



**Leading Public Protection  
Workforce Initiatives and Reducing Regulatory Barriers**

**ABN WORKFORCE INITIATIVES**

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| <b>LPN DUAL Enrollment for High School Students</b> | The ABN approved curriculum plans for dual enrollment high school programs across the state and communicated fast track approval processes to all nursing programs in the state.   |
| <b>Student Nurse Apprenticeship (SNA)</b>           | In 2021, the Board successfully petitioned the Legislature for the authority to issue permits to Student Nurse Apprentices. Apprenticeships are formal agreements between employers and education programs and are registered with the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship (AOA). Student Nurse Apprentices work according to established standards of practice, including a designated skill list, and may use some work time to satisfy clinical requirements for their education programs. The skill list is progressive and allows each apprentice to transition as they progress in their education program. The Board established rules governing Apprentices and began issuing permits in June 2022. |
| <b>Medication Assistant, Certified (MAC)</b>        | First among the new classes of healthcare workers to begin working in the state were MACs, who administer medications to patients under the supervision of licensed nurses. This allows those nurses to focus on more complex patient care at the bedside, while ensuring patient safety. Originally implemented as a delegation program in 2020, the MAC program was codified (along with the Student Nurse Apprentice program) during the 2021 Regular Legislative Session. The Board established rules governing MACs and began issuing permits to MACs on January 1, 2022. To date, more than 1200 MACs have received permits to practice in the state of Alabama.                                   |

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| <b>Nursing Student/<br/>Graduate Aides</b>                                      | While awaiting approval of the Student Nurse Apprentice program, the Board adopted rules to allow both currently enrolled and recently graduated nursing students to perform select nursing tasks in licensed healthcare facilities under delegation from licensed nurses. These Nursing Student/Graduate Aides have proven invaluable as healthcare workforce expanders under unprecedented conditions. The program provides additional clinical experience to these students and recent graduates and continues to provide value to Alabama employers, nurses, and patients.  |
| <b>INNOVATION</b>   |   |
| <b>ABN Center for<br/>Nursing Excellence</b>                                    | In 2021, the ABN launched the Center for Nursing Excellence. The Center is comprised of five components: the ANRC, the ABN Speaker's Bureau, the Leadership Institute, the Workforce Center, and Research and Data. The ABN Speaker's Bureau presents regulatory information to interested parties throughout the state, and nationally, as needed. Healthcare organizations have a platform to post nursing employment and scholarship opportunities on the Workforce Center, and the Research and Data division compiles license data for review of practice and discipline matters.  |
| <b>ABN Leadership<br/>Institute &amp;<br/>Developing Nursing<br/>Leadership</b> | Within the mandate of protecting the public, the Alabama Board of Nursing has established the Nursing Leadership Institute, designed around six core leadership competencies - effective communication, conflict resolution, proficiency in nursing regulation, collaboration, critical thinking, and innovative leadership. This education and continuing education hours are free to all licensees. Effective nursing leaders constructively influence any patient care setting, to promote a thriving healthcare environment. Developing strong leaders throughout the state will serve the mission of the Board by expanding public protection through professional development. The Leadership Institute offers courses targeted to three levels of nursing leadership – individual, team, and organizational. The Institute includes online and live classes at the ABN office in Montgomery and various locations throughout the state. It is available to any licensee who wishes to develop his or her professional abilities, to the benefit of all Alabamians. |
| <b>The Alabama<br/>Nursing Resource<br/>Center (ANRC)</b>                       | The Alabama Nursing Resource Center (ANRC) is a component of the ABN website. It serves as a repository of extensive information relating to nursing, emerging national and international health concerns, and health literacy and maintenance for both the public and licensees. The ANRC also serves as the Board's central access point for continuing education courses offered by the ABN and external providers.  |

