



January 9, 2013

Dear Colleague:

Throughout the development of the *Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification and Education* (Consensus Model) the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) and AACN Certification Corporation (AACN CertCorp) led advocacy efforts to retain acute care graduate education and certification competency testing for APRNs within the licensing framework.

As the organization representing the interests of and setting standards for acute and critical care nurses, we know the indispensable role APRNs play in meeting the healthcare needs of the country's most medically fragile patient populations, and therefore believe that protecting the role is imperative.

To advance acute care nursing roles, we are actively moving our APRN certification programs to be in alignment with the Consensus Model prior to the projected 2015 implementation date. AACN CertCorp currently offers the following APRN certification exam programs:

- Adult Acute Care Nurse Practitioner (ACNPC)
- Adult Acute and Critical Care Clinical Nurse Specialist (CCNS Adult)
- Pediatric Acute and Critical Care Clinical Nurse Specialist (CCNS Pediatric)
- Neonatal Acute and Critical Care Clinical Nurse Specialist (CCNS Neonatal)

Details of the transition of the exams are outlined below. Please note that AACN CertCorp will **discontinue administration of all current APRN exams on December 31, 2014**, when the current National Commission for Competency Assurance (NCCA) accreditation period ends. However, the current ACNPC and CCNS certification programs will continue as nationally accredited **renewal-only** programs for as long as they are required by practicing certificants.

#### **[New Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner exam](#)**

We are pleased to share with you the [Study of Practice Summary and Test Plan](#) for AACN CertCorp's new Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner (ACNPC-AG) exam.

The new test plan is the result of a 2011 nationwide acute care nurse practitioner study of practice and is in alignment with the Consensus Model. We shared this document with ACNP Program Directors in November 2011, to assist with curriculum changes as adult-gerontology ACNP programs are being developed.

Our scheduled launch date for the new Adult-Gerontology ACNP exam is January 23, 2013. At that time we will be prepared to test candidates who have completed an Adult-Gerontology ACNP program. Instant scoring at the test site will be provided. Pilot testing of the new exam was conducted in October 2012 with senior ACNP students in select graduate programs in their final semester of study or soon after graduation.

## New Adult-Gerontology, Pediatric or Neonatal Clinical Nurse Specialist exams (testing wellness through acute care)

The Consensus Model calls for all clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) to be educated from **wellness through acute care**, and their competencies tested through national certification exams. In addition, the Model requires that adult CNSs be educated in, and tested for competencies in, Gerontology.

We are pleased to share with you the Study of Practice Summaries and Test Plans for AACN CertCorp's new [Adult-Gerontology](#), [Pediatric](#) and [Neonatal](#) Clinical Nurse Specialist (ACCNS) exams.

The new test plans, the result of a 2011 nationwide CNS study of practice, are in alignment with the Consensus Model. Eligible candidates will be educated in their desired population focus (Adult-Gerontology, Pediatric or Neonatal) across the entire wellness through acute care continuum, and the certification exams will test competencies and knowledge of patient care problems in the population focus across the entire wellness through acute care continuum.

We shared these documents with CNS Program Directors in November 2011, to assist with curriculum changes as their new Consensus Model-based programs were developed.

### Examination Launch Summary

The table below summarizes all the changes taking place with our four APRN certification examinations to bring them into compliance with the Consensus Model so that they can continue to be used by Boards of Nursing for licensure purposes. As with the NP exam, we will pilot test the CNS exams with senior CNS students in select graduate programs in their final semester of study or soon after graduation. The volume of students in Neonatal CNS programs is quite low at this time, and we are currently working with educational programs to determine the best way to approach this pilot test. We will provide an update on this effort as soon as it is final.

CURRENT EXAM NAME	CURRENT CREDENTIAL AWARDED	EXAM END DATE	NEW EXAM NAME	NEW CREDENTIAL AWARDED	PILOT TEST DATE	EXAM LAUNCH DATE
Adult Acute Care NP	ACNPC	12/31/14	Adult-Gerontology ACNP	ACNPC-AG	Oct. 2012	Jan 2013
Adult Acute/Critical Care CNS	CCNS	12/31/14	Adult-Gerontology CNS	ACCNS-AG	Mar. 2013	July 2013
Pediatric Acute/Critical Care CNS	CCNS	12/31/14	Pediatric CNS	ACCNS-P	Mar. 2013	July 2013
Neonatal Acute/Critical Care CNS	CCNS	12/31/14	Neonatal CNS	ACCNS-N	TBD	TBD

### Updated Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Scope and Standards of Practice

AACN is committed to providing education, resources and a full spectrum of services including *the* certification program for adult-gerontology acute care nurse practitioners. The revised [Scope and Standards for Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Practice](#), developed and published by AACN, is available for free download. A Kindle version may also be downloaded for mobile use from the Amazon website.

A Task Force to revise the Scope and Standards of Practice for the Clinical Nurse Specialist in Acute and Critical Care will begin work in 2013. The current version is also available at the AACN website link above.

### Additional Faculty Resources

AACN CertCorp has developed Curriculum Maps for the new [Adult-Gerontology](#) and [Pediatric](#) CNS exams, which incorporate validated CNS competencies along the continuum from wellness through acute care, most significant patient care problem types, and skills and procedures performed by clinical nurse specialists at entry-level.

AACN CertCorp also developed the [Adult-Gerontology ACNP Curriculum Map](#) which incorporates validated Adult-Gerontology ACNP competencies, most significant patient care problem types, and skills and procedures performed by Adult-Gerontology ACNPs at entry-level.

These Curriculum Maps were recently provided via email to CNS and ACNP Program Directors and are available online at [www.aacn.org/APRNresources](http://www.aacn.org/APRNresources). This page includes links to other valuable information about the Consensus Model and AACN CertCorp's advanced practice certification exams.

If we may answer any questions about our certification programs, the Consensus Model or other resources, please send an email to [APRNCert@aacn.org](mailto:APRNCert@aacn.org) or call (800) 394-5995, ext. 334.

We look forward to partnering with you in ensuring the competence of APRNs caring for patients and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol Hartigan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end of the last name.

Carol Hartigan, MA, BSN, RN  
Certification and Policy Strategist  
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses  
AACN Certification Corporation