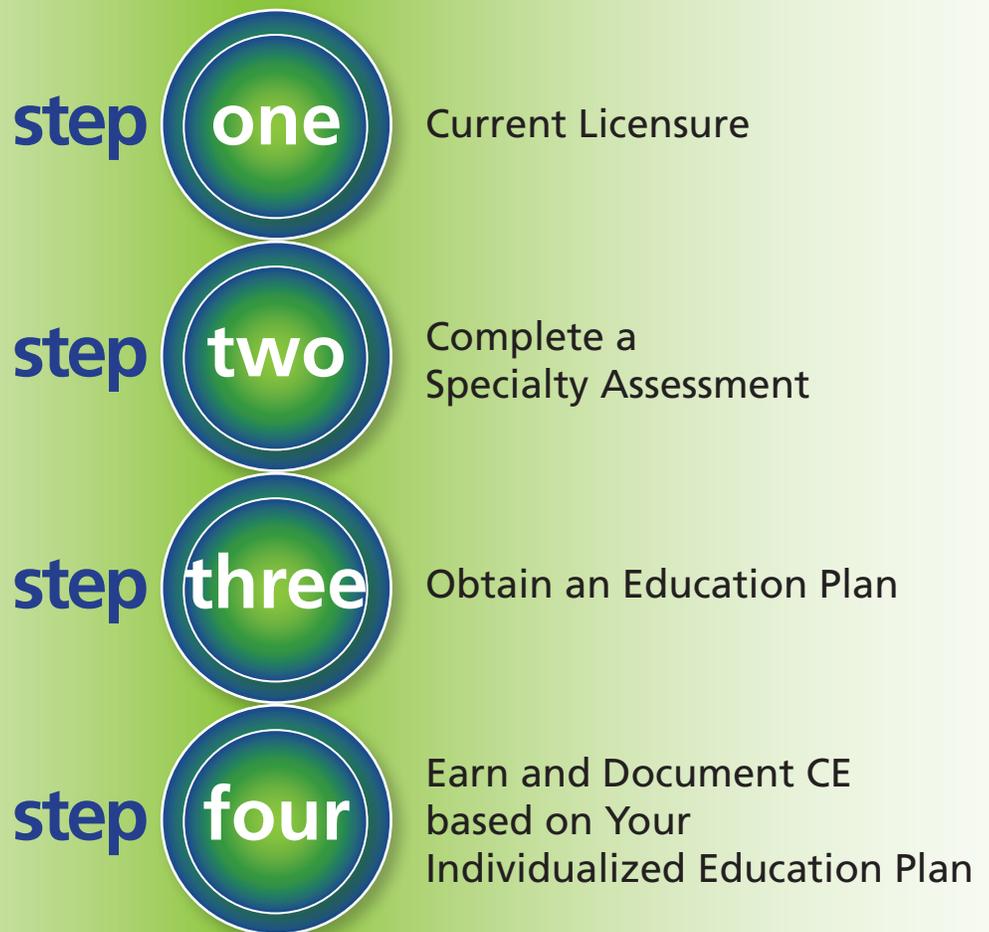


CONTINUING COMPETENCY INITIATIVE

The NCC Professional Development Maintenance Program



Only CE earned AFTER you have taken your specialty assessment tool can be used to maintain your certification. It must meet the CE specified by your educational plan.



The National Certification Corporation

The Professional Development Certification Maintenance Program involves **four major steps** to demonstrate continued knowledge of your core certification specialty knowledge competencies:



Only CE earned AFTER completion of a specialty assessment tool can be used for NCC certification maintenance and all CE earned must address the needs as outlined by the individualized Education Plan which develops from your assessment.

step

one

Current Licensure

Hold a valid, current unrestricted nursing license

step

two

Complete a Specialty Assessment

Each certified nurse will complete a specialty assessment tool developed for their specific area of certification to evaluate knowledge in the core competency content areas of their specialty.

