

Certification Makes a Difference:

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR CREDENTIAL



ONCB
ORTHOPAEDIC NURSES CERTIFICATION BOARD
CERTIFYING EXCELLENCE IN ORTHOPAEDIC NURSING

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INTRODUCTION

Earning a specialty nursing credential is an important achievement in your career. The Orthopaedic Nurse Certified (ONC®), Orthopaedic Nurse Practitioner – Certified (ONP-C®), and Orthopaedic Clinical Nurse Specialist – Certified (OCNS-C®) credentials recognize a commitment to lifelong learning and a high level of knowledge that contributes to effective patient care and safety. Having a specialty nursing certification is almost a requirement in the 21st century. Many employers and patients recognize the value of certified nurses and demand highly trained nursing staff.

We at ONCB congratulate you on earning your specialty certification in orthopaedics. Our goal is to support you throughout your career as a certified orthopaedic nurse.

We have created this toolkit to provide information and resources that will help you announce your achievement, communicate the value of earning an ONCB credential to colleagues and employers, and serve as a leader to other nurses interested in certification in your hospital or clinic.

We encourage you to review the toolkit and share it with other certified colleagues, and we welcome your feedback on this resource. Please send your comments or questions via email to oncb@oncb.org or call 888.561.ONCB.

“Anytime someone takes the time to seek out knowledge and take on the challenge of an exam, it is an accomplishment! Earning my ONC® was an achievement because I learned so much about all of the areas of orthopaedics, not just the areas where I practice. It helps you keep perspective of all of the different sub-specialties within orthopaedics.”

-Amber Kujath, PhD, RN, ONC®

THE VALUE OF CERTIFICATION

Nurses specifically trained and certified in orthopaedics are in high demand. As the general population ages and requires more health care services in the area of orthopaedics, the value of the ONC®, ONP-C®, and OCNS-C® credentials will continue to increase.

Certification shows the nurse is committed to lifelong learning and has a high level of knowledge that contributes to effective patient care and safety. In fact, the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) (www.nursingcertification.org) has conducted research which found certified nurses have increased confidence as excellent practitioners and certification enhances their professional credibility.

Earning the ONC®, ONP-C®, and OCNS-C® credentials benefits different audiences, including nurses, employers, and patients, in unique and valuable ways. Read below to learn more about the value of certification to these audiences.

Nurses

Along with a number of specialty nursing certification boards, ABNS has conducted research on the value of certification to individual nurses. The results of this comprehensive research indicate nurses value professional certification for both intrinsic (personal reward) and extrinsic (professional reward) reasons.

Certification:

- Validates specialized knowledge
- Enhances feelings of personal accomplishment
- Provides personal satisfaction
- Enhances professional credibility
- Provides a professional challenge
- Provides evidence of professional commitment
- Indicates attainment of a practice standard

"I took great pride in achieving certification as it validated my orthopaedic knowledge and expertise. It also served me well as I pursued career advancement. Recently, my employer and colleagues seem to be recognizing certification more and more as it is a metric associated with our Magnet re-designation."

- Jack Davis, MSN, RN, ONC®

Patients

Although research is evolving regarding possible links between certification and patient outcomes, consensus among leaders in the health care and nursing industries indicates patients benefit from receiving care from a certified nurse. Certified nurses are confident in their ability and often serve as leaders among the nursing staff. They are knowledgeable and often dedicated to professional development and continued learning.

Employers

Employers who hire certified orthopaedic nurses should feel confident that they are hiring qualified, knowledgeable nurses. Certified nurses value certification and seek opportunities to demonstrate their skill and commitment to professional development and continuing education. Professional certification is also an integral element in the process to earn [Magnet™](#) designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

“This designation identifies that you are a competent orthopaedic nurse, the best of the best, in my opinion.”

-Marcia Weis, BSN, RN, ONC®

PROMOTE YOUR ONCB CREDENTIALS

You can be very proud of earning your credential. This is an important achievement in your career. The next step is to promote your achievement and your credential to your colleagues, patients, employer, and friends. ONCB certificants offer some tips to promote your new credential.

- Update your resume or CV to include your new credential(s) and submit it to your human resources representative.
- Request that a copy of your certificate be included in your personnel file.
- Introduce yourself as a certified orthopaedic nurse to patients and colleagues. Have some key messages available to explain what professional certification in a specialty means and what value it holds.
- Send a press release to local media (see sample in Appendix B).
- Modify the press release into an announcement for your hospital or clinic newsletter, if one exists. Let your co-workers know what it means to be certified.
- Wear your ONC®, ONP-C®, or OCNS-C® pin at work. If you do not have a pin, please contact the ONCB office at oncb@oncb.org to purchase one.
- Announce your achievement to physicians and other members of the health care team.
- Place your credentials on your name tag if possible.
- Frame your certificate and display it prominently.
- Discuss your achievement with your direct supervisor. Or, send your supervisor a letter outlining the value of earning specialty certification (see sample in Appendix A).

