



COMMISSION ON NURSE CERTIFICATION

A large, semi-transparent portrait of a woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blazer over a yellow collared shirt. She is smiling and looking directly at the viewer. The background is a solid blue.

ANNUAL REPORT

*A Commitment to Validation, Engagement
& Professional Growth*

FISCAL YEAR 2025

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Commitment to Validation, Engagement & Professional Growth

Fiscal Year 2025 was quite exciting, notwithstanding some challenges. This fiscal year, CNC continued to promote the value, critical skill sets, and influence of the Certified Clinical Nurse Leader. As such, CNC staff oversaw the launch and implementation of initiatives and programs that showcased the impact of CNLs, encourage engagement, and facilitated information-sharing.

Due to a decline in CNL programs around the nation, CNL certification exam registrations were down. Nevertheless, CNC leadership and staff are optimistic about the future and anticipate that initiatives and promotional efforts launched in FY25 will make FY26 a prosperous year.

Having said that, CNC remained steadfast in its role to promote career advancement among CNLs through certification and professional development. In doing so, CNC launched a mentorship program to pair CNL Mentors with non-certified CNLs or CNL students pursuing CNC certification. On page 12 of this report, you'll find an overview of CNC's new CNL Certification Mentor Program.

In addition, CNC hosted a powerful virtual event in January 2025. The webinar, *Discover the Power of the Certified CNL Credential*, attracted more than 100 registrants. This online discussion brought together CNLs, academic program directors, CNL faculty and students for an insightful discussion on how CNL certification helps advance nursing careers. On page 13, read an overview of the webinar, including a list of CNLs who served as panelists.

Maintaining a robust social media presence is an important aspect of CNC's marketing efforts, which helps the Commission facilitate networking within the CNL community. This fiscal year, the Commission continued to utilize Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn to keep CNLs abreast of the organization's developments, encourage online engagement, and assist CNLs in expanding their professional network. To facilitate the sharing of information and best practices among CNLs, CNC established several LinkedIn groups. Read more about CNC's social media activities on page 16.

It is without question that in FY25, CNC has remained true to its mission to validate the skills of CNLs and promote professional growth within the CNL community. With the dedication of CNCBOC members, volunteers, and valuable stakeholders, we are able to realize our accomplishments.

It is with great appreciation that we thank you all!

Sincerely,



Sonya Curtis

Sonya Curtis
DNP, MBA, MSN, RN, CNL,
CPHQ, VHA-CM
Chair, CNC Board of Commissioners

Lynn Gardner

Lynn Gardner
BA
Director, CNC

ABOUT THE COMMISSION ON NURSE CERTIFICATION

The Commission on Nurse Certification was established in 2007, and is the autonomous certifying body of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN). CNC works to establish a collaborative environment with evolving CNL stakeholders to improve health and healthcare delivery, promote certification and professional development and keep abreast of healthcare issues. To date, over 10,261 nurses have earned the CNL credential.

The CNL certification program is governed by the CNC Board of Commissioners (CNCBOC). The CNCBOC and staff are solely responsible for the policies and administration of the CNL Certification Program.



MISSION

To govern the CNL certification activities and promote CNL practice.



VISION

To establish a collaborative environment with evolving CNL stakeholders to improve health and healthcare delivery, promote certification and professional development and keep abreast of healthcare issues.



CORE VALUES

Leadership
Certification Standards
Professional Development
Collaboration

ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

CNC's Promise to CNLs

GOAL 1 Maintain a Fair, Reliable and Defensible Certification Exam

Objectives

- Maintain CNC's position as leader of the Clinical Nurse Leader Certification Program
- Optimize the certification exam's reliability and student/faculty participation
- Provide relevant certification exam content that reflects professional standards
- Enhance the initial certification exam and renewal application process
- Increase certification program renewal rates and promote professional development

GOAL 2 Promote the Value of Certification

Objectives

- Promote the value of CNL certification and professional development
- Maintain a strong collaborative relationship with CNL stakeholders
- Enhance awareness of the CNL to the public, patients, and other healthcare disciplines
- Provide ready-made marketing tools on CNL certification to attract prospects
- Provide resources for CNLs to publish best-practice outcomes in national journals

GOAL 3 Provide Mentoring Opportunities

Objectives

- Provide orientation a packet on mentoring CNLs
- Develop an education pamphlet on what a novice CNL can expect
- Increase mentor/mentee networking opportunities at conferences
- Collaborate with CNLA on mentoring programs

GOAL 4 Manage Fiscal Operations

Objectives

- Maintain an effective governance structure and staff to oversee CNC operations
- Develop fiscal year budget to meet year-end projections
- Maintain at minimum three months of operational costs in long-term reserves
- Monitor and address confidentiality issues in the certification process

FY2023 - 2025 STRATEGIC GOALS

Goal-Specific Programs & Activities

In FY23, the CNCBOC participated in a Strategic Planning Session to identify the organization's top level priorities. CNC's leadership and staff have made significant inroads towards achieving the organization's goals. Here's a brief synopsis of some of the programs and activities that support CNC's FY23-25 goals.