step

three

Obtain an Education Plan

Based on the specialty assessment results, an individualized learning plan will be developed. The personalized Education Plan will identify those competency areas upon which continuing education should focus for specialty-specific professional development that reflects current standards of practice. A specialty index of 7.5 or better (based on a 10 point scale) achieved in any of the core competencies areas will satisfy the maintenance needs for that specific specialty area. *In other words, no continuing education needs to be earned for that particular specialty competency category.* Specialty ratings of less than 7.5 in any category or categories will generate a CE amount for the specific category. Upon completion of a specialty assessment tool, the specialty index report and resulting Education Plan will be maintained and accessible from an individual's personal website account and available in their on-line maintenance application for tracking Education Plan progress.

A description of how the specialty index report is generated and transitions to the personalized Education Plan as well as an example of a Specialty Index Report and its related Education Plan can be found on Page 9.

The professional development certification maintenance program involves **four major steps** to demonstrate continued knowledge of your core certification specialty knowledge competencies:



Only CE earned AFTER completion of a specialty assessment tool can be used for NCC certification maintenance and all CE earned must address the needs as outlined by the individualized Education Plan which develops from your assessment.

step **four**

Earn and Document CE based on Your Individualized Education Plan

The number of continuing education hours and the content of the continuing education to be completed will be reflected in the Education Plan which develops from the specialty index report generated by completion of a specialty assessment tool. Each certified nurse will have a personalized online maintenance application designed to facilitate documentation of CE earned to meet the content hour needs outlined by their Education Plan. CE earned from completion of accredited continuing education activities other than NCC CE modules can be entered as it is earned and saved for re-access later to indicate progress in completion of the Education Plan. CE earned for successful completion of any NCC CE module post test will automatically be entered and coded to the applicable specialty code within the personal certification maintenance application.



NCC Credentials that Do Not Require Completion of a Specialty Assessment Tool

Individuals holding NCC credentials for the core certifications or certificates of added qualification listed below have no changes in the process to maintain their NCC credential every three years as indicated by their individual maintenance cycle deadline date.

Maintenance Requirements Remain At:

Core Certifications

45 hours of CE in content directly related to the certification specialty

Certificate of Added Qualification

15 hours of CE in content directly related to the subspecialty area

Discontinued Core Certifications

- ANA-MCH Joint Certification in Maternal, Gynecological and Neonatal Nursing
- Reproductive Endocrinology/Infertility Nursing
- Ambulatory Women's Health Care Nursing
- High Risk Obstetric Nursing
- Telephone Nursing Practice

Certificates of Added Qualification *(current and discontinued)*

- Electronic Fetal Monitoring - **Current**
- Breastfeeding – **Discontinued**
- Menopause Clinician and Educator - **Discontinued**
- Neonatal Pediatric Transport – **Current**
- Reproductive Gynecologic Health - **Discontinued**
- Obstetrics for the Primary Care Nurse Practitioner - **Discontinued**



The assessment is now an integral part of the NCC maintenance process. An assessment tool will need to be completed at the beginning of each maintenance cycle. The resulting education plan will identify the hours and nature of CE needed to maintain your NCC certification for now and all future maintenance cycles.

The Specialty Assessment Tool

How Does it Work?

The foundation of the new Professional Development Maintenance Program is a specialty assessment process designed to provide individualized and validated direction for certification maintenance needs so that an NCC certified nurse is pursuing continuing education in support of their certification specialty's core knowledge competencies during each certification maintenance cycle.

The results of the specialty assessment do not affect an individual's certification status as the tool is used solely as a mechanism for directing the amount and content of the continuing education earned for maintenance of an NCC credential.

There is a Specialty Assessment for each NCC active core certification specialty.