## NURSING EDUCATION

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| <b>Education Program Rule Changes and Expansion</b>         | For several years, the Board has been continuously exploring innovative solutions to help address challenges in education and licensure. This has resulted in a broad range of novel revisions to rules governing nursing education rules. Most recently, the Board approved new rules to allow more latitude for conducting clinical learning experiences by simulation, deemphasize the NCLEX pass rate as the sole barometer of program quality, and to recognize equivalent education and experience as qualifiers for licensure as a nurse in the state. |
| <b>APRN Education Program Approval</b>                      | A reevaluation of the Board's statutory authority to approve and regulate educational preparation for approval as an advanced practice nurse has allowed the Board to begin reviewing these programs to ensure that the needs of students and patients are served by the graduate programs.   |
| <b>Nursing Education</b>                                    | One of the Board's primary legislative mandates is approval and review of nursing education programs. To assure instructional quality across all programs and adhere to national best practices, all programs in the state are required to obtain national accreditation.   |
| <b>Fast-track approval for new stand-alone LPN programs</b> | To assist with addressing staffing shortages throughout the healthcare delivery systems, in 2021 the Alabama Legislature appropriated funds for the establishment of additional LPN-only education programs. The Board collaborated with the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) to select schools for the new programs. The ABN worked diligently to fast-track approval of the new programs in accordance with the Nurse Practice Act. Graduates will have the opportunity to continue their educational preparation toward RN licensure in the future. |

## COMMUNICATION

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| <b>Development of Professional and Regulatory Resource Materials</b> | To assist licensees in complying with professional and regulatory requirements, the Board continuously develops a wide array of resources for nurses. These include easy-to-read scope of practice decision models, grid-based crosswalks for compliance with professional standards, and numerous other general and specific documents. These tools equip nurses with the most current and accurate information so they can make decisions about their daily practice. All resource materials are easily accessed through the Board's website. |
| <b>Communication and Public Education</b>                            | <p>The Board fosters communication among various stakeholders, such as licensees, the public, and other organizations in service of its core mission of public protection. ABN's proactive approach includes:</p> <p><u>ABN on Social Media</u> Active profiles on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter, allowing direct and efficient communication with both nurses and the public. The Board has more than 17,000 followers on these platforms, and a reach of tens of thousands more.</p>   |

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|  | <u>Newsletters</u> Quarterly publication of an ABN Newsletter ( <i>ABN Insights</i> ) which provides a forum for sharing the background and rationale for proposed changes to Board rules, as well as information relating to nursing practice.   |
| <b>LICENSE</b>                                 |   |
| <b>Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC)</b>           | In 2019, the ABN successfully petitioned the Alabama Legislature to authorize participation in the enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC). The Board subsequently implemented the NLC in Alabama effective January 1, 2020, allowing nurses to work across state lines on a Multistate Privilege to Practice.   |
| <b>NAVY and Airforce Corpsmen</b>              | By adopting rules in January 2022 allowing for the approval of certain Navy and Air Force corpsmen to qualify to take the NCLEX-PN, and, if successful, licensure as an LPN in Alabama, the ABN seeks to provide an avenue for entry to nursing practice for these qualified individuals.   |
| <b>Just in Time Training</b>                   | Beginning with the launch of the ABN Center for Nursing Excellence in 2021, Board staff began rapid production of brief informational and instructional videos on issues ranging from filing licensure applications to implementation of complex policy initiatives.  |
| <b>Online Applications</b>                     | The ABN is committed to easing the process for qualified nurses to enter the workforce as quickly and efficiently as possible by being at the forefront of efficient licensure processes. Anyone seeking to obtain, renew, or reinstate a nursing license in Alabama applies online. We continue to develop new applications as needs are identified.   |
| <b>Rapid Approval for Qualified Applicants</b> | As a result of the ABN's streamlined licensure by endorsement process, an Alabama nursing license can be issued in an average of 1.2 days for nurses who submit a complete application and have a valid license in another state.   |
| <b>Combatting License Fraud</b>                | The ABN remains diligent in its efforts to combat license fraud. Some of these efforts include a redesigned licensing process which eliminated license cards and created a new permanent CE card. The CE card allows nurses to continue recording their continuing education credits, despite it not being proof of active licensure. Elimination of license cards means that no card is required to verify active licensure and is supported by the Board's online licensure and verification processes. This process ensures that employers and consumers have real-time access to valid licensing data for Alabama nurses. The Board provides licensing verification through both the Subscription Service, which uses PUSH technology to deliver accurate data to employers relating to changes in the license status of nurses they employ, and through License Lookup, a free online search tool that allows any user to obtain credible, primary source validation of a nurse's license. |

