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The Alabama Board of Nursing

INSIGHTS

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ABN TO BEGIN SURVEYING COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE SITES IN OCTOBER



**COLLABORATIVE
PRACTICE** | CRNP | CNM

***Peggy Sellers Benson, MSN, RN, MSHA, NE-BC
Executive Officer***

As the Board strives to continue leading in proactive outreach to our licensees, the ABN staff is set to begin a new program to educate and mentor CRNPs and CNMs on a personal, one-to-one level by conducting random site visits, or surveys. The goal of these visits is to enhance understanding related to collaborative practice requirements, including proper documentation and record-keeping for the collaborative practice site(s). We feel that the best way to improve understanding, allow licensees to ask questions, and to provide guidance with documentation is for ABN nurse consultants to conduct face-to-face visits.



Lest anyone become confused about the Board's intentions for these site visits, I want to be clear that these are not punitive surveys. The Board and staff know that APRNs in Alabama do a wonderful job and are vital to both the present and future of healthcare in Alabama. Our expectation is that the surveys will underscore this fact by demonstrating the care and competence of these advanced practice nurses.

We intend for the visits to begin in October, and will be sending notices to the first round of randomly selected collaborative practice nurses 30 days prior to conducting a visit. The Board's expectation is that this practice will continue going forward, so don't be afraid if you receive a survey notice. This is your opportunity to shine.





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A Reminder Regarding Mandatory CE for Collaborative Practice

As many of you are aware, the ABN recently released three required continuing education (CE) modules this year for APRNs in collaborative practice. These courses are available under My Profile and, effective January 1, 2024, must be completed prior to renewal or application for initial approval. I encourage you to take the initiative and complete this important education ahead of time.

The required CE courses are linked to your continuing education record and the ABN renewal process, so you will not be able to renew approval until they have been completed. But fulfilling the requirement isn't the only value the courses bring. They walk you through the specific collaborative practice requirements, including the purpose and function of standard protocols and the application process which is vital to understanding your nursing practice as a APRN in Alabama. The required courses are:

- An Overview of Collaborative Practice in Alabama
- The Approval Process for CRNPs and CNMs
- Protocols, Skills, and Professional Responsibilities for CRNPs and CNMs

ABME Education Will Not Satisfy the Requirement

As a side note, I want to address a recent inquiry I have received regarding whether collaborative practice continuing medical education (CME) conducted by the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners (ABME) would satisfy the ABN CE requirement related to collaborative practice. The answer is "no." The rules require each nurse in collaborative practice

to complete education prescribed by the Board of Nursing.

The collaborative practice education prescribed by the Board of Nursing consists only of the three modules produced and released by the Board and is tied to the renewal process. No other education is acceptable to satisfy the rules. However, all nurses in Alabama are required to document 24 hours of CE each renewal period, and CME is always acceptable to apply toward the 24-hour requirement for RN renewal.

Patients Depend on You, So Be Clear About Your Role

The Board continues to receive inquiries and reports related to advanced practice nurses using the title "doctor" or "Dr." And we support the use of the title. You have worked hard to earn your doctorate and you are justly proud of the recognition you deserve.

However, context counts, and many patients in a healthcare setting will associate the title "doctor" with a licensed physician. So, it is important to be mindful of the impressions we can leave with the people we are here to care for.

When you introduce yourself to your patients, we urge you to identify yourself by your role. For instance, avoid saying only "I'm Dr. Smith;" clarify by saying "I'm Dr. Smith. I'm your Nurse Practitioner." It's a simple way to ensure that your patients are well-informed in their time of need.



A Look Back at the 2023 Regular Legislative Session

Honor L. Ingels *Chief Policy/Communications Officer*



For more than a decade, the Alabama Board of Nursing has made a concerted effort to ensure that nursing and nursing regulation have a consistent, contributing voice in Alabama healthcare policy. After all, nurses are the lifeblood of the care delivery system, and it is vital that policy decisions account for the vital role nurses play.

This effort has paid off, for the good of both nurses and patients in Alabama, and, when the Alabama Legislature adjourned its 2023 Regular Session on June 6, the ABN had another successful spring to look back on. In addition to securing adequate funding in

the budget process to perform our mission of public protection, the Board successfully advocated for passage of two bills that are vital to the future of the nursing workforce in the state. The following is a brief summary of each bill:

Alabama Act 2023-317: Enhancing the Loan Repayment Program for Advanced Practice Nursing

Introduced by Senator April Weaver (R-Brierfield) as SB 60, this legislation was signed into law by Governor Kay Ivey as Alabama Act No. 2023-317. The bill addresses some deficiencies identified in the existing Loan Program for Advanced Practice Nursing, which was established by the Legislature during the 2016 Regular Session, and has been a rousing success, placing dozens of APRNs in rural areas of the state.

However, the needs of Alabamians are many, and those needs are not limited to rural areas. Act 2023-317 addresses this problem by expanding the program to include healthcare provider shortage areas, regardless of whether the areas are rural or urban. The Board is currently accepting applications for this year's round of loans, and we are certain that the new and improved program will make a powerful positive impact for patient care in Alabama in the very near future. This will allow the Board to ensure that these advanced practice nurses can help wherever the people of the state need them.