Each Specialty Assessment Tool:

- is comprised of 125 items reflecting the topic content and distribution of the current core certification examination in a specialty and its aligned knowledge competencies using 4 major specialty areas (See Pages 11-12 for a listing of each specialty's core competency areas)
- has no fee for access and completion
- carries no pass/fail or minimum score status
- provides 5 hours of CE awarded by NCC toward the CE requirements for the maintenance cycle in which it is completed
- can be accessed at NCCwebsite.org
- is available on-demand on a 24/7 basis to meet each individual's personal schedule
- has a generous 2 hour 15 minute time allotment **requiring a single, no exit session for completion.**

Upon completion of the Specialty Assessment Tool:

- assessment results in the form of a specialty index report and Education Plan are immediately available
- the results and Education Plan are accessible only in the individual certified nurse's password protected NCC website account



When to Complete The Specialty Assessment Tool

The specialty assessment has no deadline for completion; HOWEVER, it is expected that individuals will complete the assessment tool at the beginning of the new maintenance cycle since **NO CE earned prior to when the specialty assessment is complete and the Education Plan is available** can be applied to that cycle.

For planning purposes, NCC now allows individuals who have submitted and received approval for their current certification maintenance cycle application to complete their specialty assessment up to 90 days prior to the current cycle deadline. The Education Plan can then be used to plan for continuing education needs in the upcoming cycle and CE can be earned beginning the 1st day of the new certification maintenance cycle.



What Happens After My First Maintenance Cycle with a Binding Education Plan??

By the end of 2017, all NCC certified nurses participating in the Professional Development Maintenance Program will have completed one binding Specialty Assessment and will have followed the resulting Education Plan to meet NCC certification maintenance needs for a cycle.

Moving into 2018 and beyond, use of the specialty assessment tool and resulting personal learning plan (Education Plan) will be the standard process for NCC certification maintenance under the Professional Development Maintenance Program model and will consist of:

- Completion of a Specialty Assessment tool that reflects the current knowledge competencies aligned with an individual's certification specialty **at the beginning of each new certification maintenance cycle**
- Use of the personalized Education Plan that develops from the assessment results to guide CE requirements for that particular maintenance cycle
- An opportunity to reduce the amount of CE required from the amount required for the previous maintenance cycle based on the potential for increased specialty index ratings each time a specialty assessment tool is completed for a new maintenance cycle

The real benefit to this certification maintenance approach is re-validation that each individual NCC certified nurse is maintaining the knowledge competencies of their specialty based on current practice and examination content.



Explanation of the Specialty Index Report and Personalized Education Plan

Core Competencies Defined

Determination of the specialty index ratings and the Education Plan that develops from the results begins with the foundation that each NCC certification specialty has a specialty assessment tool that has been developed to include core competency categories representing the specialty's content on the current certification examination. Across these core categories, a total of 50 hours of CE content is weighted and distributed also to reflect the specialty's current examination content. Some core competency areas are more heavily weighted as they reflect a content area of the current certification examination with a greater percentage of test items.

For example, the Professional Issues content on all NCC core examinations represents approximately 2% or less of the total certification examination content while content related to topics involving physiology, pathophysiology and management issues can reflect 25-35% or more of the total examination items.

Based on mathematical calculations, a specialty index rating range from 1-10 was established to address the content and item distribution for each specialty's core competency areas and the decision was made by NCC to consider a specialty index rating of 7.5 as having "met standard" so that no continuing education was indicated in any competency category with a index rating of 7.5 or higher for purposes of maintaining an NCC credential during that maintenance cycle.



Explanation of the Specialty Index Report and Personalized Education Plan

Base and Core Competency Hours

As these Specialty Index Ratings are transitioned to form the individualized Education Plan, a baseline requirement of 15 hours of CE in any content area related to the particular specialty is added as the starting framework.

Individuals who attain 7.5 or higher specialty index ratings on all the competency content categories in their specialty will have an Education Plan requiring 15 hours of CE in the specialty content of their choosing. *In other words, even if you achieve a specialty index rating of 7.5 or better in every core competency area, you will still need to earn 15 hours of CE. That 15 hours can be in any specialty content shown on your Education Plan.*

Individuals attaining one or more specialty index ratings of 7.5 or higher will have baseline Education Plan CE requirements between 5-15 hours depending upon the competency categories for which the 7.5 rating(s) were attained. Plus they will need to earn the CE specified by each competency category with an index rating of less than 7.5.

