STAFFING

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for the appointment of Nurse, VN/AD-0610, (all Nurse and Advanced Practice Nurse assignments – Nurse Practitioner, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Certified Nurse Midwife and Certified Nurse Anesthetist) appointed under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(1) and 38 U.S.C. § 7405 in Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. The pages in this handbook replace the existing Nurse qualification standard in VA Handbook 5005, Appendix II-G6 in its entirety. The standards are effective on the date of issuance of this handbook. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, maintained on the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer Website and VA Publications Website. Significant changes include:

   a. Updates basic requirements for nursing education accreditation requirements.

   b. Provides clarification of nursing bridge educational program requirements and foreign education degree equivalency.

   c. Establishes education and certification requirement for the assignment of Clinical Nurse Leader.

   d. Eliminates the requirement to terminate a Graduate Nurse Technician (GNT) upon failed licensure attempt and provides an expanded period for the GNT to actively achieve licensure within 120 days of appointment with two attempts.

   e. Modifies acceptable educational degrees related to Nursing.

   f. Clarifies Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) experience as it relates to grade and step rate above minimum experience.

   g. Establishes new qualifications and five dimensions of practice for each Nurse level and grade and advancement up to Nurse II with degree and specialized experience for Nurse and Nurse III for Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs). Clarifies exceptions allowed for basic accreditation requirement and eliminates State approved nursing programs as an exception.

   h. Adds separate and new qualification requirements specific to each APN assignment (Certified Nurse Practitioner, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Certified Nurse Midwife) and adds the assignment of Certified Nurse Anesthetist under APN and the 0610 occupational series.

   i. Clarifies basic certification requirement for APNs.

   j. Increases entry grade level for all APN assignments to Nurse II.

k. Expands APN assignments to Nurse IV and Nurse V grade levels.

3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059).

4. **RELATED HANDBOOK/DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing.

5. **RESCISSIONS:** VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Appendix G6, dated March 17, 2009, and Appendix G7.

CERTIFIED BY:

/s/
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BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:

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DISTRIBUTION: Electronic Only

NOTE: This transmittal page accompanied the former VA Handbook 5005, Staffing publication. It is provided for reference to highlight revisions made to this qualification standard.

FORMER VA HANDBOOK REFERENCE: PART II APPENDIX G6
EFFECTIVE DATE: January 29, 2024

NURSE
QUALIFICATION STANDARD (VN/AD-0610)
VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are the requirements for appointment as a Nurse in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). This includes all assignments under 0610 series as a Nurse and includes professional experience obtained in the following roles: Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs): Nurse Practitioner (NP), Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM) and Certified Nurse Anesthetist (CNA). Specific requirements for appointment as an APN are covered separately under Appendix G6a-G6d.

2. **DEFINITION.**

   a. **Appointing Official**. The Human Resources Officer is delegated appointing authority to process and authenticate notifications of personnel actions and authority to effect management-approved employment actions on behalf of officials, employees and facilities for which service is provided.

   b. **Approving Official**. The Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director, Facility Director or Under Secretary for Health or designee (for VHA central office appointments) is the approving official and will determine whether to approve or disapprove the appointment of employees in title 38
   c. occupations.

   d. **Creditable Experience**. To be creditable, the experience must be documented on Proficiency Report, VA Form 10-2623, the VA Form 10-2850a, Application for Employment Nurses and Certified Nurse Anesthetists or on a candidate's resume and demonstrate sustained and consistent experience as a Nurse or APN at or above an acceptable level of quality. This may be evident by one of the following:

      (1) Experience as a Graduate Nurse Technician (GNT) provided the candidate was utilized as a professional nurse and passed the State licensing (board) examination on the first attempt.

      (2) Performance as an active duty, military reservist or VA Nurse or APN that is at or above the fully satisfactory level.

      (3) Part-Time and Intermittent Nurse/APN Experience. Part-time experience as a Nurse or APN is credited per the relationship to a full work week. For example, a Nurse or APN employed 20 hours per week on a half-time basis would receive one full-time work week credit for two weeks of such service. Intermittent experience as a Nurse or APN is credited based on actual days worked.

3. BASIC REQUIREMENTS.

a. **Citizenship.** Citizen of the United States in accordance with section 7402(c) to title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.). Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified candidates in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7407(a).

b. **Education.** Graduate of a school of professional nursing.

(1) **Education Accreditation Requirement.** Nursing education must be from a school of professional nursing accredited by one of the following accrediting organizations at the time the program was completed by the applicant:

(a) The Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), 3343 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 850, Atlanta, GA 30326. The ACEN accredits all levels of nursing programs, including clinical doctorate, masters/post master's certificate, baccalaureate, associate and diploma nursing education programs. (Note: The National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission/NLNAC changed its name to ACEN in May 2013. ACEN's website may be utilized to verify accredited programs using automated inquiry processes; however, for verification of any nursing program's accreditation prior to 1998, an automated inquiry cannot be used and ACEN must be contacted directly via their email contact information on the ACEN website to verify.); or

(b) The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), 655 K Street, NW, Suite 7, Washington, DC 20001. The CCNE is an accrediting arm of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and accredits nursing education programs at the bachelor and master's level.

(2) **Nursing Bridge Programs**. Nursing bridge programs are accelerated nurse education programs which rely upon existing nursing knowledge and education. Graduates from nursing bridge programs that meet accreditation requirements specific grade level requirements in this standard must also be met in addition to the following:

(a) **Master's Level Bridge Program Education Appointments Prior to Graduation.** Individuals attending a master's level bridge program in nursing who achieve the level in their education in which they have completed coursework equivalent to a bachelor's level degree in Nursing may have opportunity to become registered as a nurse with a state licensing board prior to completion of the bridge program. Upon achievement of a State license, the individual may be appointed on a

temporary basis for any period up to three years contingent upon full completion of the professional nursing education program, if education verification provided by the school supports the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) equivalency. Upon successful completion and graduation from the bridge program, the Nurse may be converted to a permanent appointment under the provisions of section 7401(a)(1) of title 38. Failure to complete the bridge program on which the temporary appointment was based will result in termination of the appointment.

(3) **Additional Education Requirement for Nurse (Clinical Nurse Leader) Assignments.** In addition to the basic requirements, a Nurse (Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL)) must possess a bachelor's level degree in nursing and a master's degree from an accredited CNL education program. (See certification requirement in 3c.(2) of this appendix).

(4) **Foreign Education**. Graduates of foreign schools of professional nursing who possess a current, full, active and unrestricted registration (see paragraph 3c) will meet the requirement of graduation from an approved school of professional nursing to warrant appointment as a Nurse who has completed an associate degree level Nursing education program. In order to grant credit towards an appointment based on foreign nursing education higher than the associate degree level, formal degree equivalency validation from a recognized degree equivalency evaluation agency accepted by VA such as the International Consultants of Delaware (ICD) must be obtained.

(5) **Degree in a Related Field.** A graduate level or doctorate degree in health care/management related fields from an institution accredited by the State and approved by the Department of Education at the time the candidate completed the program may be credited as specifically indicated in grade requirements. The graduate level or doctorate degree and coursework must provide evidence in support of the nursing role and duties associated with the assignment and grade level. Foreign education programs/degrees are not creditable as related degrees.

c. **Licensure and Certification.** The following licensure and certification requirements are considered conditions of employment.

(1) **Nurse.** All Nurses must possess and maintain an active, current, full and unrestricted license as a Nurse to practice in a State, Territory or Commonwealth of the United States, or in the District of Columbia.

(2) **Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) Certification.** In addition to the licensure requirement under 3c.(1), Nurses in CNL assignments must

possess certification as a CNL from the Commission on Nurse Certification (CNC), American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

(3) **Impaired Licensure and Certification.** Human Resources office staff must appoint Nurses or (CNLs) in accordance with the provisions in chapter 3, section B, paragraph 15 and 17 of this part, who have, or have ever had, any license or certification revoked, suspended, denied, restricted, limited or issued/placed in a probationary status.

(4) **Exception to Licensure for Graduate Nurse Technicians**. Candidates who otherwise meet the basic education requirements, but do not possess the required licensure, may be appointed at the entry step of the grade and level applicable to the completed nursing education, as a Graduate Nurse Technician (GNT) on a temporary appointment under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7405(c)(2)(B). In all cases, GNTs must actively pursue and obtain required licensure within 120 days of appointment.

(a) GNTs may be appointed temporary for up to two years but are expected to obtain licensure within 120 days of appointment. In no case will appointments exceed two years.

(b) GNTs must advise their supervisor when they schedule licensing exam and report results immediately.

(c) If the GNT fails the licensure exam, they may retake the exam one additional time for a total of two attempts within 120 days of appointment. Failure to pass the licensure exam twice will result in separation from service with two-week's notice. The 120-day period may be extended in unusual circumstances. Extensions must be requested in writing through the Associate Director of Patient Care Services, or equivalent, for a formal decision by the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Chief Nursing Officer (CNO), or equivalent.

(d) GNTs should sign a Statement of Understanding related to the specific requirements of the appointment.

d. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service.

e. **English Language Proficiency.** Candidates must be proficient in spoken and written English to be appointed as authorized by 38 U.S.C. § 7403(f).

f. **Grandfathering Provision.** All persons employed in VHA in this occupational series and performing the duties as described in the qualification standard on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all

qualification requirements for the grade held including positive education and licensure/certification. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements required in this standard, but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:

(1) Nurses who are retained under this provision and subsequently leaves the occupation, loses protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.

(2) Nurses initially grandfathered into this occupation, who subsequently obtain additional education and/or licensure/certification and meet all the basic requirements of this qualification standard, must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.

(3) Nurses who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis, until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.

g. **Definition of Professional Nursing Practice**. Documented evidence of experience as a Nurse or APN that is determined to be sustained and consistently at or above an acceptable level of quality. This may include experience as GNT provided the candidate was utilized as a professional nurse and passed the State licensing (board) examination on the first attempt. It may also include performance as a VA Nurse or APN that is at or above the fully satisfactory level or active duty or reserve military service which was performed as a Nurse or APN. Professional nursing experience should be documented on the Proficiency Report, VA Form 10-2623, the Application for Employment Nurses and Certified Nurse Anesthetists, VA Form 10-2850a, or on a candidate's resume.

