.

Section 26.5

Because the purchasing organization may not have examination data to report for at least 1 year of testing or a minimum of 200 candidates, the purchasing organization may use applicable data from the organization selling the program.

Section 26.6

The purchasing organization and seller should create a plan to notify certificants of the change and provide a point of contact at the purchasing organization.

ABSNC

POLICY 27

REQUESTS BY ACCREDITED ORGANIZATIONS FOR EXTENSION TO SUBMIT REACCREDITATION APPLICATION

DATE APPROVED:

9-14

DATE REVIEWED:

DATE REVISED: 6-17

General Policies

1. While reaccreditation applications are to be received in the ABSNC office by the first of the month in which the reaccreditation application is due, ABSNC's standard practice is to accept applications anytime during the month in which the application is due.
2. Applicant organizations may ask for an extension of the deadline for submission of a reaccreditation application. Such requests must be made at least 2 weeks prior to the first day of the month in which the reaccreditation application is due, and in writing as described below. Such an extension may not extend past 6 weeks from the last day of the month in which the application was originally due. In other words, ABSNC will grant a maximum of a 6-week extension.
 - a. Fee for extension - The fee for an extension is \$500 and must be submitted by check payable to "ABSNC."
 - b. The request for an extension must be sent in writing to the attention of the ABSNC President at the address of record with payment as described above.
 - c. The Review Team assigned to review the reaccreditation application will be notified of such requests.
 - (1) If an organization requests an extension longer than 6 weeks, the ABSNC President will review the circumstances and determine if the additional time will be granted.
 - d. If the Review Team's review of a submitted reaccreditation application leads to subsequent requests for further information that result in the review exceeding the expiration date of an organization's accreditation, the website listing of Approved Programs will be changed to reflect the status of this accreditation as "Pending."

ABSNC

POLICY 28

Record Retention Policy

DATE APPROVED: 10-17 DATE REVIEWED: DATE REVISED: 10-17

Policy

A record retention policy should minimize both the legal risks flowing from hastily drafted or misleading documents and the adverse inferences that may arise from the selective destruction of documents in the absence of such a policy. Moreover, the expense of storing obsolete documents, as well as the cost of retrieving documents in response to business requests, government investigations or litigation, should be reduced.

To minimize these costs and risks, the Accreditation Board of Specialty Nursing Certification. ("the ABSNC") has adopted the following record retention policy for the systematic retention and destruction of documents based on statutory or regulatory record-keeping requirements and practical business needs.

It is the intention of this policy that documents be retained only so long as they are (1) necessary to the conduct of the ABSNC's business; (2) required to be kept by statute or government regulation; or (3) relevant to pending or foreseeable investigations or litigation. Retention periods are based primarily on current federal record-keeping requirements and state statutes of limitation. Currently relevant documents should be filed systematically and accessibly. Documents that must be maintained permanently can be catalogued and, if possible, reduced to some secure form of electronic record for storage and easy access when needed.

To achieve these objectives, procedures will be established so that documents are filed in the appropriate place, the number of copies is catalogued, and documents are retrieved and destroyed on pre-established "pull" dates. One individual will have overall responsibility for initial implementation and yearly review of compliance with this policy. The program itself will be reviewed periodically to ensure governmental requirements are being met, business needs are satisfied, and changes in hardware and software do not prevent access to stored electronic records.

The ABSNC can also be subject to criminal penalties under provisions of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, which prohibits corruptly tampering with, altering, destroying or concealing records in an effort to prevent their availability for use in an "official proceeding."

No document, including an electronic document, shall be intentionally altered, covered-up, falsified or destroyed, nor shall any agent of the ABSNC be directed to do so, to prevent its use in an official proceeding. Upon becoming aware that any document may reasonably be anticipated to be useful in any actual or reasonably predictable official proceeding, staff shall override any document retention policy or procedure that might result in the destruction of or inability to find any such document. All attorneys employed or retained by the ABSNC shall be given a copy of this policy and are hereby instructed to inform the ABSNC's management of any documents of potential use in an official proceeding.

The following schedule provides retention periods for the major categories of documents, both paper and electronic, for the ABSNC.

ABSNC

POLICY 28

Record Retention Policy (Continued)

DOCUMENT TYPE	RETENTION PERIOD
ACCOUNTING	
Accounts payable ledgers and schedules	7
Accounts receivable ledgers and schedules	7
Auditors' reports	Permanent (P)
Budgets	7
Cancelled checks, generally	6
Chart of Accounts	6
Depreciation records	P
Expense reimbursement requests	7
Financials (including bank reconciliations, bank statements)	3
General ledgers	7
Officer, director and staff expense reports	3
End of year financial statements	P
Inventory lists	7
Invoices	7
Petty cash vouchers	3
Subsidiary ledgers (accounts receivable, accounts payable, etc.)	7
Sales Records	7
Year-end general journal entries	7