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| <b>Retired Licenses</b>   | In consideration of licensee needs, the Board created the retired license status which does not require renewal to maintain its status.  |
| <b>NURSYS Participation</b>   | The Board participates in the national nurse license verification system, NURSYS, which facilitates open communication between Alabama and other jurisdictions relating to license status, regulatory best practices, and emerging regulatory data.  |
| <b>DISASTERS</b>  |  |
| <b>Temporary Permit for Nurses Responding to Disaster Circumstances</b>                   | In response to the unfortunate frequency of national disasters, the Board created a process that allows nurses from states where a disaster occurs to obtain a Disaster Temporary Permit which is valid for 90 days. This permits out-of-state nurses to continue to provide care to patients who are transferred out of disaster zones into Alabama, without submitting to the full licensure process.<br>Additionally, nurses who are personally displaced due to hurricanes and other disasters would be able to work and support their families in Alabama for up to 90 days, while either relocating permanently or preparing to return home.   |
| <b>Facility Emergency Plans Activated as a Result of <u>Public Health</u> Emergencies</b> | The Board adopted Special Circumstances rules relating to the application of licensure requirements under emergent circumstances. One rule stipulates that when a facility activates its Emergency Plan in response to a public health emergency, licensed nurses (including advanced practice nurses) are permitted to act within the alternative standards of care delivery and scope of practice authorized by the Governor's Proclamation and the Emergency Plan. The nurses must adhere to their scope of practice, education, training, and certification. This rule allows hospitals and other facilities to respond quickly to outbreaks of disease and other public health threats, without focusing unnecessarily on rules that apply in ordinary circumstances.   |
| <b>Facility Emergency Plans Activated as a Result of <u>Community Disaster</u></b>        | Another rule change relating to Special Circumstances allows licensed nurses (including advanced practice nurses (APNs)) who are working in facilities that have activated their Emergency Plans in response to a community emergency to practice according to each Emergency Plan's specific clinical models. This change enables facilities to respond to immediate events (e.g. a tour bus crash or mass shooting) by reassigning nurses and APNs to necessary departments, without shifting the focus away from patient care needs to regulatory bureaucracy. Additionally, this rule clarifies that CRNPs and CNMs may provide emergency treatment (subject to scope of practice, education, training, and certification) to patients within the area of the community disaster, even outside of an active collaboration. |

## MILITARY

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| <b>Military Medic-to-LPN Bridge Program</b>                  | <p>To ease the transition for members of the military into civilian life, the ABN approved a bridge curriculum for the Alabama Community College System (ACCS). This curriculum allows experienced military medics to augment their experience through an accelerated nursing education program. After completing the curriculum, these students are eligible to apply for Alabama LPN licensure. Currently, the curriculum is administered at Beville State Community College.</p>   |
| <b>Efficient Licensure for Military Families</b>             | <p>Consistent with the Military Family Jobs Opportunity Act, the Board adopted rules providing for the accelerated licensure of qualified spouses of military personnel. Under these rules, a military spouse who holds a valid nursing license in another state that has licensure requirements that are substantially the same as Alabama's may receive an initial Alabama license at no cost. The rules further provide an allowance for those military spouses whose licenses come from states that are not compliant with Alabama licensing requirements to practice in the state for 180 days under a temporary permit while they are completing the additional requirements for licensure.</p> |
| <b>No Lapse for Alabama Nurses Who are Actively Deployed</b> | <p>For deployed nurses, the Board amended its rules to safeguard against lapse of the nursing license if the nurse is actively deployed and unable to renew. Advanced notification and documentation of his or her deployment to the Board is required to activate this provision.</p>  |

## ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSING (APN)

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| <b>Fast Track Approval for CRNPs and CNMs</b> | <p>In cooperation with the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners, the approval process for collaborative practice applicants was redesigned, establishing a "fast track" roster and approval process for those collaborative practices that comply with established conventional practice models. Notably, most applications are fast-tracked, allowing CRNPs and CNMs to achieve full approval rapidly and get busy providing the care that patients need.</p> |
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| <b>Expanded Protocols for CRNPs</b>                                | Recognizing the relative skill levels of nurse practitioners, the ABN and the Board of Medical Examiners developed expanded treatment protocols and skills that are compatible with the CRNP's specific areas of practice. This promotes a fuller scope of practice and facilitates access to competent care throughout the state.   |
| <b>Novice-to-Expert Track for Nurses in Collaborative Practice</b> | The ABN adopted rules recognizing the preparation of experienced nurse practitioners and nurse midwives allowing those with enough experience to move past onerous requirements for on-site collaboration with physicians. Thousands of Alabama healthcare providers and patients have benefitted from this change, which enables experienced advanced practice nurses and physicians to devote more time to patient care instead of regulatory requirements.  |
| <b>Streamlining Prescribing Formularies for CRNPs and CNMs</b>     | CRNPs and CNMs in collaborative practice are granted authority to prescribe legend drugs to help patients manage their health.<br>Previously, two formularies, a Standard Formulary and a Specialty Formulary, were available. However, in recognition of the fact that all drugs on both formularies were classified as legend drugs, all the drugs are now included on the Standard Formulary. This process reduces paperwork for advanced practice nurses, while ensuring the protection of their patients.   |
| <b>Creating Limited and Flex Protocols for the CRNP</b>            | CRNPs in Alabama practice according to many different practice models, some of which may not require the nurse to practice to his or her full scope. Recognizing the existence of these exceptions, the Board has developed limited protocols specifically for collaborative practices that are highly specialized and may use limited aspects of the nurse practitioner education and training (e.g., comprehensive physicals for Medicare Advantage participants). These new protocols lessen certain restrictions, such as MD-to-CRNP ratios and can reduce costs. In addition, the Flex/PRN protocol allows for CRNPs to participate in flex pools under a collaborative agreement, although the individual nurse may be working only when the needs of the employer demand it, such as a pregnancy or illness involving a full-time CRNP. Prior to this change, employers did not have flexibility to accommodate medical events or long-term absences within their staffs. |
| <b>Establishing CNS Independent Contract Framework</b>             | For decades, Alabama's more than 1,300 Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) have been underutilized and misunderstood by employers in Alabama. In an effort to educate the public and healthcare facilities about the scope and possibilities for CNS practice, the ABN has approved a CNS independent contract framework, to guide independent nursing service contract formation. The purpose of this undertaking is to encourage and broaden utilization of these highly educated and qualified advanced practice nurses, increasing quality and access to care for all Alabama citizens.  |

## CONTINUING EDUCATION (CE)

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| <b>Nursing Regulatory Education</b> | The ABN requires at least four hours of nursing continuing education (CE) on the statutory and administrative frameworks for nursing regulation, scope of practice, and standards of practice to be eligible to renew the nursing license for the first time. The content is provided free of charge and may also be taken by any nurse to earn CE toward renewal. |
| <b>Online Upload of CE Credits</b>  | In keeping with the fast pace of today's technological advances, nurses now electronically upload his or her CE certificates using the My Profile portal on the Board's website.   |
| <b>CE Rule Changes</b>              | The ABN expanded the allowable continuing education to include orientation and training as part of the eligible CE to meet the required 24 hours each renewal period.  |

## ALTERNATIVE TO DISCIPLINE

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| <b>The Voluntary Disciplinary Alternative Program (VDAP)</b> | <p>The Voluntary Disciplinary Alternative Program (VDAP) is a program authorized by the Alabama Legislature to promote early identification, intervention, treatment, and rehabilitation of any registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, or applicant issued a valid temporary permit for licensure whose competence is found to be impaired or compromised because of the use or abuse of drugs, alcohol, controlled substances, chemicals, or other substances or as a result of a physical or mental condition rendering the person unable to meet the standards of the nursing profession. The program has been in existence since 1994.</p> <p>VDAP is a program intended for nurses who admit readily to a problem with alcohol and/or drugs or a mental or physical disorder that may cause the nurse to be unable to meet the standards for the nursing profession. VDAP is not disciplinary action and there is no discipline associated with the nurse's license, following completion of the program. The Board maintains an active campaign to promote VDAP in its mission of public protection.</p> |
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