If an individual has no competency content areas with 7.5 or higher ratings, there is no baseline in their Education Plan as they will need to earn the full 50 hours of CE reflected in their overall Education Plan.

Final Education Plan

Once the specialty index ratings have been transferred to form the Education Plan and a total number of CE hours by baseline and/or competency category is determined, the 5 hours of CE awarded by NCC for completion of the specialty assessment tool is credited dropping the total CE requirement by 5 hours. For individuals with a 50 hour CE hour total, the certification maintenance CE total drops to a 45 hour requirement representing no increase from previous NCC certification maintenance requirements. For individuals with Education Plan totals less than 45 hours, the benefit of having an individualized approach to certification maintenance becomes quite clear. An additional benefit for all individuals is that the 5 hours of CE awarded by NCC for completion of the specialty assessment can be applied to the Education Plan need of the nurse's choosing.



Specialty Index: Inpatient Obstetric Nursing Competency Assessment: Example

CORE COMPETENCY AREA	YOUR SPECIALTY INDEX	CE HOURS REQUIRED
Fetal Assessment (Code 1)	7.62	<i>Standard met</i>
Labor and Delivery (Code 2)	7.83	<i>Standard met</i>
Pregnancy and Obstetric Complications (Code 3)	6.84	10 hours
Postpartum (Code 4)	7.27	5 hours
Newborn (Code 5)	2.86	5 hours
Professional Practice (Code 6)	5	5 hours

Your education plan

CORE COMPETENCY AREA	CE HOURS
Pregnancy and Obstetric Complications (Code 3) Missed keywords: Disease processes affecting mother/fetus/newborn, Labor/Placental Disorders, Multiple gestation, Pregnancy Risks, Preterm labor, Prolonged pregnancy Pregnancy and Obstetric Complications (Code 3) Self Assessment modules »	10 hours
Postpartum (Code 4) Missed keywords: Anatomy and physiology of lactation, Postpartum complications, Postpartum physiology, Postpartum Psychosocial Adaptation Postpartum (Code 4) Self Assessment modules »	5 hours
Newborn (Code 5) Missed keywords: Adaptation to Extrauterine Life, Infant Nutrition, Newborn Complications, Newborn Resuscitation Newborn (Code 5) Self Assessment modules »	5 hours
Professional Practice (Code 6) Missed keywords: Ethical Principles and Theories, Patient Safety Professional Practice (Code 6) Self Assessment modules »	5 hours
15 Baseline CE hours in any of your content specific specialty areas	15 hours
Credit for taking this assessment (may be applied to any Plan CE need)	-5 hours
Total hours required	35 hours

INP Core Competency Area

Fetal Assessment (Code 1)

*10 hours

- Antepartum assessment
- Electronic fetal monitoring
- Non-electronic fetal monitoring
- Acid-base assessment
- Fetal and placental development

Labor and Delivery (Code 2)

*15 hours

Labor and Delivery

- Physiology of labor
- Labor management
- Obstetrical procedures
- Pain management

Pregnancy and Obstetric Complications (Code 3)

*10 hours

Pregnancy Complications

- Maternal diseases affecting the fetus and newborn
- Lifestyle and environmental pregnancy risks

Obstetric Complications

- Labor and placental disorders
- Multiple gestation
- Preterm Labor
- Prolonged pregnancy

Postpartum (Code 4)

*5 hours

- Physiology of the postpartum woman
- Family adaptation
- Lactation
- Complications of the postpartum period
- Discharge planning and home care

Newborn (Code 5)

*5 hours

- Adaptation to extrauterine life
- Physical assessment
- Pathophysiologic conditions
- Infant nutrition
- Resuscitation and Stabilization

Professional Practice (Code 6)

*5 hours

Research

- Definitions
- Application to practice

Legal/Ethical Issues

- Definitions
- Application to practice
- Informed consent
- Legal issues affecting inpatient obstetric nursing practice

Patient Safety

*Number of CE hours required if you do not achieve a specialty index of 7.5 or more in the content area.

