



The Alabama Board of Nursing

# INSIGHTS

Fall 2025

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# Leading Workforce Initiatives

Peggy Sellers Benson, MSN, RN, MSHA, NE-BC

This past year has been a tremendous one, in terms of change and continuing efforts to address nursing workforce issues, and to address the needs of Alabama nurses and the public. In December, the ABN began the new process of licensing and regulating the Certified Nursing Support Technician (NST-C) role. This new permit allows thousands of nursing support positions working under various titles to transition to a single designation (NST-C) and to work under their own scope of practice and approved skills list. Though licensed NST-Cs will be supervised by nurses, these new professionals will no longer be working under delegation from licensed population. Status of each NST-C permit will be available under license look-up on the ABN website and be included in our subscription service.

The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) has participated as never before in this major project. For its part, the ACCS Innovation Center has developed a groundbreaking educational online program for the NST-C as well as a test for the NST-C certification. Please visit [www.abn.alabama.gov](http://www.abn.alabama.gov) and [www.accs.edu](http://www.accs.edu) for further information.

## The Future of Alabama Nursing

Obviously, the nursing workforce will remain a focus for the next few years and now is the time to work together collaboratively to advance nursing into the future. The most recent nursing workforce survey from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) indicated that 40% of the nursing workforce plans to retire within the next 5 years. This data aligns with ABN workforce data as well. In 2024, ABN reported that approximately 39,000 nurses in Alabama indicated they would retire within the next five years. We need to prepare for a much younger nursing workforce through mentoring opportunities, leadership development, and engaging the older nursing workforce to train

this new generation. Five years is a very short window of time to accomplish all that we must.

In addition, the board recently appointed a CRNP Advisory Council to revise CRNP practice protocols and update outdated language, with many nursing experts from across the state participating as council members. This type of collaboration improves nursing practice and brings the experts to the forefront of regulation. Our goal is to reduce unnecessary barriers to advanced nursing practice and modernize the protocol language.

Continuing with collaboration and communication, ABN would like to hear from our licensees, and we hope that you will respond to our surveys and will take the time to send us your ideas on how to improve nursing from a regulatory standpoint. You are key to daily practice issues and your ideas matter. Please send your thoughts and ideas to [advancedpractice@abn.alabama.gov](mailto:advancedpractice@abn.alabama.gov)

## A Note on that Other Bit of ABN News

By now, many of you know that I have officially announced my plans to retire from the position of ABN Executive Officer in the coming year. While a date has not been finalized, the Board has begun accepting submissions for a successor and we are continuing to make plans for the future.

It should be noted that the staff and I will have no role in the selection of the Board's next EO. However, I have been asked to collect submissions. Qualified applicants should direct their submissions to [Peggy.Benson@abn.alabama.gov](mailto:Peggy.Benson@abn.alabama.gov) for future consideration. Submissions will be accepted until November 14.



# Joyce Jeter Named ABN Deputy Director and CNO

We are pleased to announce that ABN Executive Officer Peggy Benson has promoted Joyce Jeter, MSN, RN, NEA-BC to the position of ABN Deputy Director and Chief Nursing Officer. Ms. Jeter had served as Administrative Director for Licensing, Nursing Practice, and CE Providers since 2013.

As Deputy Director, Jeter will be responsible for oversight of variety of vital agency functions, including daily operations, while maintaining responsibility for nursing licensure, practice, and CE provider approval and compliance, as well as oversight of nursing roles throughout the agency. Ms. Benson said that Ms. Jeter is an ideal choice for the role.

"I cannot tell you how pleased I am that Joyce was able to accept the Deputy Director role," Benson said, "Having worked with her for more than a decade, I can assure our licensees that we have a Deputy who is fully capable of handling any task or problem that she may encounter. Joyce has distinguished herself as a strong, competent, and willing leader among her peers on the ABN nursing staff. This is no small praise, as we have an exceptionally strong staff of nursing leaders throughout the agency."



ABN Deputy Director and CNO Joyce Jeter, MSN, RN, NEA-BC



## Kirkland Named New Chief of External Affairs

ABN Executive Officer Peggy Sellers Benson recently announce that the Board has hired Kenneth Kirkland, MSN, RN, NRP, to the newly-designated position of Chief External Affairs Officer, where he will exercise primary oversight responsibilities for Nursing Education, Continuing Education (CE), and the ABN Center for Nursing Excellence, which includes the ABN Leadership Institute. He will also be leading strategic planning and continuous quality improvement initiatives. Mr. Kirkland comes to the Board from his most recent post as Dean of Health Sciences for Calhoun Community College in Tanner, Alabama.

Benson said, "Kenneth Kirkland is going to be tremendous asset to the Alabama Board of Nursing going forward. Kenneth's prior experience as the Director of Health Programs at the Alabama Community College System is invaluable to Alabama nursing workforce initiatives. His leadership role in the agency will ensure that the ABN remains on the forefront of new educational licensure pathways that support its efforts to address the looming nursing shortage in Alabama."



### Renewal Is Open for MSL RNs, LPNs, MACs, SNAs, and NST-Cs

Annual Renewal for LPNs, RNs holding multistate licenses, Medication Assistants, Certified, Student Nurse Apprentices, and Nursing Support Technicians - Certified began at 8:00 a.m. on September 1 and will end at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 31. If you are among these professionals, please be sure to visit [www.abn.alabama.gov](http://www.abn.alabama.gov) and renew as soon as you are able. As the end of December gets closer, traffic on the web-site is sure to increase, so we encourage you to begin the process soon.