“I promoted my new credential in a few different ways. First, word of mouth was big—I told everyone who would listen that I had passed the ONP-C® test. We also have a listserv and web page that we use to share faculty achievements, so I made use of that as well. I also made sure I was using my credential if I was presenting at a conference.”
-Michael Zychowicz, DNP, ANP, ONP-C®, FAANP

SERVE AS A CERTIFICATION LEADER

As a certified nurse, you have demonstrated your knowledge and skill. Certified nurses understand the impact of their credentials on patients and other members of the health care team. They often become leaders among the nursing staff and mentor other nurses who are interested in certification. Here are some ways you can accept the challenge and serve as a certification leader.

ONCB Ambassador

A nurse who holds the ONC®, OCNS-C®, or ONP-C® credential and is interested in promoting orthopaedic nursing certification at work, in the community, and in local chapters can volunteer as an ONCB Ambassador. Ambassadors are enthusiastic about certification and mentor other orthopaedic nurses by explaining the importance of certification, helping with the application process, and assisting with exam preparation. They also partner with ONCB certificants to share ideas and activities that help other Ambassadors promote certification.

Ambassadors also:

- Coach nurses through the process of studying, staying calm, and sharing study materials.
- Encourage nurse leaders to help with the certification process by paying for the exam, buying study materials, or sponsoring a preparation course.
- Bring information to local chapter meetings or workshops.

If you are interested in serving as an Ambassador, complete the [willingness-to-serve form](#) and submit it to ONCB.

“My ONC® certification has changed my nursing career. It gave me the confidence to do more. I became an ONCB Ambassador and eventually sat on the ONCB Board of Directors. I continue to promote orthopaedic nursing and encourage others to achieve their orthopaedic nursing certification.”

-Colleen J. Hagge BSN, RN, ONC®

Educate your Employer about Certification

As a certified nurse, you understand the value of earning a credential and can share this important information with supervisors and employers. Gaining the support and endorsement of employers is a crucial step to creating an organizational culture that supports and encourages professional certification. Below are some tips to help you share your knowledge about the value of certification with your supervisor and employer. A sample letter to employers outlining the value of certification is included in Appendix A.

- Educate employers about [Certified Nurses Day](#) and encourage them to host a celebratory event, such as a breakfast, in honor of all the certified nurses in your unit, hospital, or clinic. Consider

joining forces with certified nurses in other departments and speaking in a unified voice.

- Ask employers to reimburse certified nurses for fees related to earning and maintaining a professional certification.
- Encourage employers to require the ONC[®], OCNS-C[®], or ONP-C[®] credentials for open positions or indicate that these professional certifications are preferred.
- Identify an area of the hospital or clinic to recognize new certificants with a bulletin board and pictures.
- Encourage your employer to recognize ONC[®]s with the "[ONCB Honors](#)" plaque.
- Encourage your supervisor to recognize new certificants at hospital or clinic events.
- Investigate hosting an onsite review course for the ONCB certification exams. The National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses (NAON) offers a one-day review course for facilities interested in hosting a prep course. Click [here](#) for more information.
- Share information regarding the value of certification (see pages 3 – 4 of this resource).
- Suggest employers purchase exam preparation materials for nursing units.
- Discuss how certification can be incorporated into the career ladder and become a prerequisite for advancement to selected positions.
- Request the opportunity to publish personal stories or testimonials about certified nurses in department or hospital newsletters.
- Provide a link to the [ONCB web site](#) for posting on employer's intranet or web site.
- Encourage employers to provide a pay increase or bonus to certified nurses.
- Request nurse leaders send a congratulatory note or letter to each new certified nurse.
- Draft and distribute a press release on the hospital's certification rates to local media.

"Receiving my ONC[®] was better to me than passing my state boards to become an RN. My ONC[®] was validation to me that I did know orthopaedics and that I was making a difference in my patients' lives by bringing my knowledge to the bedside every day."

-Becky Laslev, RN, BSN, ONC[®]

Step up and Lead

Here are some tips on how you can mentor other nurses interested in becoming certified.

- Encourage eligible nurses to become certified.