Core Certification Specialty Knowledge Competencies

Women's Health Care Nurse Practitioner

Normal Physiology and Management - 10 hours

Pathophysiology - 20 hours

Physical Assessment & Diagnostic Tools - 5 hours

Pharmacology - 10 hours

Professional Practice - 5 hours

Inpatient Obstetric Nursing

Fetal Assessment & Labor/Delivery

- Fetal Assessment - 10 hours
- Labor and Delivery - 15 hours

Pregnancy & Obstetric Complications - 10 hours

Postpartum & Normal Newborn

- Postpartum - 5 hours
- Normal Newborn - 5 hours

Professional Practice - 5 hours

Neonatal Intensive Care Nursing

General Assessment & Management - 15 hours

(includes risk assessment, gestational age assessment, physical examination, behavioral/psychosocial adjustment, developmental care and thermoregulation & nutrition)

Physiology & Pathophysiology - 20 hours

- System Complications
(includes fluids, electrolytes, oxygenation and homeostasis)
- Grieving Process

Pharmacology - 10 hours

Professional Practice - 5 hours

Core Certification Specialty Knowledge Competencies

Neonatal Nurse Practitioner

Physical Assessment - 5 hours

(includes risk assessment, gestational age assessment, physical examination, clinical laboratory & diagnostic studies)

Physiology & Pathophysiology

- System Complications - 20 hours
- General Management - 10 hours
(includes thermoregulation, nutrition, fluids and electrolytes, and resuscitation and stabilization)

Pharmacology - 10 hours

Professional Practice - 5 hours

Low Risk Neonatal Nursing

Mother/Fetus - 5 hours

Physical Assessment - 15 hours

(includes physical examination, gestational age assessment, diagnostic laboratory evaluation and behavioral assessment, thermoregulation & nutrition)

Management

- Neonatal Complications - 20 hours
(includes perinatal substance abuse & hyperbilirubinemia)
- Pharmacology - 5 hours

Professional Practice - 5 hours

Maternal Newborn Nursing

Maternal/Neonatal Factors Affecting Outcomes - 5 hours

Postpartum Assessment & Management - 20 hours

Newborn Assessment & Management - 20 hours

Professional Practice - 5 hours



Other Recognized Activities and Designated Hour Assignment

These activities have to be outside your expected employment responsibilities.

The activities described can only be used to meet any baseline CE needs within the Education Plan.

No more than the designated hours can be earned in each of the activities as described.

Various hours can be substituted for the following activity:

- Presentation of an accredited continuing education course will give the presenter the same amount of credit awarded to the participants attending the course. *Presentations can only be used once during a certification period.*

A total of 10 hours can be substituted for any of the following activities:

- Preceptor students in the same specialty area of certification
- Editor of a book
- Authorship of a journal article or book chapter
- Primary or secondary authorship of a book

The Benefits

Participation in the Professional Development Maintenance Program offers the NCC certified nurse the following benefits:

- Continuing education requirements will be individualized to address identified knowledge competency gaps and in many cases, total CE required will be less than the 45 hour generic standard used for years
- Continuing education will only be required in areas identified by the individual certified nurse's specialty assessment tool and the directed education will build on existing knowledge competencies in their specialty without requiring a one-size fits all approach to ongoing learning
- NCC will award 5 continuing education hours each time the specialty assessment tool is completed for a certification maintenance cycle
- Use of the specialty assessment tool offers an external process that provides an objective measure of the core certification knowledge competencies aligned with a certification specialty and re-validates the NCC certified nurse's knowledge and expertise for patients, families, employers and regulatory agencies



Maintenance Fee

The certification maintenance fee remains at \$100.