Goal I Increase Awareness of the Pathway to Certification

CNL Certification Mentor Program. In April 2025, CNC launched the CNL Certification Mentor Program with the purpose of providing mentorship and guidance to CNL students and non-certified CNLs who plan to pursue CNL certification. Upon launch, the program attracted certified CNLs from Texas, New York, and New Hampshire who volunteered to serve as mentors. In doing so, these CNLs agreed to:

- Mentor students enrolled in an accredited CNL master's program;
- Help non-certified CNLs prepare for the CNL exam;
- Assist CNLs with goal setting and career planning;
- Provide CNLs advice on how to advance in the CNL role; and
- Share professional experiences on how they integrate the CNL skill set within the perioperative setting.

Goal II Uphold the Integrity of the Certification Process

NCCA Accreditation. CNC continues to maintain its accreditation by adhering to standards set by the National Commission on Certifying Agencies. Since 1977, the NCCA has developed and maintained standards of excellence for voluntary certification programs in healthcare. Established to ensure the health, welfare and safety of the public, NCCA's Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs were the first standards developed by credentialing industry for professional certification program. In FY25, CNC achieved reaccreditation with the National Commission for Certifying Agencies through 2029. Read more on CNC accreditation on page 12.

Goal III Promote the Value of Certified CNLs in Health Systems

Discover CNLs Video Series. Clinical Nurse Leaders continue to be instrumental in improving the delivery of healthcare in practice settings across the continuum of care, including hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, academic settings, and laboratories. In FY23, CNC launch a new video series, *Discover CNLs*, to document and showcase the impact of CNLs in their workplace. The first episode of the series can be viewed on [YouTube](#).

Goal IV Better Communicate CNLs Power to Lead Transformative Change

Public Outreach. CNC staff has capitalized on every opportunity to realize our goal of communicating the power of the CNL, by supporting and exhibiting in regional and national conferences. During FY23-25, CNC has supported the regional CNL conferences by providing subject matter experts to speak or conduct workshops, and by exhibiting. In doing so, CNC has participated in conferences hosted by the International Clinical Nurse Leaders Association and the Association of American Colleges of Nursing's Annual Deans Meeting. See conference details on page 16.

CNL CERTIFICATION

The pool of certified CNLs continues to grow substantially each year. Since 2006, a total of 10,261 nurses across the United States and its territories have earned the certified CNL credential. At the state level, California has the largest number of active certificants with 1,622 certified CNLs. In FY25, 296 candidates successfully passed the CNL certification examination. Among those examinees, the pass rate among first timers was 70 percent.

CNL Certification Examinations

In FY25, 422 exam candidates sat for the CNL examination. The following is a breakdown of examinees for each exam period.

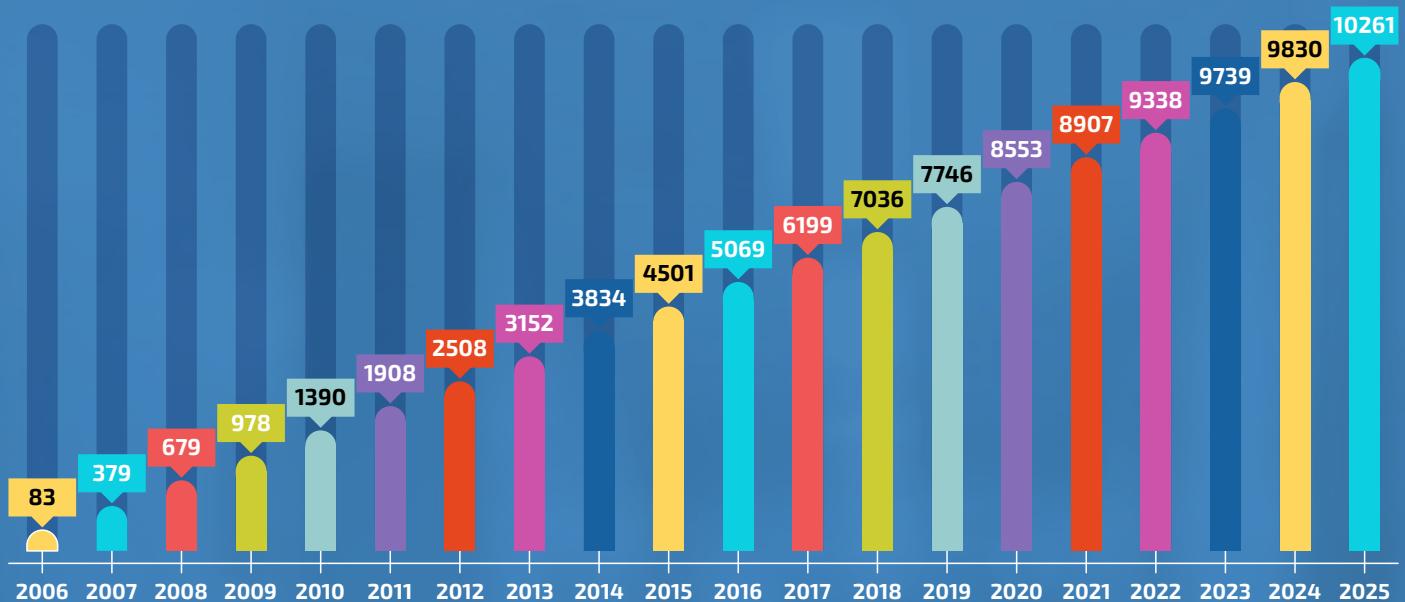
Examination Period	Examination Date	Number of Candidates
Summer 2024	Jul. 8 – Aug. 2	152
Fall 2024	Nov. 18 – Nov. 29	60
Winter 2025	Jan. 20 – Feb. 7	44
Spring 2025	Apr. 14 – May 9	166