(1) **Part-Time and Intermittent Nurse/APN Experience**. Part-time experience as a Nurse or APN is credited per the relationship to a full work week. For example, a Nurse or APN employed 20 hours per week on a half-time basis would receive one full-time work week credit for two weeks of such service. Intermittent experience as a Nurse or APN is credited based on actual days worked.

(2) **Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse (LPN/LVN) Experience.** Experience as an LPN/LVN does not count towards professional Nurse experience as creditable towards the grade level requirement for required years of professional Nurse experience; however, it may be credited towards higher level qualifications/specialized experience as it relates to calculating above minimum rates, at a rate of ½ credit as compared to full credit for Nurse experience, with a maximum credit of no more than five

years. For example, LPN/LVN experience would be counted as one full-time workweek of credit for each two weeks of such service. (A performance evaluation or reference covering the candidates most recent employment as an LPN/LVN is essential.)

4. GRADE REQUIREMENTS.

a. **Recency and Quality of Experience.** Recency or quality of training and experience as a nurse should be carefully reviewed when determining the appropriate grade. To be creditable, specialized experience requirements must be met for each level and/or grade. Nurses must successfully advance through each grade/level from Nurse I through Nurse III. Any nurse meeting the basic qualification requirements for Nurse IV or V may apply for a position at these grades.

b. **Experience.** To be creditable, experience must demonstrate possession of the following dimensions of practice requirements identified for each grade level:

c. **Grade Determination.** In addition to the basic qualification requirements, the grade level of Nurse (any assignment) is based on a combination of education and experience. Beyond the minimum education requirements, grade determination for appointment, advancement and promotion will be based on the following specific requirement for Nurses:

(1) **Nurse I, Level 1.**

(a) **Scope.** Delivers fundamental, knowledge-based care to assigned clients while developing technical competencies.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.** Diploma or associate degree in nursing with no professional nursing experience.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** Nurses at Nurse I, Level 1 are expected to meet the following dimension requirements:

i **Practice.** Knowledge of professional nursing practice and the ability to apply the nursing process (assessment, diagnosis, outcome identification, planning implementation and evaluation) with close supervision.

ii **Veteran/Patient Driven Care.** Knowledge of Veteran/patient driven care, patient experience, satisfaction and safety.

iii **Leadership.** Communicates, collaborates and utilizes leadership principles to perform as an effective member of the interprofessional team.

iv **Professional Development.** Incorporates educational resources/opportunities and self-evaluation for professional growth.

v **Evidence-Based Practice/Research.** Awareness of evidence-based practice/research to improve quality of care and resource utilization.

(2) **Nurse I, Level 2.**

(a) **Scope.** Demonstrates integration of biopsychosocial concepts, cognitive skills and technically competent practice in providing care to clients with basic or complex.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Diploma or associate degree in nursing and one year of specialized nursing experience equivalent to a Nurse I, Level 1

OR

ii Bachelor's degree in nursing and no professional nursing experience.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** Nurses at Nurse I, Level 2 are expected to meet the following dimension requirements:

i **Practice.** Delivers professional practice using the nursing process (assessment, diagnosis, outcome identification, planning implementation and evaluation) with general supervision.

ii **Veteran/Patient Driven Care.** Provides Veteran/patient driven care by optimizing the patient experience, satisfaction and/or safety for assigned patients.

iii **Leadership.** Communicates and collaborates as an effective member of the interprofessional team, demonstrating progression from team member to team leader.

iv **Professional Development.** Seeks knowledge and learning opportunities that support current nursing practice and self-evaluation.

v **Evidence-Based Practice/Research.** Applies evidence-based practice/research, considering patient preferences to improve quality of care and resource utilization for assigned patients.

(3) **Nurse I, Level 3.**

(a) **Scope.** Demonstrates proficiency in practice based on conscious and deliberate planning. Self-directed in goal setting for managing complex client situations.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Diploma or associate degree in nursing and two years of professional nursing experience, one of which is a year of specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse I, Level 2.

OR

ii Bachelor's degree in nursing and one year of professional nursing experience equivalent to Nurse I, Level 2.

OR

iii Master's degree in nursing and no professional nursing experience.

OR

iv Master's degree in a related field with a bachelor's degree in nursing with no professional nursing experience.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** Nurses at Nurse I, Level 3 are expected to meet the following dimension requirements:

i **Practice.** Delivers self-directed, professional nursing practice using the nursing process (assessment, diagnosis, outcome identification, planning implementation and evaluation) for complex patients based on conscious and deliberate planning with occasional supervision.

ii **Veteran/Patient Driven Care.** Provides and directs others in Veteran/patient driven care by optimizing the patient experience, satisfaction and/or safety for a team of patients.

iii **Leadership.** Communicates and collaborates as an effective member of the interprofessional team, demonstrating leadership responsibilities such as team leader/charge nurse.

iv **Professional Development.** Shares knowledge and learning opportunities that enhance current nursing practice and self-evaluation for self and others on the team.

v **Evidence-Based Practice/Research.** Applies evidence-based practice/research considering patient preferences, to improve quality of care and resource utilization, participating in established improvement activities.

(4) **Nurse II.**

(a) **Scope.** Demonstrates leadership in delivering and improving holistic care through collaborative strategies with others.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Bachelor's degree in nursing and two years of professional nursing experience, one of which is a year of specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse I, Level 3.

OR

ii Master's degree in nursing with one year of specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse I, Level 3.

OR

iii Master's degree in a related field with a bachelor's degree in nursing with one year of specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse I, Level 3.

OR

iv Doctorate degree in nursing with no professional nursing experience.

OR

v Doctorate degree in a related field with a master's or bachelor's degree in nursing with no professional nursing experience.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** Nurses at Nurse II are expected to meet the following dimension requirements:

i **Practice.** Leads professional practice using the nursing process (assessment, diagnosis, outcome identification, planning, implementation and evaluation) to improve evidence-based and/or data-driven outcomes for an identified patient population and/or specialized areas within immediate practice setting.

ii **Veteran/Patient Driven Care.** Improves Veteran/patient driven care by optimizing the patient experience, satisfaction and/or safety for the immediate practice setting.

iii **Leadership.** Communicates and collaborates as an effective leader of the interprofessional team, at the expert level, with improved evidence-based and/or data-driven outcomes in the immediate practice setting.

iv **Professional Development.** Expands knowledge base and practice evaluation through mentoring, precepting and/or teaching to improve outcomes in the immediate practice setting.

v **Evidence Based Practice/Research.** Leads the integration of evidence-based practice/research with clinical expertise to improve quality of care and resource utilization with improved outcomes for the immediate practice setting.

(5) **Nurse III.**

(a) **Scope.** Executes position responsibilities that demonstrate leadership, experience and creative approaches to management of complex client care beyond the immediate practice setting.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Master's degree in nursing with two years of specialized nursing experience, one of which is equivalent to Nurse II and meets all dimension requirements for Nurse III.

OR

ii Master's degree in a related field with a bachelor's degree in nursing with two years of specialized nursing experience, one of which is equivalent to Nurse II and meets all dimension requirements for Nurse III.

OR

iii Doctorate degree in nursing with one year of specialized nursing experience which is equivalent to Nurse II and meets all dimension requirements for Nurse III.

OR

iv Doctorate degree in a related field with a master's or bachelor's degree in nursing with one year of specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse II and meets all dimension requirements for Nurse III.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** Nurses at Nurse III must meet ALL the following dimension requirements to qualify for Nurse III.

i **Practice.** Demonstrates expertise in professional practice using the nursing process (assessment, diagnosis, outcome identification, planning, implementation and evaluation) with improved evidence-based and/or data-driven outcomes beyond the immediate practice setting.

ii **Veteran/Patient Driven Care.** Leads initiatives to improve Veteran/patient experience. Satisfaction and/or safety beyond the immediate practice setting.

iii **Leadership.** Communicates and collaborates as an effective leader of the interprofessional team, at the expert level, with improved evidence-based and/or data-driven outcomes beyond the immediate practice setting.

iv **Professional Development.** Enhances knowledge base and practice evaluation, at the expert level, with improved outcomes beyond the immediate practice setting.

v **Evidence Based Practice/Research.** Leads the identification and integration of evidence-based practice/research with clinical expertise to improve quality of care and resource utilization at the expert level with improved outcomes beyond the immediate practice setting.

(6) **Nurse IV.**

(a) **Scope.** Executes leadership that is characterized by substantial and continuous responsibility and accountability for population groups or integrated programs that cross service and/or discipline lines and influence organizational mission and health care.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Master's degree in nursing and four years of professional nursing experience, one of which is specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse III and meets all dimension requirements for Nurse IV.

OR

ii Master's degree in a related field and a bachelor level degree in nursing and four years of professional nursing experience, one of which is specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse III and meets all dimension requirements for Nurse IV.

OR

iii Doctorate in Nursing and three years of professional nursing experience, one of which is specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse III and meets all dimension requirements for Nurse IV.

OR

iv Doctorate degree in a related field and a master or bachelor level degree in nursing and three years of professional nursing experience, one of which is specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse III and meets all dimension requirements for Nurse IV.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** Nurses at Nurse IV must meet ALL the following dimension requirements to qualify for Nurse IV.

i **Leadership.** Leads health care delivery by leveraging evidence-based practices, industry-leading research and innovative care models. Drives a shared vision and successfully leads change to improve performance and attain measurable outcomes at the program or service level.

ii **Business Acumen.** Transforms health care by implementing new processes, technology, informatics and data analytics using business models and fundamental concepts of resource management at the program or service level.

iii **Inspiring an Industry-Leading Lifestyle.** Employs an industry-leading, shared decision-making lifestyle. Cultivates a workforce that serves Veterans, families and caregivers of all backgrounds and builds trust, lifestyle competencies and catalyzes dynamic teams at the program or service level.

iv **Communication and Relationship Management.** Directs the effective use of relationship management principles to achieve positive customer service experiences that are consistent with professional organizational values, beliefs and practices at the program or services level.

v **Professional and Social Responsibility.** Operationalizes holistic care, health advocacy and health equity. Applies ethical principles in decision-making at the program or service level. Advances nursing knowledge through health science research and the translation and dissemination of evidence into practice to maximize the value to Veterans and the community.

