



POSITION STATEMENT

Understanding Certification

INTRODUCTION

Professionals are seeking ways to validate expertise in today's complex, competitive health care environment. Consumers, payers and regulatory bodies want assurance of quality and competence. Both groups often turn to credentialing as a method to achieve their respective goals.

Credentialing is a broad term denoting evidence of expertise. It is how individuals are designated by a qualified agent as having met certain standards at a given point in time. Three major credentialing mechanisms are accreditation, licensure and certification. Accreditation usually refers to institutions; licensure and certification to individuals.

Licensing performed by state governments identifies individual achievement of the minimum level of competence necessary to safely practice the profession or occupation. Therefore, licensure is required for individuals to practice.

Certification is a formal process validating a professional's knowledge, skill, and abilities in a defined role and area of practice based on predetermined standards. In most cases, certification is voluntary. The nursing profession has become more specialized to meet demands of the health care system. Certification provides consumers with the ability to identify health professionals who meet specialized needs. The process of recertification assures consumers the individual has maintained expertise in the specialty.

RATIONALE

Certification in the specialty of occupational and environmental health nursing (OHN) is the formal recognition of the knowledge, skills and experiences of the OHN. It represents mastery of the occupational and environmental health body of knowledge through completion of a prescribed course of study, successful performance on an examination and evidence of specific continuing education and practice experience.

The certifying agency for the OHN is The American Board of Occupational Health Nurses (ABOHN). ABOHN is an independent nursing specialty certifying

board and the sole provider of certification in the specialty of occupational and environmental health nursing. It is accredited by The National Commission for Certifying Agencies who ensures certification examinations validly represent the scope of current occupational and environmental health nursing practice by conducting periodic practice analyses. To nurses who successfully complete the requirements for certification ABOHN grants the right to use the specific credentials individuals may list after their name. Certifications currently offered include Certified Occupational Health Nurse (COHN), Certified Occupational Health Nurse-Specialist (COHN-S) and Case Management (CM). Requirements to obtain and maintain certification are on the ABOHN website (<http://www.abohn.org>).

Occupational Health Nurses may choose to become certified in more than one area of expertise related to practice, such as advanced practice nursing/nurse practitioner, disability management, health education, health coaching, or industrial hygiene. Certification is a significant personal and professional accomplishment.

AAOHN's POSITION

Certification in the specialty of occupational and environmental health nursing (OHN) is an important part of professional development demonstrating competency in the field. Certification is a mark of excellence requiring continued learning and skill development. Certified nurses raise the stature of occupational and environmental health nursing specialty and distinguish employers as having an expert professional providing care in their work environments. Certification promotes recognition by peers and other health professionals. Certification can advance career mobility, increase earning power, and enhance recognition of expertise. Additionally, nurse certification benefits patient/workers, their families, and employers (AACN, 2015).

Consistent with the Institute of Medicine's report about the Future of Nursing (2010), the certified OHN can provide knowledgeable assessment and management of occupational injuries and illnesses contributing to a healthy workplace. The certified OHN can also reduce the employer's legal exposure through management of

regulatory requirements such as OSHA, FMLA, ADA, DOT, HIPAA, etc. Certified OHN's can positively impact the employer's financial bottom line when practicing to the full extent of their education and training as demonstrated through certification.

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