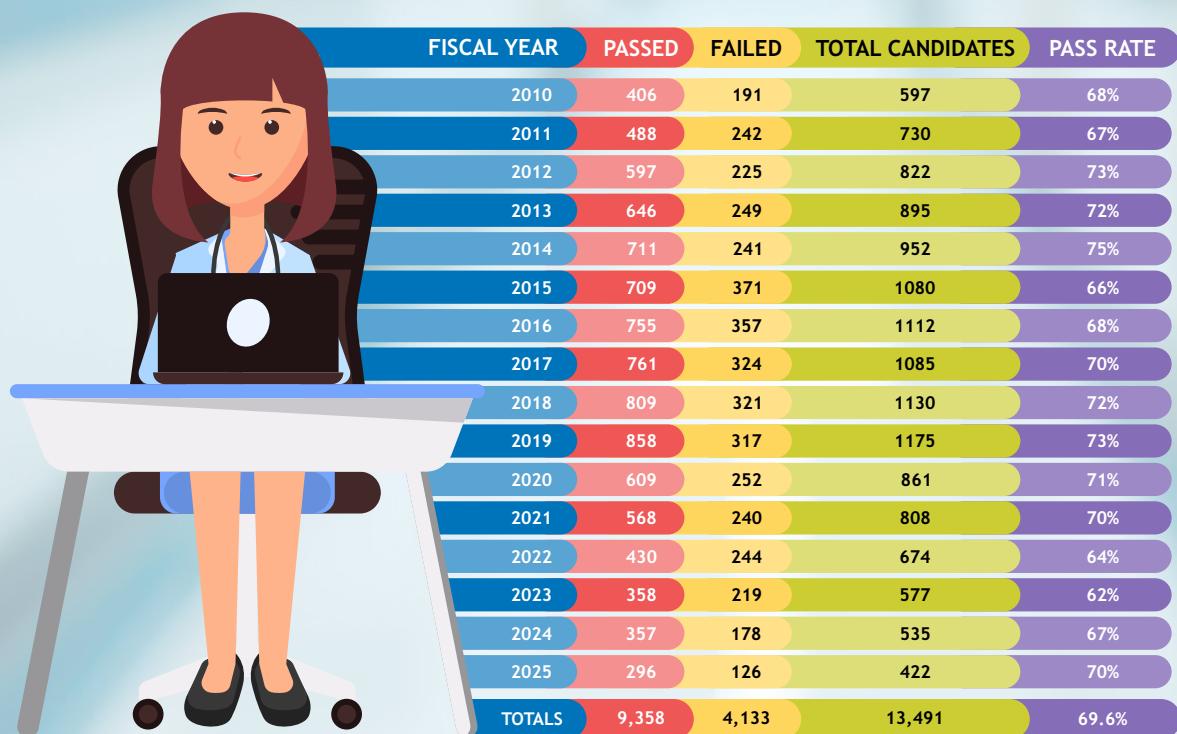
CERTIFICATION STATISTICS

Total Number of Nurses Who are CNL Certified

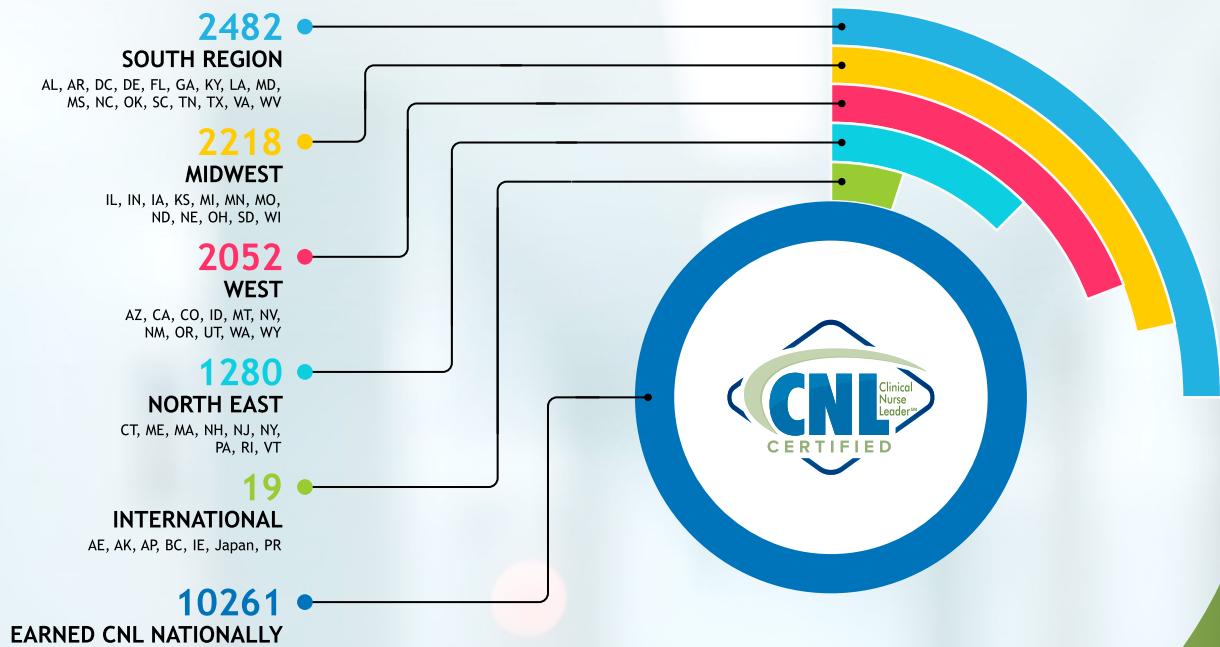
The following is a breakdown of the growth of certified CNLs from 2006 through the end of FY2025.



