



ANCB
Addictions Nursing Certification Board

CARN CERTIFICATION

EXAMINATION HANDBOOK

Revised 7/2025



ABOUT THE ADDICTIONS NURSING CERTIFICATION BOARD

The Addictions Nursing Certification Board (ANCB), established in 1989, aims to uphold the highest standards of addictions nursing practice. It achieves this through the development, implementation, and management of certification programs specifically for addictions nurses. Certification signifies the acquisition of specialized knowledge that goes beyond the foundational nursing credential. It helps maintain and enhance the quality of nursing care by providing nurses with a means to validate their expertise in this specialty area. Certification not only demonstrates the achievement of advanced knowledge but also raises the standards of addictions nursing practice and provides expanded career opportunities and professional growth within the field. In this way, certification benefits the individual nurse, the nursing profession, and the public.

STATEMENT OF MISSION, VISION, AND PURPOSE

Mission: To uphold the addictions nursing specialty certification as the standard of excellence recognized by all stakeholders as a mark of quality addictions nursing.

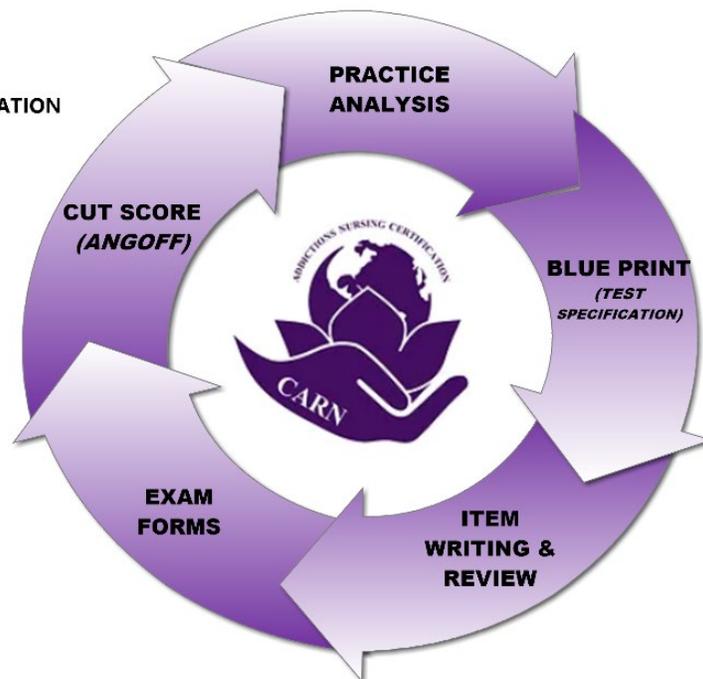
Vision: Recognizing the pervasiveness of addictions, certification in addictions nursing will be sought after by nurses across all settings and patient populations.

Purpose: To provide the leading evidence-based certifications for the addictions nursing specialty.

CARN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

CARN

ANALYSIS,
DEVELOPMENT
and IMPLEMENTATION





ABOUT THE CARN EXAMINATION

The CARN certification examination is based on a Role Delineation Study (RDS), also known as practice analysis, that is conducted approximately every five years. This study aimed to define the exam content by analyzing survey responses from addictions nurses. A panel of subject matter experts reviewed the survey data to create the exam's content specifications. An executive summary of the RDS is available at www.ancbonline.org. The exam consists of 150 questions that align with the test blueprint. Of these, about 25 are experimental or "pilot" questions, which are not scored. These pilot questions are included to test their validity and ensure they meet quality standards before being used as scored items in future exams.

PRACTICE ANALYSIS SURVEY

The Role Delineation Study is informed by a practice analysis survey conducted with nurses across the country who specialize in addictions. This survey identifies the key tasks and activities involved in treating individuals with substance use disorders. A national task force oversees the survey's design, data collection, and analysis. The task force reviews the survey results and provides recommendations for updating the CARN exam specifications. Each exam question directly correlates with the tasks and activities identified in the exam specifications. This process is conducted every five years to ensure the exam remains relevant and reflects current practices.