(7) **Nurse V.**

(a) **Scope.** Practice of an executive nature, comprised of complex leadership and administrative components, associated with critical health care issues and activities that drive meeting the organizational mission, health care and policy.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Master's degree in nursing and five years of professional nursing experience, one of which is specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse IV and demonstration of the dimension requirements for Nurse V.

OR

ii Master's degree in a related field and a bachelor level degree in Nursing and five years of professional nursing experience, one of which is specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse IV and demonstration of the dimension requirements for Nurse V.

OR

iii Doctorate degree in nursing and four years of professional nursing experience, one of which is specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse IV and demonstration of all dimension requirements for Nurse V.

OR

iv Doctorate degree in a related field and a master or bachelor level degree in nursing and four years of professional nursing experience, one of which is specialized nursing experience equivalent to Nurse IV and demonstration of all dimension requirements for Nurse V.

(c) **Leadership.** Establishes the strategic direction for health care delivery, evidence-based practices, industry-leading research and innovative care models. Creates a shared vision and successfully leads change to improve performance and attain measurable outcomes at the organization or enterprise level.

(d) **Business Acumen.** Transforms health care through the application of new processes, technology, informatics, data analytics, business principles, systems thinking and resource management at the organization or enterprise level.

(e) **Inspiring an Industry-Leading Lifestyle.** Establishes an industry-leading, shared decision-making lifestyle; a workforce that serves Veterans, families and caregivers of all backgrounds; builds trust and lifestyle competencies and catalyzes dynamic teams at the organization and enterprise level.

(f) **Communication and Relationship Management.** Drives the effective use of relationship management principles to achieve positive customer service experiences that are consistent with professional and organizational values, beliefs and practices at the organizational or enterprise level.

(g) **Professional and Social Responsibility.** Sets the standard for a lifestyle of holistic care, health advocacy and health equity. Applies ethical principles in decision-making at the organization or enterprise level. Advances nursing knowledge through health science research and the translation and dissemination of evidence into practice to maximize the value to Veterans, the community and the health care industry.

5. DEVIATIONS.

a. **Accreditation Waiver**. Candidates meeting the basic education requirement of graduation from an ACEN or CCNE accredited nursing program must be considered before consideration of a deviation to the basic accreditation requirement.

(1) In rare instances, when there is a need to expand the application pool to candidates not meeting the basic education requirement due to extenuating circumstances, e.g., a difficult to recruit position, graduates of nursing education programs recognized by the Department of Education as an accredited Postsecondary Institution or Program at the time of graduation may be considered.

(2) The applicant's superior practice qualifications must warrant the exception to the basic education requirement; example of qualifications to consider include the candidate's experience, skills, competencies and professional

accomplishments. A request to strongly support the need for a deviation must be formally documented with evidence to support the deviation, to

(3) include validation by Department of Education and submitted through the Associate Director, Patient Care Services for formal decision by the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), Chief Nursing Officer, or delegated nursing official. For Centralized Positions, the request must be submitted to the Chief Nursing Officer/Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, or delegated nursing official, for formal decision.

b. **Waiver of Experience and/or Degree Requirements.** The approving official may authorize a waiver of experience and/or the degree requirements for individuals whose professional accomplishments, performance and qualifications warrant such consideration based on demonstrated ability to meet the requirements for promotion to the next higher grade or advancement to a higher level within the grade. Waivers of degree requirements are not authorized for appointments. Waivers of degree requirements are also not authorized for Nurse IV and Nurse V.

NOTE. A Nurse is eligible for a waiver of one degree only. Waivers of two degrees are not authorized. Once an employee has obtained the degree that was initially waived, they may be considered for waiver of another degree. For example: An Associate Degree prepared nurse receives an educational waiver of the bachelor's degree for promotion to Nurse II. The nurse then earns a bachelor's degree and is seeking promotion to Nurse III. If the nurse has met all of the dimension requirements as outlined in this qualification standard and all conditions for promotion are met in accordance with the qualification standard, an education waiver of the master's degree would be considered.

c. Under no circumstances may the educational, certification or licensure requirements be waived for appointment.

d. The placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this qualification standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health or designee in VHA Central Office.

APPENDIX G6a. ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE (NURSE PRACTITIONER)

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are the requirements for appointment as an Advanced Practice Nurse (Nurse Practitioner) (APN (NP)), 0610 occupational series. All professional practice as a Nurse and APN may be considered upon appointment.

2. **BASIC REQUIREMENTS.**

   a. **Citizenship.** Citizen of the United States [in accordance with section 7402(c) of title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.). Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified candidates in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7407(a).

   b. **Education.** A post-master's certificate or master's or doctoral degree as a Nurse Practitioner. (**NOTE**: the post-master's certificate is formal education awarded from an acceptable school of professional nursing and is not considered board certification as described under 2.c.(2) of this appendix).

      (1) **Education Accreditation Requirement.** Nursing education must be from a school of professional nursing accredited by one of the following accrediting organizations at the time the program was completed by the applicant:

         (a) The Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), 3343 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 850, Atlanta, GA 30326. The ACEN accredits all levels of nursing programs, including clinical doctorate, masters/post-master's certificate, baccalaureate, associate and diploma nursing education programs. (**NOTE**: The National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission/NLNAC changed its name to ACEN in May 2013 ACEN's website may be utilized to verify accredited programs using automated inquiry processes; however, for verification of any nursing program's accreditation prior to 1998, an automated inquiry cannot be used and ACEN must be contacted directly via their email contact information on the ACEN website to verify.); or

         (b) The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), 655 K Street, NW, Suite 7, Washington, DC 20001. The CCNE is an accrediting arm of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and accredits nursing education programs at the bachelor and master's level.

(2) **Foreign Education**. Graduates of foreign schools of professional nursing programs, the nurse practitioner degree equivalency must be validated through an Agency recognized degree equivalency evaluation agency, such as the International Consultants of Delaware (ICD). Candidates with equivalent Nurse Practitioner masters or doctorate level degrees who possess current, full, active and unrestricted registration and certification (see paragraph 2c) will meet the requirement of graduation from an approved school of professional nursing to warrant appointment.

c. **Licensure and Certification.** The following licensure and certification requirements are considered conditions of employment.

(1) **License.** All APNs (NPs) must possess and maintain an active, current, full and unrestricted APN license to practice as a NP in a State, Territory or Commonwealth of the United States, or in the District of Columbia.

(2) **Basic Certification.**

(a) All APNs (NPs) must maintain full and current board certification in an area of clinical specialty from one of the following:

i The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC);

ii The American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board (AANPCB); or

iii Other nationally recognized certifying body in the area in which the Nurse Practitioner is academically prepared.

(b) The required basic certification as a Nurse Practitioner must be identified in support of any position being established or filled as an APN (NP). An approved list of NP/APN certifications may be found on the Office of Nursing site at the Office of Nursing Services.

(c) Basic certification as a nurse practitioner is a condition of employment and qualifying factor for the specific assignment.

(d) APNs (NPs) are credentialed and privileged to provide care based upon scope of practice, formal graduate nursing educational preparation, certification and patient population. It is the focus of care based on patient care needs, not the care setting, that defines the provider's scope of practice and basic certification required. The scope of practice is determined by the provider's formal academic education and basic Nurse Practitioner certification. The assignment will either require a specific basic certification as a nurse practitioner, i.e., Mental Health, Women's Health, etc., or may allow for more than one basic nurse practitioner certification.

(e) The APNs (NPs) may also hold a specialty certification which in many cases is not specific to a Nurse Practitioner role. Specialty certifications may be highly recommended but are not required as a condition of employment or required for an assignment and do not support the basic board certification nurse practitioner requirement.

(3) **Impaired Licensure and Certification.** Human Resources office staff must appoint APNs (NP) in accordance with the provisions in chapter 3, section B, paragraph 15 of this part, who have, or have ever had, any license or certification revoked, suspended, denied, restricted, limited or issued/placed in a probationary status.

(4) **Exception to Licensure for Graduate Nurse Technicians.**

(a) Candidates who otherwise meet the basic requirements, but do not possess the required licensure and/or certification, may be appointed at the entry step of the Nurse II, as a Graduate Nurse Technician Nurse Practitioner (GNT-NP) on a temporary appointment up to any period not-to-exceed one year and a day under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7405(c)(2)(B).

(b) GNT-NP must take the national certification examination at the earliest scheduled date following the date of their temporary appointment.

(c) GNT-NP must actively pursue and obtain required licensure and certification within a year and a day and sign a statement of understanding.

(d) Failure to achieve licensure and certification within this period will result in separation from service with two-week's notice.

d. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service.

e. **English Language Proficiency.** Candidates must be proficient in spoken and written English to be appointed as authorized by 38 U.S.C. § 7403(f).

f. **Grandfathering Provision.** All persons employed in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in this occupational series and APN (NP) assignment that are also performing the duties as described in the qualification standard on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the grade held including positive education and

licensure/certification. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements required in this standard, but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:

(1) APN (NP) who is retained under this provision and subsequently leaves the occupation or assignment loses protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.

(2) APN (NP) initially grandfathered into this occupation or assignment, who subsequently obtain additional education and/or licensure/certification and meet all the basic requirements of this qualification standard, must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.