CNL Certification Exam Data

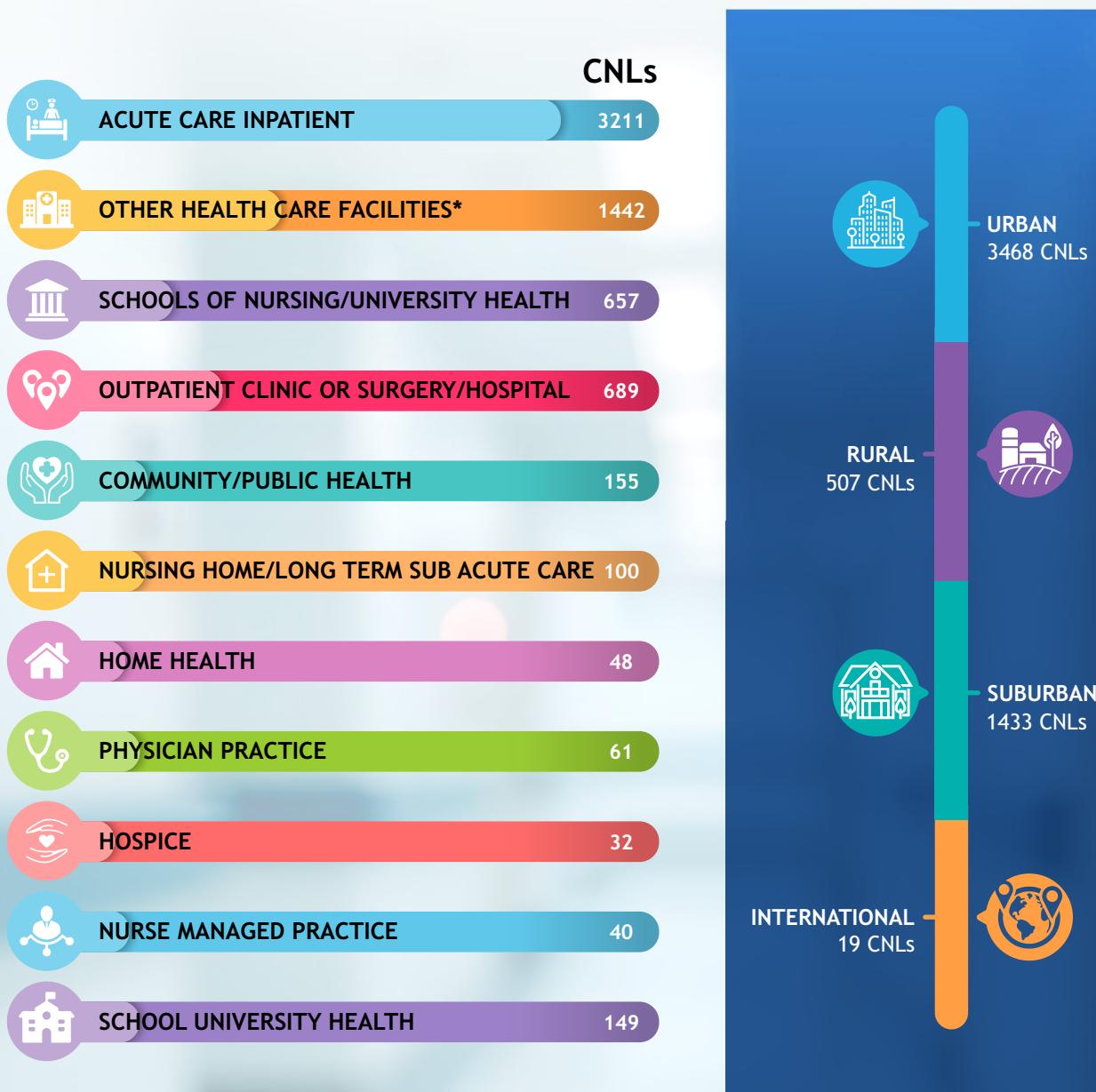


Number of Nurses Who Have Earned the CNL Credential since 2006 by Region



Certified CNLs by Employment Setting

The following is a breakdown of Certified CNLs in practice settings around the world.