- Organize a study group.
- Develop a bulletin board in your unit to feature certified nurses and information about how to become certified.
- Meet with other certified nurses and discuss how to become an ONCB Ambassador.
- Offer in-services for hospital or clinic staff and discuss certification when you speak.
- Contact the nursing staff development department and offer to teach on orthopaedic topics. Be sure your credential is included in the publicity for the course.
- Distribute a resource list of certified nurses in orthopaedics to other practice areas, volunteering your assistance as orthopaedic experts.

“The only way to stay abreast of the ever-changing world of medicine is to stay educated. Specialty nursing certification should be the standard expectation and representation of knowledge and excellence in your specialty of health care.”
Michele Hughes, MSN, RN, ACNP, ONP-C®

- Write an article on the value of certification for the hospital newsletter, perhaps in conjunction with International Orthopaedic Nurses Day or Certified Nurses Day, to promote certification.
- Make presentations on certification to other professional organizations, or local chapters, in the area.
- Call local media to do a spotlight on orthopaedic nursing certification. You may get better results if you contact local media during relevant events, such as Certified Nurses Day.

- E-mail a study tip of the week to help motivate candidates who are pursuing certification.
- Refer colleagues to the [ONCB Web site](#) and inform them that valuable information, such as the Candidate Handbook, is available for free download.
- Educate interested nurses about the [ONCB Certification Scholarship for Examination](#) or Recertification. This award encourages nurses to seek and retain certification in orthopaedics.

“Education is the key to success. I believe we can always challenge ourselves to learn more. Earning my orthopaedic nursing certification was a building block to achieving my professional development goals. My designation of ONC® has fostered stronger relationships with physicians, administrative leaders, co-workers, and patients, because they recognize me as an expert in orthopaedics”
Donna Kurek RN, BSN, ONC®

CERTIFICATION RESOURCES

Many resources available to help you understand the value of certification, maintain your credential, and encourage others to seek certification from ONCB. Below is a list of some of the resources you may find helpful. We suggest you bookmark these web sites and take a few moments to review the contents.

Certification Bibliography

The American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) provides the [Certification Bibliography](#), a list of published sources that focus on nursing certification. The Certification Bibliography is available to the public on the [ABNS Web site](#). It is updated annually to ensure content is relevant and current. The bibliography includes published sources on the following topics:

1. General Information on Nursing Certification
2. Specialty Certification
3. Value of Certification
4. Role Delineation/Exam Development
5. Advanced Practice Certification
6. Descriptive Studies
7. Patient Outcome Studies
8. Certification and Recertification Methods
9. Continuing Competency
10. General Interest

"Obtaining my ONC® certification was the impetus to return to school to get my BSN. It was the turning point for me as a professional."

- Mary Jo Satusky, BSN, RN, ONC®, CCRC

Maintaining your ONCB Credential

Once you become certified, how often should you re-visit the ONCB Web site? The answer is as often as possible. The site has valuable information on the requirements for recertification, the recertification process, and deadlines for recertification. Remember, it is your responsibility to track and maintain your credential.

We also encourage you to share recertification information with certified colleagues in your department. You may wish to hold an annual meeting discussing the requirements of recertification with other certified nurses—another great way to serve as a certification leader in your hospital.

APPENDIX A – SAMPLE LETTER TO EMPLOYERS

[Click here to download the letter in a customizable, Microsoft Word document.](#)

[Insert Date]

[Insert Name
Address
City, State Zip]

Dear [Insert Name],

I have been associated with [insert name of hospital or clinic] as a registered nurse (RN) working in orthopaedics for [x] years. I recently earned my ONC® [or ONP-C® / OCNS-C®] credential, a specialty certification for nurses practicing in the area of orthopaedics, from the Orthopaedic Nurses Certification Board (ONCB).

I am asking you to review the information I have included in this letter about the value of certification. This information may help you better support your nursing staff, improve the care the hospital's nurses provide to patients, and advance the hospital's overall goals. I believe strongly in the value of professional certification for orthopaedic nurses and consider it an honor to share my knowledge with you.

Research by the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) confirms that nurses value specialty certification because it validates their knowledge, enhances their feelings of personal and professional achievement, enhances their credibility on the health care team, provides a professional challenge, and demonstrates attainment of practice standards. These are just a few of the reasons that more than 500,000 nurses nationwide have earned a credential such as the ONC® in a specialty.

Not only does certification benefit nurses, it benefits employers, patients, and the hospital or clinic. I value professional development and view certification as both a personal and professional achievement. If you asked other certified nurses, I believe you would hear the same answer. Having your support throughout the certification process makes a difference. In addition, certification is a key factor in earning Magnet™ designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). As you know, this is an important distinction for hospitals—one that depends on a culture dedicated to supporting professional certification.

