

### Why does school nurse certification exist?

To become a Registered Nurse a candidate must pass the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX). This exam represents the minimum standard for entry into practice as a Registered Nurse – it measures the knowledge needed for ‘beginning nursing practice’ without specialty skills or experience.

Additional professional standards exist that assure competence and/or expertise in most specialty areas of nursing such as School Nursing, Pediatric Nursing, Public Health Nursing, etc.

Professional standards documented by certification are required by agencies and employers to assure a competent work force. Credentials represent a higher level of knowledge and expertise than the entry level licensure exam. The employer has a measure for saying that someone meets professional standards.

### Who determines school nursing standards?

School Nursing is a recognized specialty area of practice within the profession of nursing. Professional nursing standards are set by legislative bodies, boards of nursing, professional organizations, and accepted best practices.

Nursing specialty practice competence is measured by certifications that vary by state and area of practice. Depending on individual state requirements, school nursing certification may come from a State Board of Education, American Nurses Credentialing Center or [National Board for Certification of School Nurses](#).

### Who makes sure that requirements are followed?

Authority for setting staff qualifications for working in North Carolina schools is given to the North Carolina State Board of Education. School districts and agency employers are charged with assuring staff qualification compliance.

No allowance or policy exists for differences in qualifications based on agency of employment. Contracted staff who are hired as school nurses are required to have the same credentialing as regular staff. Contracted staff are legally viewed as agents of the institution in which they work. Federal regulations regarding IDEA include the requirement for all staff to meet state standards.

### What credentials are required for NC school nurses?

Licensure as a Registered Nurse with an unrestricted NC approved license.

Since July 1, 1998: national certification in the specialty of school nursing upon employment, with a grace period of three years to achieve certification when employed.

National certification requires documentation of hours of employment as a school nurse, licensure, baccalaureate degree in nursing (BSN), application, fee and exam.