CNL ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE



PROUD MEMBER

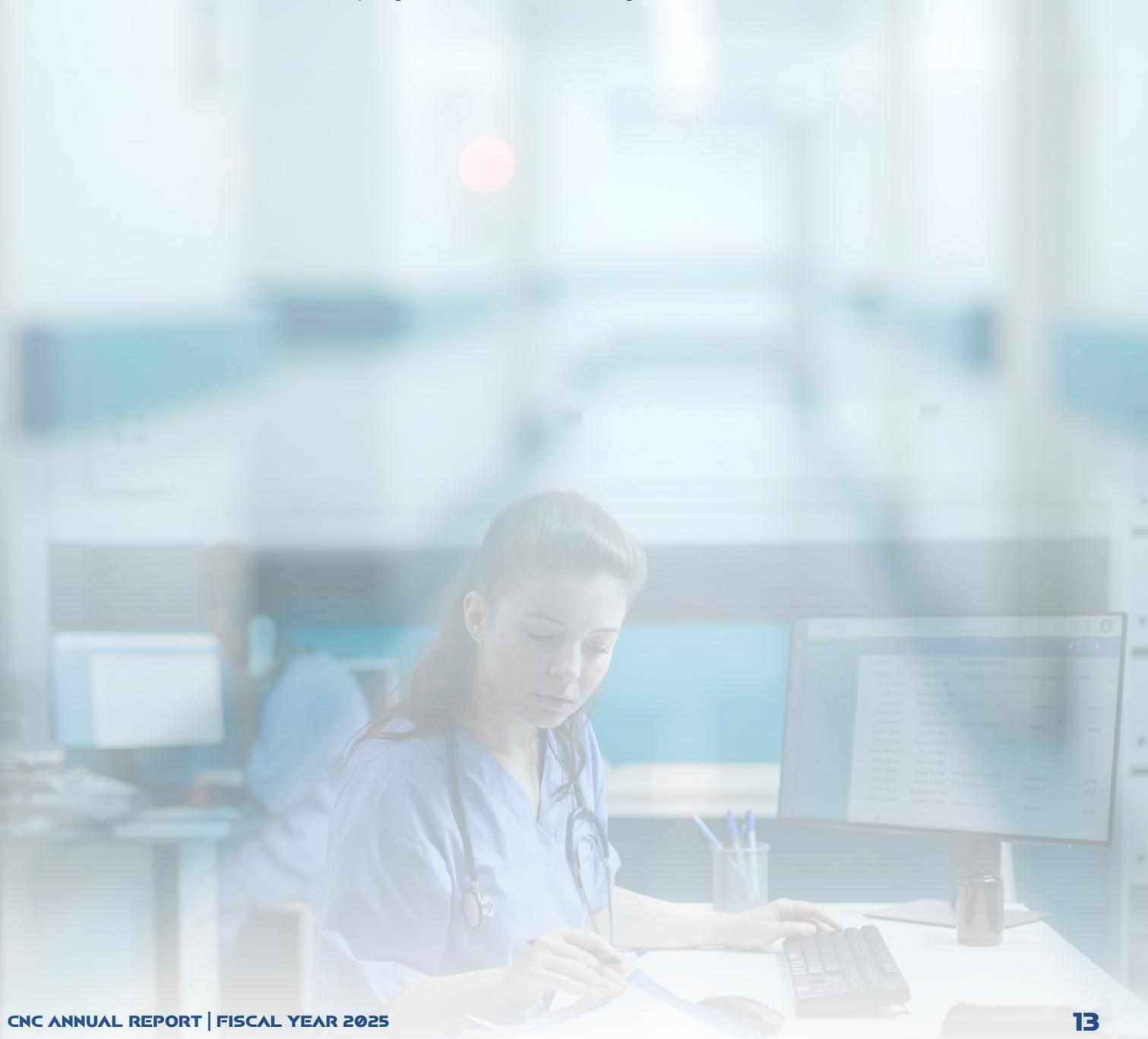


National Accreditation

In FY25, CNC achieved reaccreditation with National Commission for Certifying Agencies through 2029.