TEST COMMITTEE

The CARN Test Development Committee, composed of nurses with expertise in addictions nursing, oversees the development of the CARN exam. Certified addictions nurses from diverse geographic and practice settings serve as item writers to create test questions (or "items") aligned with the CARN blueprint. Both item writers and committee members are regarded as content experts in the knowledge and skills required for safe practice in addictions nursing. The committee meets in person at least once annually to review, evaluate, and write exam questions. To ensure accuracy, all test items are supported by references.

ANGOFF PROCEDURE

The passing score for the CARN examination is determined using the Angoff Procedure, a standard-setting process performed by a panel of subject matter experts (SMEs). This panel includes both experienced and newly certified nurses specializing in addictions. SMEs review each test question to assess its difficulty level and determine whether the test effectively evaluates the required knowledge and skills for safe practice. The overall exam difficulty is determined based on these reviews, and candidates' scores are compared against a predetermined standard rather than the performance of other test takers.

BIAS/SENSITIVITY

To promote fairness and inclusiveness, individual test items and the overall examination undergo thorough reviews at multiple stages of development. These reviews ensure that the content avoids inappropriate references or biases regarding gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or language proficiency.



NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

No individual will be denied the opportunity to participate in the ANCB certification program based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or disability.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA - CARN

To be eligible for the CARN certification exam, applicants must meet the following requirements:

1) LICENSURE REQUIREMENT

Applicants must hold a current license as a registered nurse (RN) by passing the NCLEX or must demonstrate the license has been verified for equivalency by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS), World Education Services (WES), or Educational Records Evaluation Services (ERES). If licensed in more than one jurisdiction, the candidate must hold full and unrestricted licenses in all jurisdictions where they practice.

ALTERNATIVE TO DISCIPLINE POLICY

ANCB acknowledges the valuable contributions that nurses in recovery bring to the field of addiction nursing. To support this, ANCB has established the following guidelines regarding participation in Alternative Treatment Programs:

A) Surrendered Licenses or Agreement Violations:

If an applicant has surrendered their license or violated the terms of an agreement with a monitoring program, they will be deemed ineligible to sit for the certification exam.

B) Restricted Licenses and Monitoring Program Involvement:

Applicants with restricted licenses who are actively participating in a monitoring program must submit a letter from the monitoring program. This letter must verify:

- The applicant's license is active.
- The applicant is in full compliance with the terms of their agreement.
- The monitoring program supports the applicant's eligibility to sit for the exam.

C) Compliance with State Regulations:

All applicants are expected to adhere to their state's Nurse Practice Act and the laws governing alternative-to-discipline programs.

These policies ensure that applicants meet the necessary professional and ethical standards while recognizing the importance of recovery in addictions nursing.

2) CLINICAL EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENT

To be eligible to sit for the CARN, applicants must attest to at least 2,000 hours (equivalent to one year) of nursing experience *related to addictions*. This experience may include roles in staff nursing, administration, teaching, private practice, consultation, counseling, or research. To qualify, these hours must have been completed within *the three years preceding* the application submission.



3) CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENT (CONTACT HOURS)

Applicants must complete a total of thirty (30) continuing education hours. These hours must have been earned within three (3) years before the application submission, and at least 51% of the hours must be specific to addictions nursing, while the remaining hours must be related to addictions nursing, e.g., HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, pain management, etc. Applicants must detail their contact hours in their online application, but are not required to upload certificates with the initial submission. However, certificates must be provided upon request by the testing agency or certification board. Formal academic coursework may be used to fulfill continuing education requirements with the following equivalencies:

- 1 academic semester credit = 15 contact hours
- 1 academic quarter credit = 12.5 contact hours

For initial certification by examination, continuing education hours must involve activities where the applicant is a learner, such as online or on-campus courses, conferences, lectures, or similar educational events. Professional activities such as precepting, authoring publications, or delivering presentations may count as professional contact hours for recertification purposes but are not eligible for initial certification by examination.

