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Nursing Education Programs Approval/Accreditation Basics

Board Approval

The Arizona State Board of Nursing requires that all nursing programs be approved by the Board before offering the program. There are 2 types of Board approval: provisional approval and full approval.

Provisional approval is the term used for the approval granted to a new nursing program. There are two steps in the application process for provisional approval: proposal approval where the program must establish the need for the program and demonstrate that it has the resources to operate the program and the actual provisional approval application where the program must demonstrate compliance with all Board regulations. A program holding provisional approval may apply for full approval upon graduation of the first class. A program must apply for full approval within 2 years after the first class graduates and takes the NCLEX exam. If the program fails to meet the requirements for full approval, Board may extend the period of provisional approval.

Full approval is that status awarded to established programs that meet the standards of the Board. The standards of the Board for nursing programs are contained in the Rules of the Board, Article 2 which can be accessed on the Board website: www.azbn.gov under Resources/Nurse Practice Act.

Notice of Deficiency

The Board website may indicate that a program is under a "notice of deficiency". A notice of deficiency is an official action of the Board indicating that a program that has failed to meet one or more standards of the Board. The Board may grant up to 18 months to correct the deficiency. Occasionally, if a program is making substantial progress toward remedying the deficiency, the Board will extend this time frame. Information related to the notice of deficiency is public and available upon request. If a program is currently under a notice of deficiency, it will be noted in the Board's list of approved programs available on the Board's website under resources/Educational Resources. Failure to correct a deficiency in the time-frame allotted may result in revocation of approval or a restriction on admissions to the program.

Other Actions

Nursing programs in Arizona are also subject to other disciplinary actions such as decree of censure, civil penalty, probation, suspension and revocation. Occasionally a program repeatedly violates one or more rules of the Board and is placed on probation

or ordered to pay a civil penalty. The Board may also issue a non-disciplinary “letter of concern” to a program for infractions that do not rise to the level of Board action but are of concern to the Board. Letters of concern are not publically posted.

Accreditation

There are two basic types of accreditation, institutional accreditation and program accreditation. The Board requires schools offering nursing programs to hold institutional accreditation, but many nursing programs also hold program accreditation. The purpose of requiring accreditation is to ensure that the education provided by the institution meets acceptable levels of quality. Accrediting agencies are private entities however the U.S. Department of Education maintains a list of recognized accrediting agencies on their website www.ed.gov. A school may claim to be accredited, but the accreditation must be recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to meet Board standards.

Institutional Accreditation

There are also two types of institutional accreditation, regional and national. Regional accreditation for Arizona schools is provided by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Higher Learning Commission. Regional accreditation is sought by both private and public full service colleges and universities. Examples of schools in Arizona that hold regional accreditation are: Arizona State University, University of Arizona, Grand Canyon University, Everest College, Scottsdale Community College, and Northland Pioneer College. All public and most traditional private colleges and universities hold this type of accreditation. Although transfer of credits is always the sole prerogative of the recipient institution, academic credits are more easily transferred between regionally accredited institutions.

National accreditation is a type of accreditation geared toward private and specialized career schools. Some agencies that provide national accreditation of colleges that have nursing programs in Arizona are: Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT), Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) and the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES). Examples of schools in Arizona that hold national accreditation are: Carrington College, Brookline College and Pima Medical Institute. Generally speaking, unless a specific articulation agreement exists, academic credits earned at these schools are difficult to transfer to a regionally accredited institution.

Program Accreditation

In addition to institutional accreditation, a program within an institution may also be accredited. Although the Board does not require nursing programs to be accredited, it does recognize nursing program accreditation. While many RN programs hold this type of accreditation, there are no accredited LPN programs in Arizona. There are 2 agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for the purposes of accrediting pre-licensure nursing programs.

The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) accredits nursing programs at the baccalaureate and graduate degree level. The maximum accreditation period is

10 years. Examples of programs in Arizona accredited by CCNE are: University of Arizona, Grand Canyon University, Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University and University of Phoenix.

The National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) accredits all types of nursing programs. Examples of RN programs that hold NLNAC accreditation are: Scottsdale Community College, Cochise College, Mohave Community College, Pima Community College, Central Arizona College, Yavapai College and Arizona Western College. The maximum period of NLNAC accreditation is 8 years.

There are other specialized nursing accrediting bodies for advanced practice nursing programs such as the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Education Programs and the American College of Nurse Midwives Accrediting Commission. All advanced practice nursing programs in Arizona must be accredited. In Arizona, all nurse practitioner programs are accredited by CCNE.

The Board indicates in its list of approved programs which nursing programs are accredited and the institutional accrediting body.

Key Points:

- All AZ nursing programs are in accredited institutions
- Credits earned at nationally accredited institutions do not generally transfer
- Some AZ nursing programs are also accredited by either CCNE or NLNAC
- Other information on nursing programs and nursing program selection is available on the Board website: www.azbn.gov