NCCA is the authority on accreditation standards for professional certification programs. The NCCA helps ensure the health, welfare, and safety of the public through the accreditation of individual certification programs that assess professional competency. Based on sound principles, NCCA standards are optimal and comprehensive criteria for organizational process and performance. They are broadly recognized, objective, and set current benchmarks for certifying bodies to achieve and by which they operate.

Maintenance of our accreditation involves the submission of documentation and policies demonstrating compliance with NCCA standards. Achieving and maintaining NCCA accreditation demonstrates CNC's commitment to adding value to the CNL Certification Examination and verifies that certified CNLs and the CNL program adhere to the highest certification standards.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CONNECT WITH A CNL MENTOR!
TAKE YOUR NURSING CAREER TO THE NEXT LEVEL

CNC's CNL Certification Mentor Program is ideal for:

- CNL Master's Students;
- Nurses Pursuing CNL Certification; or
- Certified CNLs seeking career guidance.

Get details and sign up at DiscoverCNLs.org/cnl-mentors

CNL Certification Mentor Program

In April 2025, CNC launched the CNL Certification Mentor Program. The program connects non-certified CNLs and CNL students with certified CNLs who have elected to serve as CNL Mentors. These mentors are not professional counselors but are experienced CNC-certified CNLs who volunteer to provide professional guidance to others. In addition to offering advice to CNLs seeking insight on how to advance their career, CNL Mentors provide mentorship and advice to exam candidates pursuing CNC certification, including registration and exam preparation. Click [here](#) to learn more about the CNL Certification Mentor Program.

DiscoverCNLs

Discover the **Power** of the Certified CNL Credential

A Free Webinar Hosted by CNC

Save Your Seat

January 15, 2025
4 PM Eastern

CNC

CNC Webinar

Discover the Power of the Certified CNL Credential

Across the country, CNLs attest to the positive impact that certified CNL status has on their career. Since CNC certification is the only official validation of the CNL skill set, the certified CNL credential has become the guidepost for employers seeking qualified CNLs.

On Jan. 22, 2025, CNC hosted, *Discover the Power of the Certified CNL Credential*, a complimentary webinar that covered the impact of the certified CNL status on nursing careers. Designed for CNL program directors, faculty and students, as well as non-certified practicing CNLs, the webinar examined:

- How certified CNL status helps bring about improved patient outcomes ;
- The role CNC certification plays in job recognition and career advancement;
- Resources to prepare for the CNL Certification Exam; and
- Skill sets employers seek when hiring a CNL.



Moderator
Lynn M. Gardner
Director, Commission on Nurse Certification

Washington, DC



Madalyn Frank-Cooper
CNL
Jamaica Hospital Medical Center
Queens, NY



Sharlene Parmley
MSN, RN, CNL
Spartanburg Medical Center
Spartanburg, SC



Cheryl Green
PhD, DNP, N, LCSW, CNL, CNE, MAC, FAPA
Yale New Haven Health System
Hamden, CT

CNL RESOURCES



Digital Badging

CNC's digital badging program is attracting widespread participation. Since the program's inception in December 2019, 9,640 digital badges have been issued via the Credly's Acclaim platform. In FY25, 223 digital badges were issued. Digital badges are valuable professional tools as they enable CNLs to list verified qualifications on email signatures, digital resumes, and social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. [Click here](#) to learn more about the CNL Badge program.

An advertisement for the CNL Certification. It features a woman in teal scrubs smiling. The text on the left reads: 'PREP NOW FOR CNL CERTIFICATION EXAM. The CNL® Practice Exam can give you the edge!' Below this are two buttons: 'Subscribe Now to Prepare for the 2025 Exams' and '15% Discount Available for Program Directors!'.

CNL Practice Exam

CNC's Clinical Nurse LeaderSM Practice Exam continues to gain interest among CNLs. In FY25, 77 one-month and 95 three-month subscriptions were purchased. Developed in collaboration with CNC and Gray Matter Publishing, Inc./TestRun, this exam is an insightful tool for CNLs preparing for CNC's certification exam. CNLs are able to take multiple practice tests, a full practice exam, or multiple short 10 question quizzes. Subscribers can view progress reports that help them identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. [Click here](#) to learn more about the CNL Practice Exam.