GOVERNMENT-ISSUED PHOTO ID REQUIREMENT

To ensure test security, candidates must upload a copy of their government-issued photo ID. The name on the ID must exactly match the name provided on the candidate's application. Failure to meet this requirement will result in the candidate being turned away from the testing facility. Temporary or expired identification will not be accepted.

TESTING AGENCY

The Center for Nursing Education and Testing, Inc. (C-NET) has been selected by the ANCB to provide testing and evaluation services that meet the assessment needs of addiction nursing. C-NET's staff members bring extensive expertise in developing and administering certification and licensure examinations specifically for nurses.

EXAMINATION FEES

Examination fees are listed on the C-NET website. Please note that examination fees are subject to change at the discretion of the ANCB.

EXAM APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The CARN examination application is available on our testing company's website at cnetnurse.com under the "Addictions Nursing" section. Before starting the online application, review the pre-application page, which includes a checklist of the required documents and information. Ensure you have all necessary items ready, as they are needed to complete the application process.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND EXAM REGISTRATION

Once you have completed the online CARN examination application, you will be redirected to a PayPal page for payment. You may use an existing PayPal account or pay as a guest using a credit



card if you do not have a PayPal account. After successfully submitting your application, you should receive two emails:

- A receipt from PayPal.
- A confirmation from C-NET.

If you do not receive these emails within 10 minutes, please check your spam or junk email folders. If they are not there, contact C-NET promptly at info@cnetnurse.com to verify your submission.

Once C-NET has reviewed your application and confirmed that you meet the required prerequisites, you will be automatically registered with C-NET's global testing partner, PSI. PSI will then email you a unique applicant ID number and a link to the scheduling portal, where you can schedule your examination at an *available* PSI testing location of your choice.

Important: If your card is declined, you will not receive any notification, and your application will be automatically canceled.

APPLICATION PROCESSING TIME

CARN testing is available year-round, with no specific deadlines for submitting examination applications. Once submitted, the standard processing time for a CARN application is approximately two weeks from the date it is received by C-NET. If applicants have not received their examination permit within two weeks of submission, they should check their spam or junk email folders. If the permit is still not found, it is the applicant's responsibility to notify C-NET promptly by emailing info@cnetnurse.com.

INCOMPLETE APPLICATION STATUS

Be advised that applications submitted with missing or incorrect information may incur an Incomplete Application Fee. If an application is deemed to be incomplete, the applicant will receive an Incomplete Status Letter via email. This letter will detail the reasons for the incomplete status and provide clear instructions on resolving the issue. Applicants must follow the instructions in the letter carefully and completely to avoid additional penalties or delays.

TESTING WINDOW (90 DAYS)

Once the application is approved and the candidate is registered with PSI, candidates are granted a 90-day testing window. During this period, candidates must schedule and complete their exam as specified in their registration confirmation. If a candidate fails to either schedule or test within the 90-day window, their testing registration, application, and examination fee will expire, and the candidate must submit a new application and pay the required fee to proceed.

EXAM SCHEDULING CONFIRMATION AND VERIFICATION

After scheduling, candidates will receive a confirmation email from PSI. This email will include the candidate's name, exam name, date, time, and testing location for their upcoming examination. Candidates are responsible for verifying that all information is accurate. If any errors are found, candidates must promptly report them to C-NET at info@cnetnurse.com to request correction.



RESCHEDULE REQUESTS

To reschedule an exam, candidates may use the scheduling portal provided by PSI when they initially scheduled their exam.

Important:

- Rescheduling is not permitted less than 48 hours before the currently scheduled exam. Candidates attempting to reschedule within this timeframe will be blocked and must either test as scheduled or be considered a "no-show."
- For rescheduling **assistance** more than 48 hours before the exam, contact a PSI representative.

