

AMERICAN LEGAL NURSE CONSULTANT CERTIFICATION BOARD

POSITION STATEMENT Certification in Legal Nurse Consulting

Summary:

The purpose of this position statement is to define and clarify the role of certification for legal nurse consultants and to establish the Legal Nurse Consultant Certified (LNCC®) program¹ as the premier certification in this specialty.

Introduction:

As a nursing specialty recognized by the American Nurses Association (ANA), it is vital that legal nurse consultants (LNCs) have a pathway to certification which incorporates experiential and educational requirements. The LNCC® program is the only certification examination in the field endorsed by the American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants (AALNC) and accredited by the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC).

Background & Discussion:

Established in 1997 by AALNC, the American Legal Nurse Consultant Certification Board (ALNCCB) is responsible for developing and maintaining a certification program in legal nurse consulting.

As part of the decision to offer a high-quality certification program, ALNCCB sought accreditation by an outside body and selected ABSNC as the most appropriate accreditor. ABSNC is an advocate for consumer protection, and is the only accrediting body specifically for nursing certification. ABSNC provides a peer-review mechanism that allows nursing certification organizations to obtain accreditation by demonstrating compliance with established ABSNC standards.

ALNCCB maintains the only certification in legal nurse consulting accredited by ABSNC and endorsed by AALNC. The LNCC® program was initially accredited in 1999 and reaccredited in 2004 and 2009. Accreditation distinguishes the LNCC® Program within the field of legal nurse consulting and equates the LNCC® credential with credentials from other highly respected programs.

ALNCCB endorses the definition of certification adopted by ABNS, now ABSNC:

Certification is the formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills, and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes. (ABNS 2005)

A certification program helps advance the profession, and is one of the required elements for recognition as a nursing specialty. AALNC achieved this milestone in 2006 when the ANA officially recognized legal nurse consulting as a specialty practice of nursing. AALNC, in collaboration with the ANA, published *Legal Nurse Consulting Scope & Standards of Practice*. In this document, the authors note:

¹ The LNCC® program is the collective term for all components of the certification process, including policies related to test development, certification, and recertification.

Participation in the specialty's certification process demonstrates a level of professionalism and commitment, and allows community recognition of those legal nurse consultants who have achieved a higher level of skill and expertise within the specialty. (ANA, 2006)

While RN licensure ensures entry-level competency, certification is the gold standard for demonstrating knowledge and experience in specialty practice. Similar to physician board certification, nursing specialty certification is not achieved at entry into practice. The ABNS / ABSNC Position Statement on the Value of Certification address the issue of certification as a standard beyond licensure, noting that:

While state licensure provides the legal authority for an individual to practice professional nursing, private voluntary certification is obtained through individual specialty nursing certifying organizations and reflects achievement of a standard beyond licensure for specialty nursing practice. (ABNS, 2005)

The value of certification also extends to the public. According to ABNS:

The increasingly complex patient/client needs within the current healthcare delivery system are best met when registered nurses, certified in specialty practice, provide nursing care. (ABNS, 2005)

This statement applies to traditional nursing roles as well as legal nurse consulting practice. Similar to certified nurses in other specialties, LNCCs, by virtue of their knowledge and experience in the specialty, can more readily meet the needs of their client than the novice practitioner.

Certification is a commitment that begins at entry into the specialty and continues throughout a nurse's career. Although voluntary, certification allows nursing specialties- including Legal Nurse Consulting-to publicly acknowledge a member's level of experience, judgment, and knowledge. LNCs should commit to building their competency in the field, with a goal of sitting for the LNCC® examination.

Conclusion:

The LNCC® program is designed to promote a level of expertise and professionalism by documenting individual performance as measured against a predetermined level of knowledge in legal nurse consulting; however it is not intended to determine who is qualified or who shall engage in legal nurse consulting. The LNCC® credential allows the public to more readily identify legal nurse consultants who have demonstrated a high level of experience, expertise, and commitment to this specialty nursing practice.

Legal nurse consultants who wish to distinguish themselves in the profession should seek voluntary certification as an LNCC®. As the only practice-based certification program that meets national testing standards, the LNCC® is comparable to board certification in other nursing specialties. In addition to the personal satisfaction that comes with certification, LNCs who invest their time in achieving and maintaining LNCC® certification can be comfortable in the knowledge that they have achieved a credential that has met or exceeded ABNS / ABSNC requirements, and is the gold standard for certification in the specialty.

It is the position of the American Legal Nurse Consultant Certification Board that

1. Certification is an objective measure of professional knowledge. It demonstrates to the public that an individual has met national testing standards, and has achieved a level of expertise in the specialty.
2. Certification in Legal Nurse Consulting is based on experience and knowledge, and is not achieved at entry into the specialty.
3. The Legal Nurse Consultant Certified (LNCC[®]) is the premier certification credential for legal nurse consultants, which is the only legal nurse consultant certification program accredited by the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC).

References:

American Board of Nursing Specialties. (October, 10, 2010). *Frequently Asked Questions About ABSNC Accreditation*. Retrieved December 8, 2011 from <http://nursingcertification.org/pdf/10-19-10%20Final%20FAQs.pdf>

American Board of Nursing Specialties. (March 5, 2005). *A position statement on the value of specialty nursing certification*. Retrieved July 11, 2006 from http://www.nursingcertification.org/position_statements.htm .

American Nurses Association and American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants. (2006). *Scope and Standards of Practice for Legal Nurse Consultants*. Silver Spring, MD: Nursesbooks.org.

Approved by the American Legal Nurse Consultant Certification Board

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