**As a reminder, if you do not renew by 4:30 p.m. on December 31, your license or permit will expire and you will no longer be legally authorized to practice in this state.**

### Natalie Baker Joins ABN Advanced Practice Staff



Natalie Baker joined the ABN staff in August.

ABN Executive Officer Peggy Benson recently announced that the agency had added veteran CRNP and Educator Natalie R. Baker to the staff to assist with collaborative practice skills and protocols, as well as preparation and conduct for meetings of the Joint Committee. Dr. Baker has enjoyed a long association with the ABN, serving as both a former member of the Board of Nursing and as a valuable subject matter expert in the area of CRNP practice.

"As soon as we learned that Dr. Baker was retiring from her position, we saw an opportunity to add a valuable asset to the Board's APRN staff. As one of Alabama's first nurse practitioners and most distinguished APRN educators, Natalie brings a unique perspective to her new role with the Board. Already, in her short time with the staff, she has made a remarkable impact on every aspect of CRNP and CNM regulation."

### ABN Proposes Change to Solidify the "Nurse" in Nurse Practitioner

As many no doubt noted in July, the Board proposed revisions to two chapters of the ABN Administrative Code - Chapter 610-X-5 and Chapter 610-X-9 - related to advanced practice nursing. The changes are mostly technical and related to consolidating APRN qualifications within Chapter 9, where qualifications for CRNA and CNS approval currently appear.

Under Alabama law, the Board of Nursing remains the sole authority for determining qualifications for APRNs, and the Board did propose one major policy change. That change would ensure that all applicants for CRNP and CNM approval have relevant patient care experience as RNs prior to receiving APRN approval from the Board.

For too long, new CRNPs and CNMs have endured attacks for a lack of clinical experience prior to completing APRN education and moving on to advanced practice. The Board proposes addressing this issue by requiring future applicants to demonstrate patient care experience in an RN role upon applying for APRN approval. This change will both advance public protection and ensure that Alabama's highly competent advanced practice nursing workforce is no longer vulnerable to attack from detractors who seek to limit the CRNP and CNM role in our state.

While the details of this new requirement have not been finalized, the ABN remains confident that the change will serve to increase interdisciplinary respect for these vital APRN roles and blunt future attacks on these highly qualified professionals.

If you have questions or comments related to these or any other issues involving advanced practice nursing, please contact [AdvancedPractice@abn.alabama.gov](mailto:AdvancedPractice@abn.alabama.gov).



## ABN Finalizes Amendments to the Rules for VDAP

In 1994, the Alabama legislature established the Voluntary Disciplinary Alternative Program (VDAP). Recently, the ABN proposed substantial revisions to the rules governing VDAP, and we'd like to take this opportunity to provide you with some highlights of the proposed revisions relating to eligibility to participate in the program, evaluation requirements, and treatment requirements.

### Eligibility

The proposed rules will expand the eligibility criteria and eliminate barriers to program participation. The proposed changes include:

- Only a history of disciplinary action related to the condition for which participation in VDAP is sought will render the nurse ineligible for VDAP.
- There will no longer be an absolute two-agreement limit for eligibility.
- For advanced practice nurses, return to APRN practice will be made contingent upon the recommendation of the nurse's chosen Board-recognized substance use disorder evaluation provider, rather than requiring that all APRNs remain out of advanced practice for a minimum of one year.

The ABN hopes these changes to the eligibility requirements will make it possible for more nurses to benefit from the non-disciplinary nature of VDAP.

### Evaluation

The proposed rules contain significant changes to the evaluation process.

- The Board proposes to separately recognize evaluation providers. The evaluation providers will NOT have to be treatment providers as well. This means that various providers may form their own multidisciplinary teams and apply for board recognition. This proposed change maintains the evidence-based components of the evaluation process, while also providing for expanded evaluation options which may create efficiencies that benefit the nurses as consumers of these services.



- Nurses reporting mental health or physical conditions will follow a separate evaluation process that is context-specific to the condition for which the nurse is seeking participation.
- For board-recognized substance use disorder evaluation providers,
- The definition of comprehensive evaluation is enhanced to describe the required members of the interdisciplinary team and components of the evaluation.
- Board-recognized substance use disorder evaluators will be required to identify a minimum of three treatment providers at which the recommended treatment may be obtained. At least two of the recommended treatment providers cannot be owned, operated, or otherwise financially affiliated with the evaluation providers, and if three options are not available, the evaluator will have to explain why those referrals cannot be made.
- Board recognized evaluation providers will be required to tell the nurse the cost of the evaluation up-front.
- Board-recognized evaluation providers will be required to coordinate with the treatment providers to issue opinions regarding fitness to return to safety sensitive employment in the field of nursing following the completion of treatment.

## **Treatment**

Under the proposed rules, board-recognized treatment providers will be separated from evaluation providers, although one entity may provide both services. Consistent with the statute, only nurses seeking VDAP for substance use disorder will be required to have sought treatment. If the evaluation for a physical or mental condition does not reveal the need for primary treatment, the evaluator may move directly to recommendations for return to practice.

In addition, monitoring agreements, based on recent evidence, will be reduced from 60 months to 36 months and will clarify options for evaluations.

The proposed rules are on the Board's agenda for September 19, 2025, at which time the Board will likely certify them as final, with an effective date in mid-November.





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