CNC BRAND AWARENESS

2025 Certified CNL Day

CNLs: *Shaping the Future of Healthcare*

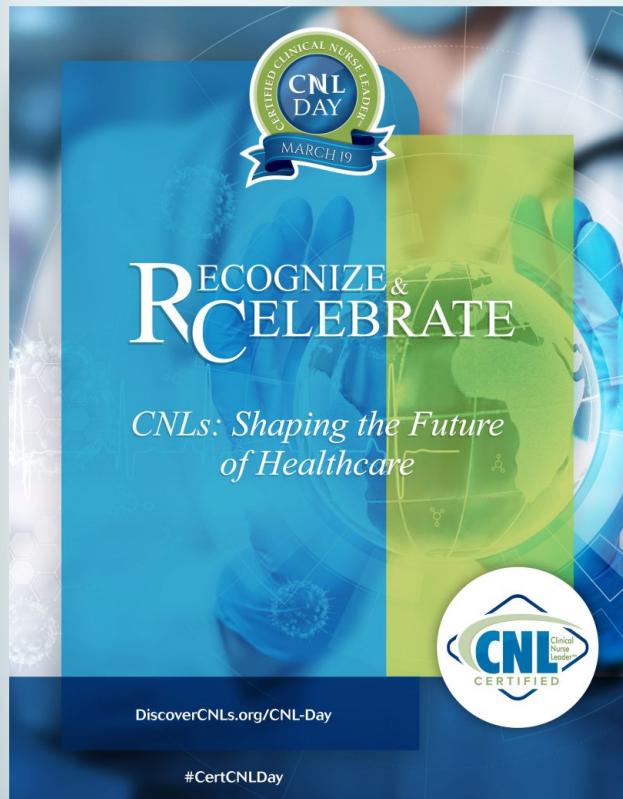
In observance of Certified CNL Day, Mar. 20, CNC joined certified CNLs around the globe to recognize and celebrate their role in shaping the future of healthcare. In doing so, employers, healthcare administrators, and medical professionals celebrated CNLs who have validated their skills and increase their knowledge through CNC's rigorous certification process.



Participation in CNC's 2025 Certified CNL Day surpassed engagement levels of previous years largely due to CNC's robust promotion and the integration of video marketing strategies.

Certified CNLs from across the healthcare continuum embraced the Certified CNL Day theme, *CNLs: Shaping the Future of Healthcare*. In doing so, CNLs took to social media platforms to promote their status as well as the impact CNL certification has had on their careers.

CNL Day Greetings Video. CNL Day video greetings featuring CNC leaders, ambassadors and dedicated volunteers proved highly engaging. Greetings were posted on CNC social media platforms and distributed to CNLs via promotional emails. This robust social marketing campaign grabbed the attention of CNLs across the world, and sparked a level of engagement that CNC has never experienced in past celebrations.



Certified CNL Day Toolkit and Social Media Tools.

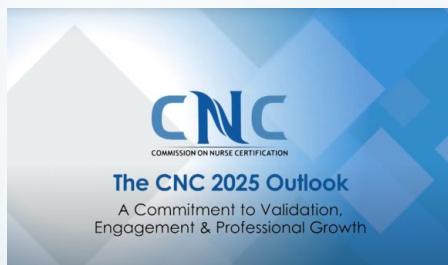
CNC staff was excited to see the large number of Certified CNLs who posted the Certified CNL Day social card, *I'm Proud to Be a Certified CNL*, on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

CNC 2025 Outlook Video

A Commitment to Validation, Engagement & Professional Growth



In Feb. 2025, CNC announced its program agenda via a professionally produced video. The video announced CNC's plans to launch new programs, including the CNL Mentor Program and discussed the revitalization of existing programs such as the CNL Certification Ambassador Program. [Click here](#) to view the CNC 2025 Outlook video.



Social Media

During this fiscal year, CNC established professional groups on LinkedIn to facilitate networking within the CNL community. The Commission created exclusive networking groups for specific CNL audiences:

- Practicing Certified CNLs
- Aspiring CNLs (CNL Graduate Students)
- Faculty & Program Directors

Visit [CNC's LinkedIn](#) page and join our network.

CNC Exhibiting

CNC is committed to promoting the value of CNL certification to the entire healthcare community. In doing so, CNC staff participated in the following national conferences around the nation.



2025 International Clinical Nurse Leader Conference

The CNL Advantage: Driving Sustainable Change in Health Care

Feb. 13-15, 2025

Northeastern University | Charlotte, NC



2025 Deans Annual Meeting

Leading Academic Nursing: Navigating Change with Ingenuity and Courage

Mar. 29-31, 2025

The Fairmont | Washington, DC

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

In FY25, CNC's total revenue earned was \$533,391.79, which is comprised of exam registration fees, renewal fees, symposium registration fees, and miscellaneous income. Expenses totaled \$511,151.93, which include program expenses, organizational management, and general expenses. These activities resulted in a fiscal year net asset of \$22,240.