A discounted maintenance fee is still available to those individuals who complete 15 or more hours of CE using NCC CE modules and who complete a specialty assessment tool to direct their certification maintenance cycle needs.

Earning at least **15 hours of NCC continuing education**, lowers the fee to **\$80**

Earning at least **30 hours of NCC continuing education**, lowers the fee to **\$70**

Earning at least **45 hours of NCC continuing education**, lowers the fee to **\$60**

Discounts do not apply to alternative maintenance.

Use of NCC CE modules is optional and not required but is provided as a way to provide affordable, easily accessible CE for those who may have limited CE options in their area or practice.



Opting Out of the Professional Development Maintenance Program Use of the Alternative Maintenance Pathway

While NCC strongly encourages individuals to participate in the new Professional Development Maintenance Program based on use of the specialty assessment tool, it is possible to opt out using the alternative maintenance pathway.

Please note that this approach is more complex, more costly and without certain benefits available to those who use the Professional Development Maintenance Program. The process will require a statement of declaration that the individual is voluntarily opting out of the specialty assessment component of the continuing competency initiative. Selection of this option is made by accessing one's current on-line maintenance application.

Continuing education will be required in the designated amount for each core category as outlined for the certification specialty and will total 50 hours of CE. No discounts will be afforded for the use of NCC CE modules and no alternative activities such as preceptorship and CE presentations will be recognized for CE toward maintenance using this approach. Course outlines and certificates uploaded in Word or PDF format will be required for submitting maintenance. The certification maintenance fee is \$175.* Additional information is available in the Continuing Competency section of the NCC website.

**maintenance fee and process components are subject to change*



Changes to the NCC Maintenance Program

On June 1, 2010 major changes to the NCC certification maintenance process were initiated. These changes were made to assure that continuing education options used by the certified nurse* for maintenance of a NCC credential are individualized and formally address the core certification specialty knowledge competencies as reflected on the current certification examination for each specialty.

The changes in the certification maintenance process DO NOT affect those individuals certified in a specialty area for which an active certification examination is no longer administered or those individuals holding subspecialty credentials of added qualification. (See Page 4 for the list of specific credentials that are not affected by this new maintenance program).

The previous certification maintenance process completed its transition to the new Professional Development Certification Maintenance Program with the last maintenance cycle deadline in 2013 (12/31/2013). The new Program includes the use of a specialty assessment tool to identify individual-specific knowledge competency strengths and gaps. The specialty assessment which is to be completed at the beginning of each certification maintenance cycle provides the foundation for a personalized learning plan for the certified nurse to use in meeting continuing education needs for a specific maintenance cycle.

**refers to any individual holding a core NCC certification as a RNC, WHNP-BC or NNP-BC.*

Why the Changes Were Made

The changes in the maintenance program are being made in recognition of the expanding knowledge base needed to function in an increasingly complex healthcare environment. This approach also brings greater accountability and transparency to the certification maintenance process while providing employers and the public a valid measure of assurance regarding the ongoing competency of nurses certified by NCC.

It also aligns NCC with other professions who have added continuing competency components to their maintenance processes including physicians, pharmacists, physical therapists and nurses in the United States, Great Britain, Australia and Canada. Many state boards of nursing are also introducing continuing competency measures for nursing re-licensure.

Frequently Asked Questions About the Continuing Competency Initiative

Q If I use the Alternative Maintenance process for a maintenance cycle, does that mean I have to use that same opt out option for all upcoming certification maintenance cycles?

No, each NCC certification maintenance cycle is distinct and has its own 3 year timeframe. Once you successfully complete and submit an appropriate certification maintenance application and transition to a new maintenance cycle, you may elect to complete a specialty assessment tool and follow the personalized Education Plan for the new certification maintenance cycle.

Q Why is there a higher fee if I don't take the specialty assessment evaluation?
In order for NCC to assess that you have maintained competency in the major certification competencies, we will have to review your certificates which takes more resources and time to accomplish. The cost for that will be borne by the individual.