(3) APN (NPs) who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis, until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.

g. **Definition of Professional Nursing Practice.** Documented evidence of experience as a Nurse or APN that is determined to be sustained and consistently at or above an acceptable level of quality. This may include experience as a GNT provided the candidate was utilized as a professional nurse and passed the State licensing (board) examination on the first attempt. It may also include performance as a VA Nurse or APN that is at or above the fully satisfactory level or active duty or reserve military service which was performed as a Nurse or APN. Professional nursing experience should be documented on the Proficiency Report, VA Form 10-2623, the VA Form 10-2850a, Application for Employment Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists or on a candidate's resume.

h. Part-Time and Intermittent Nurse/APN Experience. Part-time experience as a Nurse/APN is credited per the relationship to a full work week. For example, a Nurse/APN employed 20 hours per week on a half-time basis would receive one full-time work week credit for two weeks of such service. Intermittent experience as a Nurse/APN is credited based on actual days worked.

3. GRADE REQUIREMENTS.

a. **Recency and Quality of Experience.** Recency or quality of training and experience as a Nurse/APN should be carefully reviewed when determining the appropriate grade. To be creditable, specialized experience requirements must be met for each level and/or grade. Any APN meeting the basic qualification requirements for APN IV or V may apply for a position at these grades.

b. **Experience.** To be creditable, experience must demonstrate possession of the following dimensions of practice requirements identified for each grade level:

(1) **Research.** At any grade, an APN (NP) may conduct, collaborate or assist with approved research or scholarly projects that enhance their knowledge and skills in the profession and advance the missions of VA.

c. **Grade Determination.** In addition to the basic qualification requirements, the grade level of an APN (NP) is based on a combination of education and experience. Beyond the minimum education requirements, grade determination for appointment, advancement and promotion will be based on the following specific requirement for an APN (NP). The level of practice at which an APN (NP) may perform is based upon a combination of many factors. Beyond the minimum educational requirements, grade determination, upon appointment and advancement, is dependent upon aspects such as continued professional development (formal and/or informal education), clinical performance, judgment, outcomes (at the service level and beyond), leadership and interpersonal skills that influence, inspire and motivate others within their program/service or beyond. As the APN (NP) acquires the knowledge, skills and judgment that accrues with experience, the privilege of increased authority for patient care and service in administrative roles is expanded as applicable.

(1) **APN (Nurse Practitioner) II.**

(a) **Scope.** Demonstrates leadership in delivering and improving holistic care through collaborative strategies with others.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.** Meets basic education requirement for APN (CNS). Nurse II is considered the entry grade level for APN (NPs); no experience is required.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** APNs (NPs) at level II are expected to meet the following dimension requirements:

i **Clinical Practice.** Delivers evidence-based health care, demonstrating proficiency in the ability to manage a patient panel, population or program.

ii **Outcome Focus.** Utilizes research and evidence-based practice to evaluate the patient care delivery system within a patient panel or program, presents findings and contributes to changes that enhance the quality and timeliness of veteran/patient care.

iii **Leadership.** Works effectively as a leader within a team/unit/group and seeks interdisciplinary collaboration as appropriate to enhance patient care.

iv **Professional Development.** Acquires knowledge and skills to develop expertise in area of practice.

v **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Demonstrates effective communication skills and professional behavior, promoting cooperation and teamwork. Participates in interdisciplinary teams and processes that positively impact patient outcomes.

(2) **APN (Nurse Practitioner) III.**

(a) **Scope.** Executes position responsibilities that demonstrate leadership, experience and creative approaches to management of complex client care.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Meets basic education requirement for an APN (NP).

AND

ii One year of specialized APN (NP) experience equivalent to the Nurse II grade level.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** APNs (Nurse Practitioners) at grade III are expected to meet the following dimension requirements:

i **Clinical Practice.** Influences and models the delivery of evidence-based health care, demonstrating expertise in the ability to manage a patient panel, population or program.

ii **Outcome Focus.** Leads and implements changes that enhance the quality and timeliness of Veteran/patient care applying research and evidence in the delivery of healthcare for patient populations.

iii **Leadership.** Initiates and leads interdisciplinary teams informed by structured approaches and processes to improve outcomes that positively impact care for a patient panel, population or program.

iv **Professional Development.** Acquires knowledge and skills, then disseminates acquired information within and/or outside the medical facility.

v **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Initiates and leads interdisciplinary teams developing systems that positively impact outcomes at the panel, population or program level. Demonstrates effective communication skills and professional behavior, promoting cooperation and teamwork.

(3) **APN (Nurse Practitioner) IV.**

(a) **Scope.** Executes leadership that is characterized by substantial and continuous responsibility and accountability for population groups or integrated programs that cross service and/or discipline lines and influence organizational mission and health care.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Meets basic education requirement for an APN (NP)

AND

ii Four years of APN (NP) experience, one of which is specialized experience equivalent to Nurse III

AND

iii Meets all Nurse IV dimension requirements.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** APNs (NPs) at Level IV must meet ALL the following dimension requirements:

i **Practice.** Practices at an associate executive level, utilizing clinical, leadership and administrative skills, demonstrating continuing responsibility that influences the organizational mission, health care delivery and policy at the local and/or regional level.

ii **Outcome Focus.** Leads the application of clinical/business models, incorporating research/evidence-based practices, designed to achieve and sustain excellence in the delivery of health care at the service and organization levels.

iii **Leadership.** Creates and implements a shared vision and successfully leads change to improve organizational performance and attain measurable performance outcomes.

iv **Professional Development.** Establishes innovative, current and future healthcare delivery models, policy/regulation and governance to cultivate a healthy lifestyle, improving health outcomes.

v **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Facilitates effective relationship management, communication, customer service experiences and negotiation across lifestyles using a broad range of technology platforms to influence, inspire and motivate others within their program/service or beyond.

(4) **APN (Nurse Practitioner) V.**

(a) **Scope.** Practice of an executive nature, comprised of complex leadership and administrative components, associated with critical health care issues and activities that drive meeting the organizational mission, health care and policy.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Meets basic education requirement for an APN (NP).

AND

ii Five years of APN (NP) experience, one of which is specialized experience equivalent to Nurse IV

AND

iii Meets all Nurse V dimension requirements.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** APNs (NPs) at Level V must meet ALL the following dimension requirements:

i **Practice.** Serves at an executive level, applying complex clinical, leadership and administrative skills, demonstrating substantial and continuing responsibility that drives the organizational mission, health care delivery and policy at the local, regional and/or national level.

ii **Outcome Focus.** Applies clinical/business principles and research/evidence-based practice, including systems thinking, to the healthcare environment to improve the care delivery system at the organization or enterprise level.

iii **Leadership.** Drives enterprise-wide organizational excellence through a shared vision, leading change to achieve the mission and strategic goals of the organization.

v **Professional Development.** Provides executive leadership in creating governance structures to establish an environment where professional and personal growth is expected and fostered.

vi **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Strategically deploys various communication channels and platforms to nurture a healthy lifestyle, influence, motivate and empower people while building collaborative relationships at an enterprise level.

4. DEVIATIONS.

a. **Accreditation Waiver**. Candidates meeting the basic education requirement of graduation from an ACEN or CCNE accredited nursing program must be considered before consideration of a deviation to the basic accreditation requirement.

(1) In rare instances, graduates of nursing education programs recognized by the Department of Education as an accredited Postsecondary Institution or Program at the time of graduation may be considered.

(2) The applicant's superior practice qualifications must warrant the exception to the basic education requirement; example of qualifications to consider include the candidate's experience, skills, competencies and professional accomplishments. A request to support the need for a deviation must be formally documented with evidence to support the deviation, to include validation by Department of Education and submitted through the Associate Director, Patient Care Services for formal decision by the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), Chief Nursing Officer or delegated nursing official. For Centralized Positions, the request must be submitted to the Chief Nursing Officer/Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, or delegated nursing official, for formal decision.

(3) Under no circumstances may the educational, certification or licensure requirements be waived for promotion or appointment.

(4) The placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this qualification standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health or designee in VHA Central Office.

APPENDIX G6b. ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE (CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALIST)

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are the requirements for appointment as an Advanced Practice Nurse (Clinical Nurse Specialist) (APN (CNS)), 0610 occupational series. All professional practice as a Nurse and APN may be considered upon appointment.

2. **BASIC REQUIREMENTS.**

   a. **Citizenship.** Be a citizen of the United States in accordance with section 7402(c) of title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.). Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified candidates in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7407(a).

   b. **Education.** A post-master's certificate or masters or doctoral degree as a clinical nurse specialist. (**NOTE**: the post-master's certificate is formal education awarded from an acceptable school of professional nursing and is not considered board certification as described under 2.c. of this appendix).

      (1) **Education Accreditation Requirement.** Nursing education must be from a school of professional nursing accredited by one of the following accrediting organizations at the time the program was completed by the applicant:

         (a) The Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), 3343 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 850, Atlanta, GA 30326. The ACEN accredits all levels of nursing programs, including clinical doctorate, masters/post-master's certificate, baccalaureate, associate and diploma nursing education programs. (**NOTE**: The National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission/NLNAC changed its name to ACEN in May 2013. ACEN's website may be utilized to verify accredited programs using automated inquiry processes; however, for verification of any nursing program's accreditation prior to 1998, an automated inquiry cannot be used, and ACEN must be contacted directly via their email contact information on the ACEN website to verify.); or

         (b) The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), 655 K Street, NW, Suite 7, Washington, DC 20001. The CCNE is an accrediting arm of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and accredits nursing education programs at the bachelor and master's level.

(2) **Foreign Education.** Graduates of foreign schools of professional nursing programs, the CNS degree equivalency must be validated through an Agency recognized degree equivalency evaluation agency, such as the International Consultants of Delaware (ICD). Candidates with equivalent CNS post-masters, masters or doctorate level degrees who possess current, full, active and unrestricted license and certification (see paragraph 2.c. below) will meet the requirement of graduation from an approved school of professional nursing to warrant appointment.

c. **Licensure and Certification.** The following licensure and certification requirements are considered conditions of employment.

(1) **License.** All APNs (CNSs) must possess and maintain an active, current, full and unrestricted license to practice as a CNS, or equivalent, in a State, Territory, or Commonwealth of the United States, or in the District of Columbia.

