The Clinical Nurse Leader® (CNL®) is a master’s educated nurse, prepared for practice across the continuum of care within any healthcare setting. The CNL was developed by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

The CNL is certified by the Commission on Nurse Certification (CNC).

- In practice, the CNL oversees care coordination and actively provides direct patient care in complex situations.
- The CNL puts evidence-based practice into action to ensure patients benefit from the latest innovations in care delivery.
- The CNL evaluates patient outcomes, assesses cohort risk, and has the decision-making authority to change care plans when necessary.
- The CNL is a leader in the healthcare delivery system.
A CNL improves patient care by focusing on:

- leadership
- patient outcomes
- care environment
- management

Skill set functions of the CNL include:

- advocate
- team manager
- information manager
- systems analyst/risk
- anticipator
- clinician
- outcomes manager
- educator
What is CNL certification?

- A unique credential that recognizes graduates of Clinical Nurse Leader programs who have demonstrated accepted standards of practice.

- The **CNL mark of excellence promotes safe, quality practice** through ongoing requirements for personal and professional growth.
The CNL Certification Program is managed by the **Commission on Nurse Certification (CNC)**, the autonomous certifying arm of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

www.aacnnursing.org/cnl-certification
The CNC name was established in October 2007; previously called the CNL Certification Advisory Board – first board members were appointed August 2007.

**Mission:** To govern the CNL certification activities and promote CNL practice.
CNC promotes higher quality patient care through the certification of qualified individuals by:

- Recognizing formally those individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the certification program and pass the examination.
- Encouraging continued personal and professional growth in one’s practice.
- Providing a national standard of requisite knowledge and experience required for certification, thereby assisting communities of interest in the assessment of certificants.
CNC is governed by a Board of Commissioners – nine voting members:

- Four members from the practice setting
- Four members from the educational setting
- One consumer/public member
Certification is voluntary and serves to:

- Demonstrate a commitment to the profession
- Indicate that an individual has acquired knowledge beyond RN licensure
- Recognize that an individual has demonstrated standards and knowledge of the profession
- Assure the public that the CNL is well prepared for safe practice
- Promote lifelong learning through renewal requirements
Program Facts

- CNL Certification Program piloted November 2006
- More than 6,800 certified CNLs
- More than 90 schools of nursing have served as a CNL exam site
- Up to 100 schools of nursing offer a CNL education program
The CNL Certification Program is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies.

The Program meets national standards for a valid and reliable certification process including: development, implementation, maintenance, and governance.
Certification Eligibility

- Registered Nurse licensure
- Graduation from a CNL master’s or post-master’s education program
- Waiver for faculty of existing CNL education programs (expires December 31, 2020)
- Successful completion of CNL certification exam

**NOTE:** Students may sit for the exam in their last semester and prior to RN licensure.

www.aacnnursing.org/CNL-Certification/Apply-for-the-Exam
Exam Site Registration

Program responsibilities:

- Review Program Checklist
- Submit the School of Nursing CNL Education Program Verification Form
- Select exam date within CNC testing period
- Submit the Site Registration form to CNC
- Notify examinee(s) of exam date/time and location

www.aacnnursing.org/CNL-Certification/Apply-for-the-Exam
Certification Application Process

- Candidate must meet eligibility requirements
- Candidate submits online application with payment ($350 initial fee; $425 if using a testing center)
- CNL Program Director completes the online Education Documentation Form.
- Faculty candidates submit the Faculty Eligibility Documentation Form
- Candidate confirms exam date, time, and location with faculty contact
Certification Exam

- Based upon a CNL Job Analysis Study
- Computer-based
- 140 multiple choice items (includes 130 scored items; 10 pre-test items)
- 3 hour time limit
- Administered at the school of nursing or a testing center
CNL Renewal Requirements

- Renew once every five years; submit application with payment ($310)
- RN licensure
- Professional practice (2,000 hours of employment – Clinical Nurse Leader title is not required)
- Minimum of 50 contact hours/continuing education that support the CNL competencies
- Documentation (if audited)

**NOTE:** Retesting is not required.
Resource Materials

- CNL Certification Guide
- CNL Self Assessment Exam
- CNL Job Analysis Study
- AACN’s Competencies and Curricular Expectations for Clinical Nurse Leader Education and Practice
- Recommended Reading List
- AACN’s CNL Certification Exam Review Course
- CNC Social Media Networks

www.aacnnursing.org/CNL-Certification/Prepare-for-the-Exam
Resource Materials

CNL Nurses Lounge
http://www.nurseslounge.com/lounges/profile/16380/clinical-nurse-leader
CNC’s Clinical Nurse Leader YouTube Channel
https://www.youtube.com/user/clinicalnurseleader

Brochures and CNL Merchandise
http://www.aacnnursing.org/CNL-Certification/Order-CNL-Merchandise
Connect with CNC

Facebook
Facebook.com/CNCsCNL

Twitter
Twitter.com/CNLatAACN

LinkedIn
Linkedin.com/company/commission-on-nurse-certification
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