Q What happens if I get 7.5 specialty index in all content areas?
Your continuing education requirement would then be 15 continuing education hours in your certification specialty area, the specified topics would be of your choosing.

Q What if no continuing education options are available to me in the content areas indicated by my Education Plan?
NCC CE modules will be available for all specialty areas as resources; however, use of NCC CE modules is optional and not required to meet certification maintenance needs under the new Professional Development Maintenance Program.

Q When in a new maintenance cycle should the specialty assessment be completed?
Since NO CE can be earned until the Education Plan that develops from the specialty assessment results is available to direct the amount and content of CE earned for maintenance, the expectation is that the specialty assessment will be completed as early as possible in each new maintenance cycle.

Q What will happen if I don't take the specialty assessment evaluation in time and don't have enough time to meet my continuing education requirements.
The same options will be available to you as they are now. If you need additional time, then you can request an extension for a fee. If you don't file your maintenance on time, you will have one year to reinstate for a fee.

(continued)

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Continuing Competency Initiative

Q If I don't earn continuing education in the required areas but have at least 50 hours, can I still maintain?

No, you have to meet both the CE hour and content category requirements as designated by the individualized Education Plan in order to complete your certification maintenance application by the maintenance cycle deadline.

Q I guess I really don't understand this. If I take the specialty assessment evaluation and get a 7.5 specialty index in all areas, I really only have to earn 10 continuing education hours to maintain my certification?

Yes, that is correct. While the requirement is 15 continuing education hours, because you earn 5 continuing education hours for the specialty assessment, that makes your continuing education commitment 10 continuing education hours in the certification specialty.

Q Do I have to study for the specialty assessment? Will NCC provide study guides?

The specialty assessment is not a pass/fail instrument. It is an assessment tool used to provide individualized feedback regarding your specialty knowledge competency strengths and gaps solely for the purpose of directing continuing education needed for maintenance of your NCC credential. NCC does not anticipate that individuals will study prior to completing the assessment and no study materials are provided. Your clinical experience and/or ongoing continuing education in support of your specialty knowledge is considered the best preparation.

Q I have been certified as a WHNP for 10 years but my practice now deals almost exclusively in gynecologic patients with a subspecialty in cancer patients? I know I won't do well in the obstetric part. I don't think it is fair to judge me on practices I don't do.

Certification is not tied to anyone's specific practice but to a standard of knowledge that all certified nurses or NPs in a specific specialty should know. Your maintenance of certification states that you have maintained your knowledge in all the areas of certification not just 1 or 2. Tomorrow, you could accept a position that is just the opposite where you exclusively see obstetric patients. NCC certification specifies that you have knowledge competencies in the areas of your certification.

(continued)

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Continuing Competency Initiative

Q I'm Maternal Newborn Nursing certified but my hospital requires me to float to the L&D if needed. So I take a lot L&D courses mandated by the hospital. I can use them to maintain my Maternal Newborn Nursing certification, right?

No, while individual practices may broaden or narrow within the core certification knowledge competencies, the continuing education used for your maintenance must be in your certification specialty. If you now perform significant L&D management, it may be time to consider taking the inpatient obstetric nursing exam if your practice has changed over time.

Q I'm no longer working as an inpatient obstetric nurse but I love the area and have maintained even though I don't work in it any more. I hope to return to it one day and I never want to take the certification exam again? What's going to happen to me?

NCC does not require a work requirement to maintain, but realistically, if you are not working in the area any longer, it would be conceivable that your specialty index would not be as high as someone who does and therefore, your continuing education commitments might be greater. But you still have the opportunity to maintain in the same manner as any other certified in your specialty.

Q I don't have access to a computer so you will provide a paper specialty assessment evaluation for me?

No, the specialty assessment is an evaluation tool housed on a secure network platform to protect the integrity of the assessment and the method of presentation. If you do not own a computer, options include short-term use of a friend or family member's computer or access via a public library or internet cafe. Any charges incurred for use of fee-for-use services will be the responsibility of the individual nurse.