(2) **Basic Certification for Assignment.** All APNs (CNSs) must maintain full and current board certification in an area of clinical specialty. Certification must be obtained through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN), or another nationally recognized certifying body. The required specialty certification for the assignment must be identified in support any position being established or filled as a CNS. The required basic certification as a CNS is a condition of employment and qualifying factor for the specific assignment. An approved list of CNS/APN certifications may be found on the Office of Nursing website at the Office of Nursing Services.

(a) APNs (CNSs) are credentialed and privileged to provide care based upon scope of practice, formal graduate nursing educational preparation, certification and patient population. It is the focus of care based on patient care needs, not the care setting, that defines the provider's scope of practice and the basic certification required. The scope of practice is determined by the provider's formal academic education and basic CNS certification. The assignment will either require a specific basic certification as a CNS or may allow for more than one basic APN certification.

(b) APNs (CNSs) may also hold a specialty certification which in many cases is not specific to a CNS role. Specialty certifications may be highly recommended but are not required as a condition of employment or required for an assignment and do not support the basic board certification CNS requirement.

(3) **Impaired Licensure and Certification.** An APN (CNS) who has, or has ever had, any license or certification revoked, suspended, denied, restricted, limited, or issued/placed in a probationary status may be appointed only in accordance with the provisions of chapter 3, section B, paragraph 13 of this part. (**NOTE:** Individuals who have or have had multiple licenses and had any such license revoked for professional misconduct, professional incompetence or substandard care, or who surrendered such license after receiving written notice of potential termination of such license by the State for professional misconduct, professional incompetence, or substandard care, are not eligible for appointment to the position unless such revoked or surrendered license is fully restored. Part II, Chapter 3, paragraph 3.c.).

(4) **Exception to Licensure for Graduate Nurse Technicians**.

(a) Candidates who otherwise meet the basic requirements, but do not possess the required licensure and/or certification, may be appointed at the entry step of the Nurse II, as a Graduate Nurse Technician Clinical Nurse Specialist (GNT-CNS) on a temporary appointment up to any period not-to-exceed one year and a day under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7405(c)(2)(B).

(b) GNT-CNS must take the national certification examination at the earliest scheduled date following the date of their temporary appointment.

(c) In all cases, the GNT-CNS must actively pursue and obtain required licensure and certification within a year and a day and sign a statement of understanding.

(d) Failure to achieve licensure and certification within this period will result in separation from service with two-week's notice.

d. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service.

e. **English Language Proficiency.** Candidates must be proficient in spoken and written English to be appointed as authorized by 38 U.S.C. § 7403(f).

f. **Grandfathering Provision.** All persons employed in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in this occupational series and an APN (CNS) assignment that are also performing the duties as described in the qualification standard on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the grade held including positive education and licensure/certification. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements required in this standard, but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:

(1) If an employee who was retained under this provision leaves the occupation or assignment, the employee will lose protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.

(2) Employees initially grandfathered into this occupation and the APN (CNS) assignment, who subsequently obtain additional education and/or licensure/certification and meet all the basic requirements of this qualification standard, must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.

(3) APNs (CNSs) who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis, until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.

g. **Definition of Professional Nursing Practice.** Documented evidence of experience as a Nurse or APN that is determined to be sustained and consistently at or above an acceptable level of quality. This may include experience as a Graduate Nurse Technician (GNT) provided the candidate was utilized as a professional nurse and passed the State licensing (board) examination on the first attempt. It may also include performance as a VA Nurse or APN that is at or above the fully satisfactory level or active duty or reserve military service which was performed as a Nurse or APN. Professional nursing experience should be documented on the Proficiency Report, VA Form 10-2623, the VA Form 10-2850a, Application for Employment Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists or on a candidate's resume.

h. **Part-Time and Intermittent Nurse/APN Experience.** Part-time experience as a Nurse/APN is credited per the relationship to a full work week. For example, a Nurse/APN employed 20 hours per week on a half-time basis would receive one full-time work week credit for two weeks of such service. Intermittent experience as a Nurse/APN is credited based on actual days worked.

3. GRADE REQUIREMENTS.

a. **Recency and Quality of Experience.** Recency or quality of training and experience as a Nurse/APN should be carefully reviewed when determining the appropriate grade. To be creditable, specialized experience requirements must be met for each level and/or grade. Any APN meeting the basic qualification requirements for APN IV or V may apply for a position at these grades.

b. **Experience.** To be creditable, experience must demonstrate possession of the following dimensions of practice requirements identified for each grade level:

(1) **Research.** At any grade, an APN (CNS) may conduct, collaborate, or assist with approved research or scholarly projects that enhance their knowledge and skills in the profession and advance the missions of VA.

c. **Grade Determination.** In addition to the basic qualification requirements in this qualification standard, the grade level of an APN (CNS) is based on a combination of education and experience. Beyond the minimum education requirements, grade determination for appointment, advancement and promotion will be based on the following specific requirement for an APN (CNS). The level of practice at which an APN (CNS) may perform is based upon a combination of many factors. Beyond the minimum educational requirements, grade determination, upon appointment and advancement, is dependent upon aspects such as continued professional development (formal and/or informal education,) clinical performance, judgment, outcomes (at the service level and beyond), leadership and interpersonal skills that influence, inspire and motivate others within their program/service or beyond. As the APN (CNS) acquires the knowledge, skills and judgment that accrues with experience, the privilege of increased authority for patient care and service in administrative roles is expanded as applicable.

(1) **APN (Clinical Nurse Specialist) II.**

(a) **Scope.** Demonstrates leadership in delivering and improving holistic care through collaborative strategies with others.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.** Meets basic education requirement for APN (CNS). Nurse II is considered the entry grade level for APN (CNSs); no experience is required.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** APN (CNSs) at grade II are expected to meet the following dimension requirements:

i **Clinical Practice.** Delivers evidence-based health care, demonstrating proficiency in the ability to manage a patient panel, population or program.

ii **Outcome Focus.** Utilizes research and evidence-based practice to evaluate the patient care delivery system within a patient panel or program, presents findings and contributes to changes that enhance the quality and timeliness of veteran/patient care.

iii **Leadership.** Works effectively as a leader within a team/unit/group and seeks interdisciplinary collaboration as appropriate to enhance patient care.

iv **Professional Development.** Acquires knowledge and skills to develop expertise in area of practice.

v **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Demonstrates effective communication skills and professional behavior, promoting cooperation and teamwork. Participates in interdisciplinary teams and processes that positively impact patient outcomes.

(2) **APN (Clinical Nurse Specialist) III.**

(a) **Scope.** Executes position responsibilities that demonstrate leadership, experience and creative approaches to management of complex client care.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNS)

AND

ii One year of specialized APN (CNS) experience equivalent to the Nurse II grade level.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** APN (CNSs) at grade III are expected to meet the following dimension requirements:

i **Clinical Practice.** Influences and models the delivery of evidence-based health care, demonstrating expertise in the ability to manage a patient panel, population or program.

ii **Outcome Focus.** Leads and implements changes that enhance the quality and timeliness of Veteran/patient care applying research and evidence in the delivery of healthcare for patient populations.

iii **Leadership.** Initiates and leads interdisciplinary teams informed by structured approaches and processes to improve outcomes that positively impact care for a patient panel, population or program.

iv **Professional Development.** Acquires knowledge and skills, then disseminates acquired information within and/or outside the medical facility.

v **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Initiates and leads interdisciplinary teams developing systems that positively impact outcomes at the panel, population, or program level. Demonstrates effective communication skills and professional behavior, promoting cooperation and teamwork.

(3) **APN (Clinical Nurse Specialist) IV.**

(a) **Scope.** Executes leadership that is characterized by substantial and continuous responsibility and accountability for population groups or integrated programs that cross service and/or discipline lines and influence organizational mission and health care.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNS)

AND

ii Four years of APN (CNS) experience, one of which is specialized experience equivalent to Nurse III

AND

iii Meets all Nurse IV dimension requirements.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** APN (NPs) at Level IV must meet ALL the following dimension requirements:

i **Practice.** Practices at an associate executive level, utilizing clinical, leadership and administrative skills, demonstrating continuing responsibility that influences the organizational mission, health care delivery and policy at the local and/or regional level.

ii **Outcome Focus.** Leads the application of clinical/business models, incorporating research/evidence-based practices, designed to achieve and sustain excellence in the delivery of health care at the service and organization levels.

iii **Leadership.** Creates and implements a shared vision and successfully leads change to improve organizational performance and attain measurable performance outcomes.

iv **Professional Development.** Establishes innovative, current and future healthcare delivery models, policy/regulation and governance to cultivate a healthy lifestyle, improving health outcomes.

v **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Facilitates effective relationship management, communication, customer service experiences and negotiation across lifestyles using a broad range of technology platforms to influence, inspire and motivate others within their program/service or beyond.

(4) **APN (Clinical Nurse Specialist) V.**

(a) **Scope.** Practice of an executive nature, comprised of complex leadership and administrative components, associated with critical health care issues and activities that drive meeting the organizational mission, health care and policy.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNS)

AND

Five years of APN (CNS) experience, one of which is specialized experience equivalent to Nurse IV grade level

AND

ii Meets all Nurse V dimension requirements.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** APN (CNSs) at Nurse V must meet ALL the following dimension requirements to qualify for Nurse V**.**

i **Practice.** Serves at an executive level, applying complex clinical, leadership and administrative skills, demonstrating substantial and continuing responsibility that drives the organizational mission, health care delivery and policy at the local, regional and/or national level.

ii **Outcome Focus.** Applies clinical/business principles and research/evidence-based practice, including systems thinking, to the healthcare environment to improve the care delivery system at the organization or enterprise level.

iii **Leadership.** Drives enterprise-wide organizational excellence through a shared vision, leading change to achieve the mission and strategic goals of the organization.

iv **Professional Development.** Provides executive leadership in creating governance structures to establish an environment where professional and personal growth is expected and fostered.

v **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Strategically deploys various communication channels and platforms to nurture a healthy lifestyle, influence, motivate and empower people while building collaborative relationships at an enterprise level.

