

What Is An APRN?

Advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) is an umbrella term for nursing professionals who have earned a master's or doctoral degree and provide advanced health care services.

There are four disciplines of advanced practice nursing:

Nurse Practitioner (NP):

- All NPs must complete a master's or doctoral degree program and have advanced clinical training beyond their initial professional registered nurse (RN) preparation. Didactic and clinical courses prepare nurses with specialized knowledge and clinical competency to practice in primary care, acute care, and long-term health care settings.
- To be recognized as expert health care providers and ensure the highest quality of care, NPs undergo rigorous national certification, periodic peer review, clinical outcome evaluations and adhere to a code for ethical practices. Self-directed continued learning and professional development is also essential to maintaining clinical competency.
- Additionally, to promote quality health care and improve clinical outcomes, NPs lead and participate in both professional and lay health care forums, conduct research, and apply findings to clinical practice.
- Autonomously and in collaboration with health care professionals and other individuals, NPs provide a full range of primary, acute, and specialty health care services, including:
 - Ordering, performing, and interpreting diagnostic tests such as lab work and x-rays.
 - Diagnosing and treating acute and chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, infections, and injuries.
 - Prescribing medications and other treatments.
 - Managing patients' overall care.
 - Counseling.
 - Educating patients on disease prevention and positive health and lifestyle choices.

Specialty areas include:

- Acute Care
- Adult Health
- Family Health
- Gerontology Health
- Neonatal Health
- Oncology
- Pediatric/Child Health
- Psychiatric/Mental Health
- Women's Health

- What sets NPs apart from other health care providers is their unique emphasis on the health and well-being of the whole person. With a focus on health promotion, disease prevention and health education and counseling, NPs guide patients in making smarter health and lifestyle choices, which in turn can lower patients' out-of-pocket costs.
<https://www.aanp.org/about/all-about-nps/whats-a-nurse-practitioner>

Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS):

- Clinical nurse specialists are advanced practice registered nurses who have graduate (master's or doctorate) preparation in nursing. Like other advanced practice registered nurses, they are trained in advanced physiology, pharmacology, and physical assessment in addition to their particular areas of specialty. They can diagnose, treat, prescribe, and bill like other APRNs as allowed by their state regulations.
- Clinical nurse specialists are leaders in health care.
- The clinical nurse specialist has been a part of the health care industrial complex in the United States for more than 60 years. Through the decades, the role has become widely accepted in the health care system and one that significantly impacts the nation's economy by providing safe, low-cost, and effective evidence-based health care services.
<https://nacns.org/about-us/what-is-a-cns/>

Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM) & Certified Midwife (CM):

- Educated in graduate-level midwifery programs accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME). CNMs and CMs pass national certification examination administered by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) to receive the professional designation of CNM (if they have an active RN at the time of the certification exam) or CM.
[Compare CNM and CM credentials to other midwifery credentials in the United States.](#)
- **Legal Recognition:** Laws and regulations governing the practice of midwifery are rapidly changing. CNMs and CMs are regulated at the state level, thus professional practice and interaction with other health care professionals, such as physicians, can vary from state to state. CNMs are legally recognized to practice in every state in the US and in the District of Columbia. CMs are currently legally recognized to practice in Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.
Visit the [State Resource Center](#) for information about state laws and regulations.
<https://www.midwife.org/the-credential-cnm-and-cm>

Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA):

- **Autonomy and Responsibility:** As advanced practice registered nurses, CRNAs practice with a high degree of autonomy and professional respect. CRNAs are qualified to make independent judgments regarding all aspects of anesthesia care based on their education, licensure, and certification. They are the only anesthesia professionals with critical care experience prior to beginning formal anesthesia education.
- **Practice Settings:** CRNAs practice in every setting in which anesthesia is delivered such as traditional hospital surgical suites and obstetrical delivery rooms, critical access

hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, ketamine clinics, dental offices, podiatrists, ophthalmologists, plastic surgeons, pain management specialists, the U.S. military, public health services, and Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare facilities.

- **Military Presence:** Nurses first provided anesthesia on the battlefields of the American Civil War. During World War I, nurse anesthetists became the predominant providers of anesthesia care to wounded soldiers on the front lines. Today, CRNAs have full practice authority in every branch of the military and are the primary providers of anesthesia care to U.S. military personnel on the front lines, navy ships, and aircraft evacuation teams around the globe.

<https://www.aana.com/membership/become-a-crna/crna-fact-sheet>