CORPORATE	
Annual reports	P
Approved Board minutes and records of all actions taken by Board without a meeting	P
Approved Executive Committee minutes and records of all actions taken by Executive Committee without a meeting	P
Articles of Incorporation and amendments	P
Authorizations for expenditures	7
Bylaws (including prior versions)	P
Certification Handbook	P
Committee (other than Executive and Ethics) files	3
Conflict of Interest files	7
Contracts, generally	Expiration +7
Contracts, sales (UCC)	7
CMD applications and maintenance files	Current +5
CMD names and addresses	Current
Ethics Committee files/minutes	5
Journals (one copy)	P
Meeting materials (call for proposals, call for abstracts, registration brochure, final program)	3
Notes (internal reports, memos, etc.)	3
Photos of ABSNC Board members, meetings	3
Policies	P
Publications (other than Journals newsletters, membership or other brochures-one copy)	3
Purchase orders	3
Purchase reports	3
Training Policies	3

Whistleblower Policy complaint files	7
Written communications to rejected CMD applicants	5
Written communications to CMDs, general	3
Written communications to CMDs, CMD discipline/ethics	5
CORRESPONDENCE	
General, routine	3
INSURANCE	
Accident reports/claims	7
Insurance policies	P
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY	
Trademark registrations, copyright registrations, patents	P
LEGAL	
Claims and litigation files (except drafts)	P
Legal Correspondence	7
TAX	
Employer tax identification number	P
Exempt status IRS determination letter, application and related IRS correspondence	P
Income tax returns and cancelled tax payment checks (federal, state and local)	P
Property tax returns	P
Sales and use tax returns	4

ABSNC

POLICY 29

Whistleblower Policy

DATE APPROVED: 10-17 DATE REVIEWED: DATE REVISED:

Policy

Procedures for the Submission of Complaints or Concerns Regarding Financial Statement Disclosures, Accounting, Internal Accounting Controls, or Auditing Matters

To facilitate disclosures, encourage proper individual conduct and alert ABSNC to potential issues before encountering serious consequences, the ABSNC deems it appropriate to use Section 301 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 as a guideline for the Board of Directors to establish procedures for:

- (a) the receipt, retention, and treatment of complaints received by ABSNC regarding its financial statement disclosures, accounting, internal accounting controls or auditing matters; and
- (b) the submission by staff and members of accredited bodies, on a confidential and anonymous basis, of good faith concerns regarding questionable accounting or auditing matters.

The Board of Directors has adopted the following “whistleblower policy” for implementation by ABSNC:

1. The ABSNC shall review any complaints that it receives regarding financial statement disclosures, accounting, internal accounting controls or auditing matters. Any complaint will first be evaluated to determine whether it falls within the scope of this Policy. If the complaint does not appear to involve financial statement disclosures, accounting, internal accounting controls or auditing matters, it will be forwarded to the ABSNC general counsel to handle in a manner in which he or she deems appropriate.
2. Any staff person or member of ABSNC may submit any good faith concerns regarding financial statement disclosures, accounting, internal accounting controls, or auditing matters in accordance with the following procedures:
 - (a) on a confidential and anonymous basis, the concern should be submitted in writing and sent in a sealed envelope via certified mail to ABSNC's general counsel. The envelope should be labeled: “To be opened by the Board of Directors only. This envelope is being submitted pursuant to the 'whistleblower policy' adopted by the ABSNC.” Any such envelope received by the general counsel shall be forwarded promptly and unopened to the President of ABSNC. If a staff person or member would like to discuss any matter with the Board of Directors, the individual should indicate this in the submission and include a telephone number at which he or she might be contacted if the Board of Directors deems it appropriate.
 - (b) on a non-anonymous or non-confidential basis, the concern should be reported to ABSNC's general counsel using the contact information specified below.

Hugh Webster
1747 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20006

The general counsel shall keep a written record of all such reports and shall make monthly
ABSNC

POLICY 29

Whistleblower Policy (Continued)

reports of the same to the President in any month in which a concern is reported. If the alleged violation relates to ABSNC's financial statement disclosures, accounting, internal accounting controls, or auditing matters, the reported concern shall immediately be relayed by the general counsel to the President. The President shall immediately notify the complainant that the concern has been received and that procedures as outlined below will begin.

3. Following the receipt of a complaint or a concern within the scope of this Policy, the Board of Directors will investigate each matter reported and take necessary and appropriate corrective or disciplinary actions. The status of all pending complaints will be reviewed at each regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting.
4. The Board of Directors may enlist committee members, staff, and/or outside legal, accounting or other advisors, as appropriate, to conduct any investigation of complaints or concerns regarding financial statement disclosures, accounting, internal accounting controls, or auditing matters. In conducting any investigation, and to the extent possible consistent with the need to conduct an adequate review of any complaint or concern, the Board of Directors shall use reasonable efforts to attempt to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the complainant.
5. ABSNC will not tolerate retaliation of any kind (including without limitation discharge, demotion, suspension, threatening, harassing, or in any manner discriminating against any such person in the terms or conditions of his or her employment) against staff or members of accredited bodies for complaints or concerns submitted hereunder that are made in good faith. Should the identity of any person making a complaint or a reporting a concern hereunder be made known, the Board of Directors shall monitor any disciplinary action against such person. Additionally, no staff person or member shall be adversely affected because the staff person or member refuses to carry out a directive which, in fact, constitutes corporate fraud or is a violation of state or federal law.
6. The Board of Directors shall retain as a part of its records for a period of no less than seven (7) years all such complaints and reported concerns, together with the proceedings of the Board with respect thereto. All such records will be treated as confidential information.