4. DEVIATIONS.

a. **Accreditation Waiver**. Candidates meeting the basic education requirement of graduation from an ACEN or CCNE accredited nursing program must be considered before consideration of a deviation to the basic accreditation requirement.

(1) In rare instances, graduates of nursing education programs recognized by the Department of Education as an accredited Postsecondary Institution or Program at the time of graduation may be considered.

(2) The applicant's superior qualifications must warrant the exception to the basic education requirement; example of qualifications to consider include the candidate's experience, skills, competencies and professional accomplishments. A request to support the need for a deviation must be formally documented with evidence to support the deviation, to include validation by Department of Education and submitted through the Associate Director, Patient Care Services for formal decision by the Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISNs), Chief Nursing Officer or delegated nursing official. For Centralized Positions, the request must be submitted to the Chief Nursing Officer/Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, or delegated nursing official, for formal decision.

(3) Under no circumstances may the educational, certification or licensure requirements be waived for promotion or appointment.

(4) The placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this qualification standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health or designee in VHA Central Office.

APPENDIX G6c. ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE (CERTIFIED NURSE MIDWIFE)

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are the requirements for appointment as an Advanced Practice Nurse (Certified Nurse Midwife) (APN (CNM)), 0610 occupational series. All professional practice as a Nurse and APN may be considered upon appointment.

2. **BASIC REQUIREMENTS.**

   a. **Citizenship.** Citizen of the United States [in accordance with section 7402(c) of title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.). Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified candidates in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7407(a).

   b. **Education.** A post-master's certificate or masters or doctorate degree as a nurse midwife. (**NOTE**: the post-master's certificate is formal education awarded from an acceptable school of professional nursing and is not considered board certification as described under 2.c.(2) of this appendix).

      (1) **Education Accreditation Requirement.** Nursing education must be from a school of professional nursing accredited by one of the following accrediting organizations at the time the program was completed by the applicant:

         (a) The Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), 3343 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 850, Atlanta, GA 30326. The ACEN accredits all levels of nursing programs, including clinical doctorate, masters/post-master's certificate, baccalaureate, associate and diploma nursing education programs. (**NOTE**: The National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission/NLNAC changed its name to ACEN in May 2013. ACEN's website may be utilized to verify accredited programs using automated inquiry processes; however, for verification of any nursing program's accreditation prior to 1998, an automated inquiry cannot be used and ACEN must be contacted directly via their email contact information on the ACEN website to verify.); or

         (b) The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), 655 K Street, NW, Suite 7, Washington, DC 20001. The CCNE is an accrediting arm of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and accredits nursing education programs at the bachelor and master's level.

(2) **Foreign Education**. Graduates of foreign schools of professional nursing programs, the midwifery degree equivalency must be validated through an Agency recognized degree equivalency evaluation agency, such as the International Consultants of Delaware (ICD). Candidates with equivalent masters or doctorate level degrees in midwifery who possess current, full, active and unrestricted registration and certification (see paragraph 2.c) will meet the requirement of graduation from an approved school of professional nursing to warrant appointment.

c. **Licensure and Certification.** The following licensure and certification requirements are considered conditions of employment.

(1) **License.** All APNs (CNMs) must maintain an active, current, full and unrestricted license to practice as a CNM, or equivalent, in a State, Territory or Commonwealth of the United States, or in the District of Columbia.

(2) **Basic Certification**. All APNs (CNMs) must maintain full and current board certification from the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB). The certification for the assignment must be identified in support of any position being established or filled as an APN (CNM). The required specialty certification for the assignment must be identified in support of any position being established or filled as an APN (CNM). The required basic certification as an APN (CNM) is a condition of employment and qualifying factor for the specific assignment.

NOTE: APNs (CNMs) are credentialed and privileged to provide care based upon scope of practice, formal graduate nursing educational preparation, certification and patient population. It is the focus of care based on patient care needs, not the care setting, that defines the provider's scope of practice and basic certification required. The scope of practice is determined by the provider's formal academic education and basic CNM certification. The assignment will either require a specific basic certification as a CNM or may allow for more than one basic APN certification.

NOTE: The APN (CNM) may also hold a specialty certification which in many cases is not specific to a CNM role. Specialty certifications may be highly recommended but are not required as a condition of employment or required for an assignment and do not support the basic board certification nurse midwife requirement.

(3) **Impaired Licensure and Certification.** Human Resources office staff must appoint an APN (CNM) in accordance with the provisions in chapter 3, section B, paragraph 15 of this part, who have, or have ever had, any license or certification revoked, suspended, denied, restricted, limited or issued/placed in a probationary status.

(4) **Exception to Licensure for Graduate Nurse Technicians.**

(a) Candidates who otherwise meet the basic requirements, but do not possess the required licensure and/or certification, may be appointed at the entry step of the Nurse II, as a Graduate Nurse Technician Nurse Midwife (GNT-NM) on a temporary appointment up to any period not-to-exceed one year and a day under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7405(c)(2)(B).

(b) GNT-NM must take the national certification examination at the earliest scheduled date following the date of their temporary appointment.

(c) In all cases, GNT-NM must actively pursue and obtain required licensure and certification within a year and a day and sign a statement of understanding.

(d) Failure to achieve licensure and certification within this period will result in separation from service with two-week's notice.

d. **Physical Requirements.** See Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service.

e. **English Language Proficiency.** Candidates must be proficient in spoken and written English to be appointed as authorized by 38 U.S.C. § 7403(f).

f. **Grandfathering Provision.** All persons employed in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in this occupational series and an APN (CNM) assignment that are also performing the duties as described in the qualification standard on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the grade held including positive education and licensure/certification. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements required in this standard, but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:

(1) APN (CNM) who are retained under this provision and subsequently leaves the occupation or assignment, loses protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.

(2) APN (CNM) initially grandfathered into this occupation or assignment, who subsequently obtain additional education and/or licensure/certification and meet all the basic requirements of this qualification standard, must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.

(3) APNs (CNMs) who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis, until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.

g. **Definition of Professional Nursing Practice**. Documented evidence of experience as a Nurse or APN that is determined to be sustained and consistently at or above an acceptable level of quality. This may include experience as a GNT provided the candidate was utilized as a professional nurse and passed the State licensing (board) examination on the first attempt. It may also include performance as a VA Nurse or APN that is at or above the fully satisfactory level or active duty or reserve military service which was performed as a Nurse or APN. Professional nursing experience should be documented on the Proficiency Report, VA Form 10-2623, the VA Form 10-2850a, Application for Employment Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists or on a candidate's resume.

h. **Part-Time and Intermittent Nurse/APN Experience**. Part-time experience as a Nurse/APN is credited per the relationship to a full work week. For example, a Nurse/APN employed 20 hours per week on a half-time basis would receive one full-time work week credit for two weeks of such service. Intermittent experience as a Nurse/APN is credited based on actual days worked.

3. GRADE REQUIREMENTS.

a. **Recency and Quality of Experience.** Recency or quality of training and experience as an APN (CNM) should be carefully reviewed when determining the appropriate grade. To be creditable, specialized experience requirements must be met for each level and/or grade. Any APN meeting the basic qualification requirements for APN IV or V may apply for a position at these grades.

b. **Experience.** To be creditable, experience must demonstrate possession of the following dimensions of practice requirements identified for each grade level:

(1) Research. At any grade, an APN (CNW) may conduct, collaborate or assist with approved research or scholarly projects that enhance their knowledge and skills in the profession and advance the missions of VA.

c. **Grade Determination.** In addition to the basic qualification requirements, the grade level of an APN (CNM) is based on a combination of education and experience. Beyond the minimum education requirements, grade determination

for appointment, advancement and promotion will be based on the following specific requirement for an APN (CNM). The level of practice that an APN (CNM) may perform at is based upon a combination of many factors Beyond the minimum educational requirements, grade determination, upon appointment and advancement, is dependent upon aspects such as continued professional development (formal and/or informal education,) clinical performance, judgment, outcomes (at the service level and beyond), leadership and interpersonal skills that influence, inspire and motivate others within their program/service or beyond. As the APN (CNM) acquires the knowledge, skills and judgment that accrues with experience, the privilege of increased authority for patient care and service in administrative roles is expanded as applicable.

(1) **APN (Certified Nurse Midwife) II.**

(a) **Scope:** Demonstrates leadership in delivering and improving holistic care through collaborative strategies with others.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.** Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNM). Nurse II is considered the entry grade level for APN (CNMs); no experience is required.

(c) **Dimension Requirement:** APN (CNMs) at grade II are expected to meet the following dimension requirements:

(d) **Clinical Practice.** Delivers evidence-based health care, demonstrating proficiency in the ability to manage a patient panel, population or program.

(e) **Outcome Focus.** Utilizes research and evidence-based practice to evaluate the patient care delivery system within a patient panel or program, presents findings and contributes to changes that enhance the quality and timeliness of veteran/patient care.

(f) **Leadership.** Works effectively as a leader within a team/unit/group and seeks interdisciplinary collaboration as appropriate to enhance patient care.

(g) **Professional Development.** Acquires knowledge and skills to develop expertise in area of practice.

(h) **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Demonstrates effective communication skills and professional behavior, promoting cooperation and teamwork. Participates in interdisciplinary teams and processes that positively impact patient outcomes.

(2) **APN (Certified Nurse Midwife) III.**

(a) **Scope.** Executes position responsibilities that demonstrate leadership, experience and creative approaches to management of complex client care.

(b) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNM)

AND

ii One year of specialized APN (CNM) experience equivalent to the Nurse II grade level.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** APN (CNMs) at grade III are expected to meet the following dimension requirements:

i **Clinical Practice.** Influences and models the delivery of evidence-based health care, demonstrating expertise in the ability to manage a patient panel, population or program.

ii **Outcome Focus.** Leads and implements changes that enhance the quality and timeliness of Veteran/patient care applying research and evidence in the delivery of health care for patient populations.

iii **Leadership.** Initiates and leads interdisciplinary teams informed by structured approaches and processes to improve outcomes that positively impact care for a patient panel, population or program.

iv **Professional Development.** Acquires knowledge and skills, then disseminates acquired information within and/or outside the medical facility.

v **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Initiates and leads interdisciplinary teams developing systems that positively impact outcomes at the panel, population or program level. Demonstrates effective communication skills and professional behavior, promoting cooperation and teamwork.