A Look Back at the 2023 Regular Legislative Session

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Alabama Act No. 2023-532 - Establishing a Loan Repayment Program for Nurse Educators

As employers and policy-makers throughout the nation seek solutions to the continuing shortage of nurses, sustaining the supply of new graduate nurses each year remains a top priority. However, data obtained from nursing education programs around the state indicates that thousands of otherwise-qualified applicants are denied admission to the programs each year, largely due to a shortage of qualified nursing faculty.

Prior to the 2023 Regular Session, the ABN and the Alabama Health Care Workforce Task Force proposed legislation to address this issue by offering a loan repayment program similar to the APRN loan program. In this case, loans would be awarded to those seeking graduate degrees for the purpose of becoming nurse educators. In exchange for the loans, the bill requires recipients to teach full-time in an Alabama public college or university nursing education program for two years per loan received.

Also sponsored by Senator Weaver, SB 57 was approved by the Legislature and signed into law by Governor Ivey as Alabama Act No. 2023-532. Unfortunately, as a new proposal, the program was not funded during the last session, but we are optimistic that this issue will be addressed and that the Board will begin issuing loans during 2024.

Required CE for Collaborative Practice

As most CRNPs and CNMs are aware, rule changes taking effect January 1, 2024 require all collaborative practice nurses to complete a series of ABN-provided **free** continuing education (CE) courses related to collaborative practice in Alabama. This education currently consists of three modules, released this past Spring.

These modules - *An Overview of Collaborative Practice in Alabama*, *The Approval Process for CRNPs and CNMs*, and *Protocols, Skills, and Professional Responsibilities for CRNPs and CNMs* - are available under "Available Online Courses" in the [My Profile](#) portal on the ABN website. We encourage all Alabama CRNPs and CNMs to complete these courses at your earliest convenience, as they will be required prior to your next APRN renewal.

Future applicants who may not yet have accounts under My Profile may access the courses under the [Advanced Practice CE](#) tab on the ABN website.

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**Voluntary
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Alternative
Program**



We offer an alternative to discipline for qualified nurses with issues relating to substance use, mental health, or physical ailments that may inhibit their ability to provide safe nursing care.

**Contact Us:
www.abn.alabama.gov/vdap/
(800) 656-5318**



Policy Matters: Reducing Regulatory Barriers

Peggy Sellers Benson and Honor L. Ingels
ABN Staff

Our nation is facing a crisis in the nursing workforce, and Alabama is at the forefront of the fight to safeguard the future of patient care by reducing unnecessary impediments to practice and formulating creative solutions to staffing issues. Over the past eight years, the Alabama Board of Nursing has engaged in a persistent effort to review our rules and policies to identify areas where we might find a creative solution to a current problem that requires the Board to reconsider our approach for the benefit of patients and the health-care system at large.

Two recent examples of this are the Board's successful efforts to begin issuing permits to Student Nurse Apprentices and Medication Assistants, Certified. Since implementation in 2022, each program has enjoyed tremendous success with nearly 1,200 MACs and more than 300 SNAs providing care to Alabama patients at the time of this writing. Each program also has proven to free licensed nurses to concentrate on more complex care at the bedside.

As I said, though, those are just two examples. The Board and staff continue to engage with stakeholders statewide, as well as our peers throughout the country, finding ways to address the ongoing nursing shortage, as well as various other challenges to the health-care system. When an opportunity is identified, we make changes as quickly as possible to ensure that the change is responsible, beneficial, and sustainable.

Most recently, the Board approved staff recommendations at its September 15 meeting. Among the changes approved were:

- Amendments to [ABN Administrative Code](#) Chapter 610-X-12 - these changes were made to implement Alabama Act No. 2023-317, expanding the Loan Repayment Program for Advanced Practice Nursing.
- Establishing [ABN Administrative Code](#) Chapter 610-X-16 - as with the amendments to chapter 610-X-12, new chapter 610-X-16 is necessary to implement the Loan Program for Nursing Education, which was created by Alabama Act No. 2023-532. For further information related to Alabama Acts 2023-317 and 2023-532, see *A Look Back at the 2023 Regular Legislative Session* on page 5.



Policy Matters: Reducing Regulatory Barriers

- Amendments to Chapter 610-X-4 (Licensure) consolidate the fee for temporary permits for first-time applicants for licensure into the licensing fee. When these rules are implemented, all qualified first-time applicants for licensure will receive a temporary permit to practice pending issuance of the nursing license. This will not only save applicants money; those applicants will also be free to enter the workforce immediately, ensuring greater access to care for all Alabamians.
- Finally, the Board approved an amendment to the standards of practice for LPNs that will allow these licensees to administer medications by bolus or push through a PICC or midline to stable patients in certain settings. Of course, these skills are subject to the facility maintaining an approved standardized procedure.

Each of the rule changes referenced above will take effect on November 13, 2023.

As stated above, the Alabama Board of Nursing strives every day to ensure that access to care in our state is optimized through elimination of unnecessary impediments to practice. Naturally, however, the Board's primary mission is protection of the public, so we will continue to ensure a deliberative process that seeks to preserve the quality and safety of care for all Alabama patients.



**2023 LPN, MSL RN,
& MAC Renewal**

8:00 am **Friday, September 1st** -
4:30 pm **Sunday, December 31st**

*If you fail to renew by 4:30pm on December 31,
your license will lapse and you will no longer
be legally authorized to practice in Alabama.*





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