PERMIT EXTENSIONS

Candidates who require additional time to schedule or who miss their scheduled exam date may request an extension of their 90-day testing window by emailing C-NET at info@cnetnurse.com. To qualify for an extension, candidates must contact C-NET before their original 90-day testing window expires. A permit extension fee will apply; only one extension is allowed per registration. The one-time permit extensions shall be no longer than 90 additional days.

TAKING THE EXAMINATION

The CARN exam is administered nationwide in a standard computer-based testing (CBT) format, consisting of multiple-choice questions. Candidates may test at any *available* testing facility.

Key Points:

- Read each question carefully and select the single best answer.
- There is no penalty for guessing, so make an educated guess if you are unsure of an answer.
- You will have three hours to complete the examination.

Prohibited Items:

- Reference books, notes, or other study materials are not allowed in the examination room.
- Examination questions do not require the use of a calculator.
- Personal belongings must be placed away from the testing area (in compliance with the test site policies).
- All cell phones and battery-powered devices (including communication and recording devices), whether wearable or non-wearable, must be turned off and stored securely away from the testing area (in compliance with the test site policies).

Any deviation from these guidelines may result in the revocation of certification, loss of future testing privileges, and potential legal action.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR DURING THE EXAMINATION

Examinees will be closely monitored throughout the examination via live proctors and advanced security measures, including video surveillance and biometric verification, to maintain the integrity of the testing process. Any examinee who gives or receives assistance, engages in dishonest behavior, or violates test rules may be required to stop the exam and leave the testing facility immediately. Such incidents will be reported to the ANCB for further review. Following an investigation, ANCB will determine the appropriate response. This may include invalidating the



exam attempt, withholding test results, or revoking eligibility for future examinations. Additionally, any attempt to compromise exam security, such as removing or attempting to remove materials, disclosing, recording, reproducing, distributing, or otherwise misusing test questions, will result in immediate action and may lead to legal consequences. These protocols are enforced to ensure a secure, fair, and professional testing environment.

SPECIAL TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

Special testing accommodations are available through C-NET in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). You can request accommodation via a link on the exam application instructional page on C-NET's website if you have an appropriately documented diagnosed disability. For any questions regarding accommodation, please contact C-NET at info@cnetnurse.com before submitting your application. Once your request is received, C-NET will provide the required forms and detailed instructions to assist you in completing the process.

REFUND, TRANSFER, AND WITHDRAWAL POLICIES

Once an application is submitted, neither the application nor the fee is eligible for transfer or immediate withdrawal. All refund requests must be submitted in writing to C-NET at info@cnetnurse.com to be valid. Applicants not yet registered for the exam must send their refund request within 90 days of the application submission date. Registered candidates (those who have received links to schedule their exam) must submit their refund request before their initial testing window closes. To comply with the policy, all deadlines must be met, and the candidate's testing window must be unscheduled, meaning:

- No exam has been scheduled, or
- Any previously scheduled exam has been properly canceled.

All refund requests must be submitted by the original purchaser and include the following information:

- The applicant's full name,
- The last four digits of the applicant's Social Security number
- The name of the exam being canceled.

Refund requests that fail to include all required information or do not meet the stated deadlines will not be considered. Refunds will be issued minus the following non-refundable fees:

- Application Processing Fee
- Incomplete Application Fee (if applicable)
- Incurred Bank Fee (if applicable)

EXAM RESULTS AND NOTIFICATION

At the testing facility, your scores are available immediately upon completion of the examination. Ensure that the photo and name printed on your score report belong to you. If your score report is missing any of this information, contact C-NET at info@cnetnurse.com immediately. Be advised:

- A passing score requires correctly answering 75% of the CARN test items.



- Examinees who do not pass the examination will receive a total score with sub-scores in all major areas of concentration on their score report to show how they performed in each area.
- Score reports for examinees who successfully pass the examination will only reflect the total score.