Certification is built on experience and knowledge. I studied for and passed a 3-hour examination covering all aspects of the specialty practice of orthopaedics. I was required to work a minimum of 1,000 hours in orthopaedics prior to sitting for the examination and have at least 2 years of experience as a registered nurse. To maintain my certification, I must have 100 hours of continuing education (CE) in a 5-year period, and 70% of those hours must be in clinical orthopaedics. As you can see, the process

is a difficult one that requires me to stay up to date on practice standards and continue to enhance my education.

You can encourage certification among the orthopaedic nursing staff and nurses in general in a variety of ways. While some of these tips require a financial commitment from the hospital, many do not cost anything but your time and personal support.

- Host a celebratory breakfast in honor of certified nurses on Certified Nurses Day.
- Reimburse certified nurses for certification and recertification fees.
- Require credentials on job postings.
- Recognize new certificants at hospital events.
- Purchase exam preparation materials for nursing units.
- Incorporate certification into the career ladder and make certification a prerequisite for advancement to selected positions.
- Allow nurses to publish stories about certification in department or hospital newsletters.
- Post information about certification and the ONCB web site on the hospital intranet or web site.
- Sponsor a certification information event for nurses.
- Provide a pay increase or bonus for certified nurses.
- Send a congratulatory note or letter to each new certified nurse.

I am proud of my achievement and believe other certified nurses in all departments feel the same way. I hope you will continue to see the value of certification. I would be happy to spend a few minutes discussing the information I have provided in this letter and answering any other questions that you may have.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

[Insert signature with name and credentials listed]

APPENDIX B – SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

How to Use the Sample Press Release

One way to promote your achievement is to send a press release to your local media, hospital newsletter, and other outlets to announce you have earned the ONC[®], ONP-C[®], or OCNS-C[®] credential. Customize the press release below and consider sending to the following media outlets:

- Local media – newspapers, radio stations, online news sources, etc.
- Professional associations – send to any local or national professional associations to which you belong, including your local NAON chapter if it exists.
- Hospital, department, or unit newsletter.
- Hospital intranet – request if an announcement can be placed in electronic publications on your hospital intranet.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Information:

[The contact information should be for the person who will answer questions regarding the press release. Typically this is the new certificant.]

[Insert Name] Earns Orthopaedic Nursing Certification

[INSERT CITY, STATE] (INSERT DATE OF DISTRIBUTION)—[Insert Name] has become Board-certified by passing the orthopaedic nursing certification examination and earning the ONC[®] credential from the Orthopaedic Nurses Certification Board (ONCB).

[Insert a quote from the individual who earned the credential. Example: “Having a specialty nursing certification is almost a requirement in our current healthcare climate, and earning the ONC[®] certification is both a personal and professional achievement that I have strived for in my career as a nurse,” [INSERT NAME], [INSERT CREDENTIALS] said. “I believe it demonstrates my knowledge and, more importantly, my dedication to providing the highest quality care to my patients.”

The ONC[®] credential publicly identifies the attainment of substantial knowledge in orthopaedic nursing. It validates professional achievement of identified standards of orthopaedic nursing specialty practice by the clinical nurse. Certification recognizes the individual ONC[®] who is proficient in this practice, and strengthens the conscious use of theory in planning and implementing nursing care.

To become an ONC[®], the candidate must meet all eligibility criteria at the time of application and successfully pass the certification examination. Each candidate must hold a current and unrestricted license as a registered nurse (RN) in the United States, its possessions, or Canada; have two full years of experience practicing as an RN; and have a minimum of 1000 hours of work experience as an RN in orthopaedic nursing practice within the past three years.

[INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT THE CERTIFICANT SUCH AS:

- WORK BACKGROUND
- CURRENT EMPLOYMENT
- EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND
- LEADERSHIP POSITIONS
- PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS
- PERSONAL CONNECTION TO LOCAL AREA, ETC.]

“Earning professional certification in the specialty of orthopaedics is an important achievement for a nurse,” Dottie Roberts, ONCB Executive Director, said. “Nurses go through a rigorous process that requires that they are experienced and educated to provide the care our patients need. Many employers and patients recognize the value of certified nurses and demand highly trained nursing staff.”

[INSERT LAST NAME] received the ONC® credential for a period of five years. [HE/SHE] is required to recertify the credential every five years to keep the credential active by earning 100 hours of continuing education credit.

The ONC® examination is accredited by the American Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC), an independent accrediting body specifically for nursing certification.

ONCB was founded in 1986 by the National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses (NAON) to promote the highest standards of orthopaedic nursing practice through the development, implementation and coordination of all aspects of certification for orthopaedic nurses.

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