(3) **APN (Certified Nurse Midwife) IV.**

(a) **Scope.** Executes leadership that is characterized by substantial and continuous responsibility and accountability for population groups or integrated programs that cross service and/or discipline lines and influence organizational mission and health care.

(b) **Education and Experience**

i Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNM)

AND

ii Four years of APN (CNM) experience, one of which is specialized experience equivalent to APN (CNM) III grade level

AND

iii Meets all Nurse IV dimension requirements.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** APN (CNMs) at Level IV must meet ALL the following dimension requirements:

i **Practice.** Practices at an associate executive level, utilizing clinical, leadership and administrative skills, demonstrating continuing responsibility that influences the organizational mission, health care delivery and policy at the local and/or regional level.

ii **Outcome Focus.** Leads the application of clinical/business models, incorporating research/evidence-based practices, designed to achieve and sustain excellence in the delivery of health care at the service and organization levels.

iii **Leadership.** Creates and implements a shared vision and successfully leads change to improve organizational performance and attain measurable performance outcomes.

iv **Professional Development.** Establishes innovative, current and future health care delivery models, policy/regulation and governance to cultivate a healthy lifestyle, improving health outcomes.

v **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Facilitates effective relationship management, communication, customer service experiences and negotiation across lifestyles using a broad range of technology platforms to influence, inspire and motivate others within their program/service or beyond.

(4) **APN (Certified Nurse Midwife) V.**

(a) **Scope.** Practice of an executive nature, comprised of complex leadership and administrative components, associated with critical health care issues and activities that drive meeting the organizational mission, health care and policy.

(b) **Education and Experience**

i Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNM)

AND

ii Five years of APN (CNM) experience, one of which is specialized experience equivalent to Nurse IV grade level

AND

iii Meets all Nurse V dimension requirements.

(c) **Dimension Requirement.** APN (CNMs) at Nurse V must meet ALL the following dimension requirements to qualify for Nurse V**.**

i **Practice.** Serves at an executive level, applying complex clinical, leadership and administrative skills, demonstrating substantial and continuing responsibility that drives the organizational mission, health care delivery and policy at the local, regional and/or national level.

ii **Outcome Focus.** Applies clinical/business principles and research/evidence-based practice, including systems thinking, to the health care environment to improve the care delivery system at the organization or enterprise level.

iii **Leadership.** Drives enterprise-wide organizational excellence through a shared vision, leading change to achieve the mission and strategic goals of the organization.

iv **Professional Development.** Provides executive leadership in creating governance structures to establish an environment where professional and personal growth is expected and fostered.

v **Professionalism/Collegiality.** Strategically deploys various communication channels and platforms to nurture a healthy lifestyle, influence, motivate and empower people while building collaborative relationships at an enterprise level.

4. DEVIATIONS.

a. **Accreditation Waiver**: Candidates meeting the basic education requirement of graduation from an ACEN or CCNE accredited nursing program must be considered before consideration of a deviation to the basic accreditation requirement.

(1) In rare instances, graduates of nursing education programs recognized by the Department of Education as an accredited Postsecondary Institution or Program at the time of graduation may be considered.

(2) The applicant's superior practice qualifications must warrant the exception to the basic education requirement; example of qualifications to consider include the candidate's experience, skills, competencies and professional accomplishments. A request to support the need for a deviation must be formally documented with evidence to support the deviation, to include validation by Department of Education and submitted through the Associate Director of Patient Care Services for formal decision by the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), Chief Nursing Officer, or delegated nursing official. For Centralized Positions, the request must be submitted to the Chief Nursing Officer/Deputy Chief Nursing, or delegated nursing official, for formal decision.

(3) Under no circumstances may the educational, certification or licensure requirements be waived for promotion or appointment.

(4) The placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this qualification standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health or designee in VHA Central Office.

APPENDIX G6d. ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE (CERTIFIED NURSE ANESTHETIST)

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are the requirements for appointment as an Advanced Practice Nurse (Certified Nurse Anesthetist) (APN (CNA)), 0610 occupational series. All professional practice as a Nurse and APN may be considered upon appointment.

2. **BASIC REQUIREMENTS.**

   a. **Citizenship.** Citizen of the United States [in accordance with section 7402(c) to title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.). Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified candidates in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7407(a).

   b. **Education.** A masters or doctoral degree in nurse anesthesia.

      (1) **Education Accreditation Requirement.** Nursing education must be from a school of professional nursing anesthesia accredited by the following accrediting organization at the time the program was completed by the applicant:

         (a) The Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Education Programs (COA). The COA is currently located at 222 South Prospect Avenue, Park Ridge, IL 60068. Additional information may be obtained from the COA website at Council on Accreditation – Supporting Quality Assessment and Improvement in Nurse Anesthesia Education (coacrna.org).

   c. **Licensure and Certification.** The following licensure and certification requirements are considered conditions of employment.

      (1) **License.** All APNs (CNAs) must maintain an active, current, full and unrestricted license to practice as a CNA or equivalent, in a State, Territory or Commonwealth of the United States or in the District of Columbia.

      (2) **Basic Certification**. All APNs (CNAs) must maintain full and current Certification by the National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA) or an equivalent Nurse Anesthetist certification recognized by the COA.

      (3) **Impaired Licensure and Certification.** Human Resources office staff must appoint APN (CNA) in accordance with the provisions in chapter 3, section B, paragraph 15 of this part, who have or have ever had, any license or certification revoked, suspended, denied, restricted, limited or issued/placed in a probationary status.

(4) **Exception to Licensure for Graduate Certified Nurse Anesthetist.**

(a) Candidates who otherwise meet the basic requirements, but do not possess the required CNA licensure and/or certification, may be appointed at the entry step of the Nurse II, as a Nurse Anesthetist on a temporary appointment up to any period not-to-exceed one year and a day under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7405(c)(2)(B).

(b) Nurse Anesthetists must take the national certification examination at the earliest opportunity following the date of their temporary appointment.

(c) In all cases, Nurse Anesthetists must actively pursue and obtain required licensure and certification within a year and a day and sign a statement of understanding.

(d) Failure to achieve licensure and certification within this period will result in separation from service with two-week's notice.

d. **Physical Requirements.** See Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service.

e. **English Language Proficiency.** Candidates must be proficient in spoken and written English to be appointed as authorized by 38 U.S.C. § 7403(f).

f. **Grandfathering Provision.** All persons employed in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in this occupational series and APN (CNA) assignment that are also performing the duties as described in the qualification standard on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the grade held including positive education and licensure/certification. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements required in this standard, but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:

(1) APN (CNA) who are retained under this provision and subsequently leaves the occupation or assignment, loses protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.

(2) APN (CNA) initially grandfathered into this occupation or assignment, who subsequently obtain additional education and/or licensure/certification and meet all the basic requirements of this qualification standard, must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.

(3) APN (CNAs) who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis, until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.

g. **Definition of Professional CNA Practice.** Documented evidence of experience as a Nurse or APN that is determined to be sustained and consistently at or above an acceptable level of quality. This may include experience as a graduate Nurse Anesthetist provided the candidate was utilized as a professional nurse and passed the State licensing (board) examination on the first attempt. It may also include performance as a VA Nurse or APN that is at or above the fully satisfactory level or active duty or reserve military service which was performed as a Nurse or APN Professional nursing experience should be documented on the Proficiency Report, VA Form 10-2623, the VA Form 10-2850a, Application for Employment Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists or on a candidate's resume.

h. **Part-Time and Intermittent APN (CNA) Experience**. Part-time experience as a Nurse/APN is credited per the relationship to a full work week. For example, a Nurse/APN employed 20 hours per week on a half-time basis would receive one full-time work week credit for two weeks of such service. Intermittent experience as a Nurse/APN is credited based on actual days worked.

3. GRADE REQUIREMENTS.

a. **Recency and Quality of Experience.** Recency and quality of education, training and experience in the administration of a variety of anesthesia techniques for surgical and non-operating room cases will be considered when determining the appropriate grade. To be creditable, experience must demonstrate possession of knowledge, skills and abilities related to the current practice of anesthesia. The importance of specific types of experience or training may vary according to the intended assignment.

b. **Experience.** To be creditable, experience must demonstrate possession of requirements and specialized experience identified for each grade level.

c. **Research.** At any grade, APNs (CNAs) may conduct, collaborate or assist with approved research or scholarly projects that enhance their knowledge and skills in the profession and advance the missions of VA.

d. **Grade Determination.** In addition to the basic qualification requirements, the grade level of an APN (CNA) is based on a combination of education and experience. Beyond the minimum education requirements, grade determination for appointment, advancement and promotion will be based on the following specific requirement for the APN (CNA). The level of practice that an APN (CNA) may perform at is based upon a combination of many factors. Beyond the minimum educational requirements, grade determination, upon appointment and

advancement, is dependent upon aspects such as continued professional development (formal and/or informal education,) clinical performance, judgment, outcomes (at the service level and beyond), leadership and interpersonal skills that influence, inspire and motivate others within their program/service or beyond. As the APN (CNA) acquires the knowledge, skills and judgment that accrues with experience, the privilege of increased authority for patient care and service in administrative roles is expanded as applicable.

(1) **APN (Certified Nurse Anesthetist) II.**

(a) **Education and Experience Requirement.** Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNA). Nurse II is considered the entry grade level for APNs (CNAs); no experience is required.