UPON PASSING THE EXAMINATION

Candidates who successfully pass the examination will be awarded a certificate confirming their achievement of certification. This certification allows individuals to use the professional designation "CARN" to denote their certified status. Certification is valid for a period of four (4) years, provided the individual maintains a current RN license throughout the certification period. If certification lapses, the individual must immediately discontinue the use of the "CARN" designation until recertification is achieved.

AUTOMATED EXAM RETAKE LINKS

If candidates do not pass the CARN examination, C-NET will send a rescheduling link. This link allows candidates to schedule a retake exam without submitting a new application. Per accreditation guidelines, retake links will be emailed no sooner than 30 days after the candidate's last test date and may only be used once. New rescheduling links will be issued after each unsuccessful attempt for up to one year from the date of the original application submission. After this one-year period, candidates must submit a new application to qualify for additional retake links.

ANCB APPEALS PROCEDURE

The ANCB appeals procedure is available to CARN and CARN-AP applicants in the following circumstances:

- Denial of eligibility to sit for the certification examination for CARN or CARN-AP.
- Denial of recertification for CARN or CARN-AP.
- Suspension of CARN or CARN-AP certification.
- Revocation of CARN or CARN-AP certification.

An adverse decision may be appealed on the grounds that:

- 1) ANCB did not properly apply the specified certification eligibility criteria
- 2) The decision was based on a factual error that affected the outcome

Denial of a late CARN or CARN-AP recertification application may also be appealed if extenuating circumstances exist. Before filing an appeal, a written request for reconsideration must be submitted to the testing company, C-NET ("ATTN: ANCB"), at info@cnetnurse.com.

Important Notes:

Applicants cannot appeal:

1. if they do not meet the eligibility requirements
2. the passing score or actions taken by the content experts in setting a passing score
3. actions taken against an individual's certification status because of a lack of valid registered nurse license, unless proof of licensure is submitted with a request for consideration or appeal;
4. establishment of an eligibility (initial or renewal) requirement



5. the examination or other measurement tool or individual test items
6. test content validity.

Candidates who believe that distractions or disturbances at the test site contributed to a failing score must:

- 1) file an incident report with the exam proctor at the time of the disturbance.
- 2) follow up with a written report to C-NET at info@cnetnurse.com immediately after the exam.

C-NET will investigate the incident in coordination with the test site and make a decision based on the findings.

CERTIFICATION RENEWAL PROGRAM

Certification is awarded for a period of four years, contingent upon maintaining a current registered nurse (RN) license. To maintain certification, nurses must fulfill all recertification requirements, including the submission of continuing education (CE) hours and other approved activities via the ANCB Certification Portal. Certificants may log and track CE hours in the portal throughout their certification period. However, the portal will only allow formal submission of CE hours for review starting six months prior to the certification expiration date. Once CE activities are submitted for review, no additional CE hours may be added to the portal. Before submitting CE hours, certificants are responsible for ensuring that their name and contact information are up to date in the portal. This helps ensure timely delivery of renewal notifications. To renew certification, candidates must meet all eligibility criteria, pay all applicable fees, and comply with all posted deadlines. Alternatively, certificants may choose to renew by passing the certification examination before their current certification expires. Courtesy renewal reminders begin 24 months after the initial certification date. If a renewal notice is not received, it is the certificant's responsibility to contact ANCB. Failure to receive a reminder does not exempt the certificant from the obligation to apply for renewal on time. For questions regarding certification or the recertification process, please contact C-NET (ATTN: ANCB) at info@cnetnurse.com.

RECOGNITION OF CONTINUED ACCOMPLISHMENT

Recertification in addictions nursing through ANCB's Certified Addictions Registered Nurse (CARN) program provides formal recognition of continued accomplishment and expertise in the specialized knowledge required for practice in addictions nursing. ANCB awards recertification of the CARN credential to nurses who demonstrate continued professional growth by maintaining licensure and advancing their evidence-based knowledge through education, practice, and skills development. Recertification benefits the individual nurse, their patients and families, the nursing profession, and the public.