APPENDIX

BOARD, COMMITTEE AND AMBASSADOR ROSTERS

CNC BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

CNC is governed by the CNC Board of Commissioners comprised by nine members, four of which represent academia, another four represent practice and one public-member. The following individuals served on the CNCBOC from July 1 2024 to June 30, 2025.



Sonya Curtis, DHA, DNP, MBA, RN, CNL, CPHQ, VHA-CM (Chair)

- Chair
- VISN 20 Nurse Manager & Quality Management Coordinator
- VHA VISN 20 Clinical Resource Hub
- Crowley, TX



Heather Vitko, Heather A. Vitko, PhD, RN, CNL, CCRN, TCRN, CHSE

(Vice Chair)

- Vice-Chair
- MSN Program Director, Associate Professor, CNL Coordinator
- University of Pittsburgh
- Pittsburgh, PA



Richard O. Foote, Col, USAF, NC (Finance Chair) CEN, CNL, FACHE

- Director, Reserve Medical Directorate
- United States Air Force, Pentagon
- Washington, DC



Desrie M. Nisbett, M.A. (Secretary)

- Executive Assistant to the Dean
- School of Nursing
- University of Louisville
- Louisville, KY



Megan Williams, MSN, RN, CNL

- Director of Complex Care
- Regional One Health
- Memphis, TN



James L. Harris, PhD, PMHCNS-BC, MBA, CNL, FAAN

- Professor of Nursing
- College of Nursing
- University of South Alabama
- Mobile, AL



Cathy Coleman, DNP, MSN, RN, CNL, CPHQ

- Associate Professor
- School of Nursing and Health Professions
- University of San Francisco
- San Francisco, CA



Zach Perpetua, DNP, RN, CMSRN, CNL

- Advanced Clinical Education Specialist
- UPMC Passavant
- Pittsburgh, PA



Kathy Oiphant, DNP, RN, CNL, NEA-BC

- Assistant Professor
- Director, Systems Leadership Program
- College of Nursing
- University of Cincinnati
- Cincinnati, OH

CNC Staff



Lynn M. Gardner

- Director, Commission on Nurse Certification



Ruby Karar

- CNC's Certification Assistant

CNC COMMITTEES

Appeals Committee

- Cathy Coleman, DNP, MSN, RN, CNL, CPHQ
- Sonya Curtis, DHA, DNP, MBA, RN, CNL, CPHQ, VHA-CM
- James L. Harris, PhD, PMHCNS-BC, MBA, CNL, FAAN

Bylaws Committee

- Desrie M. Nisbett, M.A.
- Kathy Oliphant, DNP, RN, CNL, NEA-BC
- Zach Perpetua, DNP, RN, CMSRN, CNL

Finance Committee

- Richard O. Foote, Col, USAF, NC
- James L. Harris, PhD, PMHCNS-BC, MBA, CNL, FAAN
- Megan Williams, MSN, RN, CNL

Nominating Committee

- Richard O. Foote, Col, USAF, NC
- Desrie M. Nisbett, M.A.
- Heather A. Vitko, PhD, RN, CNL, CCRN, TCRN, CHSE

Item Writing Committee

- Elizabeth Davis, DNP, CNL
- Reni Mattathil, DNP, MSN, RN-BC, CNL
- Sharlene Parmley, MSN, RN, CNL
- Mamta Thapar, RN, MSN, CNL

Marketing Committee

- Cathy Coleman, DNP, MSN, RN, CNL, CPHQ
- Zach Perpetua, DNP, RN, CMSRN, CNL

CNL CERTIFICATION AMBASSADORS

- Miriam Bender, PhD, RN, CNL
- Sonya Curtis, DNP, MBA, MSN, RN, CNL, VHA-CM
- Cheryl Green, PhD, DNP, RN, CNL, LCSW, CNE, ACUE, MAC, FAPA

- Mariah Hockin, DNP, RN, CNL, CMSRN, Gero-BC
- Zachary Perpetua, MSN, RN, CMSRN, CNL
- Leigh Williams, RN, MSN, CNL, ACCNS

CNL CERTIFICATION MENTORS

- Sonya Curtis, DHA, DNP, MBA, RN, CNL, CPHQ, VHA-CM
- Madalyn Frank-Cooper, RN, MS, CNL
- Kimberly Hill, CNL, CCRN

- Brooke Kwiatkowski, DNP, DHA, MBA, RN
- Julia Scavotto, MSN, RN, CNL
- Nicole Schlask, MSN, RN, CNL, CNOR



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AACNNursing.org/CNL-Certification

DiscoverCNLs.org



Connect with Us!