(b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.** The following list of knowledge, skills and abilities present the minimum skill set expected of an Entry Level CNA. Entry level into practice may include but are not limited to the following:

i Ability to translate into anesthesia care the principles of professional nursing practice including the patients' rights to autonomy, dignity, privacy and safety.

ii Knowledge of current research and practice guidelines to frame anesthesia practice including up to date techniques, pharmacology and equipment.

iii Ability to obtain, document and verify informed anesthesia consent and perform a pre-anesthetic patient history and physical, which includes managing pre-operative consults and interpreting data.

iv Ability to formulate a patient-specific anesthetic plan and describe salient anesthetic risks, benefits and options to the patient.

v Ability to administer inhalational, regional, intravenous, local and topical anesthetics.

vi Skill in detecting and treating anesthesia or surgically related physiologic changes and ability to treat accordingly in order to maintain homeostasis.

vii Skill in assessing patient status for appropriateness of transfer of care to another healthcare provider and communicating essential patient information to other providers effectively.

viii Ability to participate in collaborative responsibility for proper patient positioning, physiologic monitoring, infection control and anesthesia documentation.

ix Skill in responding to emergency situations by providing airway management, fluid and medication administration, invasive line insertion and management and the use of advanced cardiac life support techniques.

x Ability to provide patient care that is abreast of changing concepts and advancements in the profession, (e.g., ultrasound techniques.)

xi Ability to practice anesthesia in an interdisciplinary environment utilizing a collaborative concept of anesthesia care.

xii Knowledge of quality improvement processes to maintain ongoing review and evaluation of anesthesia care to improve outcomes.

xiii Ability to demonstrate a practice emphasis on safety, current established guidelines and protocols while recognizing the duty to report unsafe conditions or errors.

(2) **APN (Certified Nurse Anesthetist) III.**

(a) **Education and Experience Requirement.**

i Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNA)

AND

ii One year of specialized APN (CNA) experience equivalent to the APN (CNA) II grade level.

(b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.** Progressively responsible experience in the administration of anesthetics as indicated in the knowledge, skills and abilities listed below**.**

i Ability to plan, administer and manage anesthesia for a broad range of complex surgical procedures skillfully employing continuous assessment and anesthetic adaptation based on patient response and comorbidities. Work assignments will vary by facility.

ii Ability to participate in assignments that are technically challenging, encompass a variety of anesthetizing locations and utilize advanced equipment and procedures while adapting techniques to solve various complex anesthesia problems

including the development of individualized programs of post-op anesthesia care.

iii Skill in responsibility and accountability to perform to the extent of the CNA standards of practice as a licensed healthcare professional in any model of anesthesia practice.

iv Ability to contribute to the educational mission as a mentor or preceptor providing didactic and clinical instruction in anesthesia to student nurse anesthetists, medical and dental residents and other health care trainees.

v Knowledge to participate in the development, implementation and maintenance of auditing processes that ensure and improve the quality and consistency of anesthesia and associated documentation.

vi Ability to contribute to departmental administrative processes through quality assurance, shared governance or committee representation as applicable.

vii Ability to serve as a representative on interdisciplinary teams to establish and maintain guidelines and communication.

viii Skill demonstrated in the ability to embrace the safety lifestyle emphasis by continuously assessing for safety risks, actively reporting safety concerns and maintaining a just lifestyle by identifying faults in systems rather than individuals.

(3) **APN (Certified Nurse Anesthetist) IV, Chief Educator/ Leadership-Management.**

(a) **Chief APN (CNA) IV.**

i **Assignment.** The Chief APN (CNA) makes recommendations that may significantly affect the content, interpretation or development of VA policies or programs concerning critical matters or major issues within the anesthesia arena. The Chief APN (CNA) is distinguished by educational range, clinical experience and collaborative skills. The Chief APN (CNA) is a first line supervisor and may have administrative responsibility for anesthesia staff.

ii **Education** and **Experience Requirement**.

(A) Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNA)

AND

(B) Four years of APN (CNA) progressively responsible assignments in clinical, administrative, education and/or research related to CNA practice, one of which is specialized experience equivalent to the APN (CNA) III grade level. At this level, emphasis is placed on strategic planning and administrative responsibilities.

iii **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.** Must have the ability to perform long and short-term planning goals for their anesthesia department. Chief APN (CNA) functions may include, but are not limited to, the following knowledge, skills and abilities:

(A) Ability to assume progressive responsibility for planning organizing, directing and evaluating section and departmental processes and programs.

(B) Ability to supervise staff, students or ancillary personnel and to ensure proper scheduling and staffing.

(C) Skill to perform as a provider and mentor for unusually extensive and complex anesthetic cases.

(D) Knowledge to participate in a continual audit of anesthesia care and to ensure periodic performance and professional practice (focused and ongoing) evaluation requirements are met.

(E) Knowledge to represent departmental interests at interdisciplinary committee meetings, participate in departmental reviews, collaborate in problem solving and develop quality improvement initiatives.

(F) Knowledge to engage in departmental resource stewardship, evaluation of staffing, equipment and time value management.

(G) Ability to interpret efficiency data as well as implement and evaluate cost-effective operational strategies.

(H) Ability to prioritize and delegate tasks to enhance employee investment offering opportunities for staff leadership development.

(I) Skill to collaborate and support the development of clinical and educational programs and anesthesia protocols to improve patient outcomes and improve service level performance.

(J) Ability to provide guidance and instruction in preparing others for positions of leadership and ethical practices which impact patient care.

(K) Skill to provide leadership level commitment to foster a safety lifestyle and continuous process improvement.

(b) **APN (CNA) IV, Educator Coordinator.**

i **Assignments.** The APN (CNA), Educator Coordinator:

(A) Coordinates education within the anesthesia department. This will include but is not limited to Phase I (non-clinical) and/or Phase II (clinical) for nurse anesthesia students or health care trainees who rotate through the VA Healthcare System; ongoing education for employed APNs (CNAs); and other training activities within the department. The APN (CNA), Education Coordinator will have an academic appointment.

(B) Has responsibility for preceptor training and orientation.

(C) Represents a significant commitment to the education of students, beyond the occasional preceptorship.

(D) Has administrative and technical responsibilities for maintaining professional standards of practice in accordance with the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Education Programs (COA). Functions may include but are not limited to development of orientation programs, journal club, scheduling, counseling and grading, monitoring cases, mentoring research and/or formal scholarly projects, preparing and teaching lectures, providing hands-on lab/simulation instruction, administrative support, coordinating with didactic instructors and clinical anesthesia.

(E) Assists and provides development opportunities for primary clinical instructors and other department members to maintain their skills and keep current with progressive technical knowledge.

(F) Must demonstrate a commitment to in-service training for staff and facility continuing education to provide accurate information to the population served.

ii **Education** and **Experience Requirement.**

(A) Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNA)

AND

(B) Four years of APN (CNA) progressively responsible assignments in clinical, administrative, education and/or research related to CNA practice, one of which is specialized experience equivalent to the APN (CNA) III grade level.

iii **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.** Must have the ability to perform long and short-term planning goals for their anesthesia department. The APN (CNA), Educator Coordinator functions may include, but are not limited to, the following knowledge, skills and abilities:

(A) Ability to develop, implement and evaluate a clinical curriculum and provide feedback to students, faculty and leadership in a timely fashion.

(B) Ability to provide mentorship regarding investigating, evaluating and translating evolving research findings for implementation into clinical practice, quality improvement, policy development, system transformation and enhancing efficiency, effectiveness and patient outcomes.

(C) Ability to conduct, collaborate and assist with approved research and scholarly projects that enhance students and providers' knowledge and expertise in the profession and the missions of VA. May chair or co-chair graduate level research and/or scholarly projects to assist students in meeting program requirements. This may include mentorship in research/scholarly project development, literature search/review and evaluation, approval processes, scholarly writing, implementation and completion/defense.

(D) Skill in investigating and advancing education related to current anesthesia practice for healthcare providers both within and outside the anesthesia specialty.

(E) Knowledge to implement educational strategies to meet changes clinically, academically and professionally, related to anesthesia.

(F) Ability to perform clinical and didactic teaching, in-service training for staff and facility continuing education to provide appropriate information to the population served.

(G) Ability to serve as interdepartmental liaison to incorporate multidisciplinary expertise in a comprehensive, integrated approach to care.

(H) Skill in providing guidance and assistance in unusually difficult or complex anesthetic management.

(I) Knowledge to provide support for preparation of an educational program's accreditation process (i.e., by the COA).

(c) **APN (CNA) IV, Other Leadership/Management Positions.**

i **Assignment.** Qualifying leadership and management positions (e.g., Section Chief, Consultant, Service Chiefs, Veterans Integrated Service Network Lead, Service Line Managers, etc.) APNs (CNAs) in such a role must demonstrate effectiveness coordinating and managing interdisciplinary collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders to optimize the care of patients under their purview.

ii **Education** and **Experience Requirement.**

(A) Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNA)

AND

(B) Four years of APN (CNA) progressively responsible assignments in clinical, administrative, education and/or research related to CNA practice, one of which is specialized experience equivalent to the APN (CNA) III grade level.

iii **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.**

(A) Demonstrates outstanding professional ability in the practice of anesthesia and healthcare administration, as well as the ability to guide the development and implementation of programs within their respective domain. This would include, but is not limited to CNA practice, professional standards, personnel issues, quality and performance improvement.

(B) Demonstrates effectiveness coordinating and managing interdisciplinary collaboration with both internal and external

stakeholders to optimize the care of patients under their purview.

(d) **APN (CNA) V, Executive Leadership Positions.**

i **Assignment.** For highly qualified candidates with program responsibilities which significantly exceed the minimum scope and complexity of those described for APN (CNA) IV. Typically, candidates for this assignment (e.g., Deputy Director, Anesthesia Service, VA Central Office or other Central Office Program Positions) will be responsible for managing a national program.

ii **Education** and **Experience Requirement.**

(A) Meets basic education requirement for an APN (CNA)

AND

(B) Five years of APN (CNA) experience, one of which is specialized experience equivalent to the APN (CNA) IV grade level.

4. DEVIATIONS.

a. The approving official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for a VHA APN (CNA) whose composite record of accomplishments, performance and qualifications, as well as current assignments, warrant such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the proposed grade.

b. Under no circumstances may the educational, certification or licensure requirements be waived for promotion or appointment.

c. The placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this qualification standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health or designee in VHA Central Office.