CARN EXAMINATION BLUEPRINT

Ideal Distribution of 150-Item Test

CARN Test Specifications (Blueprint) Ideal Distribution of 150 Items

→ Domain of Practice Patient problem ↓	1 Perform a biopsychosocial SUD assessment	2 Assess acute care needs of SUD patients	3 Develop and implement an individualized plan of care	4 Educate and promote behavioral change	5 Care mgmt., treatment, and evaluation, throughout the recovery continuum (including special populations)	TOTAL
A Opioid use disorder	5-6	5-6	7-8	5-6	13-14	27% (40-42)
B Alcohol use disorders	5-6	5-6	7-8	5-6	13-14	25% (37-39)
C Medication misuse (sedative/hypnotics/anxiolytics, gabapentinoids, etc)	3-4	3-4	4-5	3-4	8-9	10% (15-17)
D Co-occurring psychiatric/comorbid medical disorders (process addictions, infectious diseases, and mental health disorders)	3-4	3-4	4-5	3-4	8-9	12% (19-21)
E Stimulant use disorders (cocaine, amphetamines, caffeine)	2-3	2-3	3-4	2-3	5-6	15% (22-24)
F Cannabinoids and other hallucinogens	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	2-3	6% (9-11)
G Tobacco use disorder (e.g., vaping, nicotine)	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	2-3	5% (7-9)
Total	15% (22-24)	20% (29-31)	15% (22-24)	15% (22-24)	35% (52-54)	100% (150)

Implemented 2026

SAMPLE ITEMS

The following items are intended to illustrate the format and style for the examination, which is similar for the CARN and the CARN-AP examinations. Specific content will differ for the two examinations. ANCB subject matter experts approve all items as corresponding to the detailed content outline as being appropriate for the respective examination. Some items may be presented as a situational set, in which a scenario is provided, followed by several items pertaining to the scenario.



1. A patient has been on a detoxification unit for alcoholism and occasional use of marijuana and cocaine. He is now in small group therapy sessions led by a nurse. On his second meeting, he fidgets in his seat and finally says, "I'm having difficulty sitting still. Am I bothering some of you who are here? Maybe I should stop coming to these meetings." Which of these actions in response to this patient would be appropriate?

- A. Encourage him to share his problem with the group members and ask for their help.
- B. Recognize that this is manipulative behavior and encourage him to remain in the group.
- C. Remove him from the group and further assess his needs.
- D. Tell him not to concern himself about the group members and to continue in the group

Correct Response -A

2. A 50-year-old is admitted to the detoxification unit for heavy drinking. Orders include oxazepam (Serax) 10mg every 6 hours prn and diphenhydramine hydrochloride (Benadryl) 50 mg every 6 hours prn. During the nurse's initial assessment, which of these questions should take priority?

- A. "Have you been taking any over-the-counter medication?"
- B. "Have you ever had a withdrawal seizure?"
- C. "When did you have your last drink?"
- D. "What has been your usual daily alcohol consumption?"

Correct Response - C

3. Mr. Bruce Mann, who is in the chemical dependency unit, tells the nurse that he is having cravings for cocaine. In addition to acknowledging the discomfort, the nurse suggests that he exercise at the gym, where various exercise machines are available. The appropriateness of this decision is based on which of these understandings about cocaine use disorder?

- A. They are more comfortable alone.
- B. They need to be kept mentally occupied.
- C. They are highly motivated to improve their physique.
- D. They need outlets for physical tension to reduce craving.

Correct Response – D

4. A drug screen was administered to a patient who last used cannabis (marijuana) 48 hours ago. The results will most likely be positive for marijuana. A positive result will remain for

- A. 7 hours.
- B. 7 days.
- C. several weeks.
- D. several months.

Correct Response – C

*For a current list of references for the CARN and CARN-AP Examinations, please visit:
<http://www.cnetnurse.com/addictions-nursing-certification/>*