

Frequently Asked Questions for Standard 4.2: Oncology Nursing Credentials *Optimal Resources for Cancer Care (2020 Standards)*

FAQs Addressed

[NCPD](#)

[Defining the Scope of Standard 4.2](#)

[Which Nurses Must Meet the Standard?](#)

[Which Certifications Count?](#)

[How Many Contact Hours are Required?](#)

[What is Applicable Continuing Education?](#)

[What Documentation is Required?](#)

[What if Compliance is Not Feasible?](#)

[Best Practices for Standard 4.2](#)

Nursing Continuing Professional Development (NCPD)

The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) has retired the term Continuing Nursing Education (CNE), replacing it with Nursing Continuing Professional Development (NCPD). **This is an update in terminology only** and has no impact on the requirements or compliance measures for Standard 4.2.

One (1) hour of NCPD is equal to one (1) hour of CNE.

Defining the Scope of Standard 4.2

The following nursing roles are included within the scope of **Standard 4.2 – Oncology Nursing Credentials** if the nurse provides direct oncology care and works continuously at the CoC-accredited facility for more than one calendar year:

- Registered nurses (RN)
- Advanced practice registered nurses (APN/APRN)
- Nurse practitioners (NP)
- Nurse navigators
- Oncology clinical trials nurses (RNs, APRNs, and nurse navigators)
- Contract nurses
- Per diem nurses*

*Per diem nurses working **less than** 832 hours each calendar year are not required to demonstrate compliance with Standard 4.2.

Standard 4.2 – Oncology Nursing Credentials applies in the following scenarios:

- RNs, APRNs, and nurse navigators who work in a dedicated oncology unit, ambulatory cancer care, or infusion center
- RNs, APRNs, and nurse navigators who work in radiation oncology
- RNs, APRNs, and nurse navigators who work in a dedicated cancer clinic or dedicated cancer center

The following healthcare professionals are **not** included within the scope of Standard 4.2:

- Medical assistants (MA)
- Physician assistants (PA)
- Travel RNs, APRNs, and nurse navigators
- Locum tenens RNs, APRNs, and nurse navigators
- Nursing administrators (directors, managers etc.) that do not provide direct patient care
- Licensed vocational nurse (LVN)
- Licensed practical nurse (LPN)

The standard does **not** apply to operating room nurses, recovery room nurses, emergency room nurses, or nurses who work on other units **not** dedicated to oncology.

The standard does **not** apply to nurses who have occasional contact with patients with cancer on another floor or unit.

Which Nurses Must Meet the Standard?

Are oncology clinical trials/clinical research nurses required to meet Standard 4.2?

Yes, if the nurse provides direct patient care and works at the facility for more than one calendar year. Examples include, but are not limited to, clinical research nurses who screen patients for trial eligibility, administer medications, or evaluate adverse events.

Are nurse administrators (managers, directors, etc.) that do not provide direct oncology patient care required to meet Standard 4.2?

No.

Are infusion nurses in medical oncology required to meet Standard 4.2?

Yes, if the nurse provides direct patient care and works at the facility for more than one calendar year.

We are a multi-specialty cancer hospital with all units and floors dedicated to cancer care and treatment. Are all of our nurses at our facility required to meet Standard 4.2?

No. Please refer to the FAQ section: [Defining the Scope of Standard 4.2](#).

Are magnet hospitals required to meet Standard 4.2?

Yes. Magnet designation does not evaluate oncology nursing competency or excellence, so magnet hospital oncology nurses within the [scope of Standard 4.2](#) are required to meet this standard.

Which Certifications Count?

What qualifies a certification to meet compliance with Standard 4.2?

The certification must developed for licensed nurses, include cancer-specific education and maintenance of certification, and be accredited by the [Board for Specialty Nursing Certification \(ABSNC\)](#) or [Institute for Credentialing Excellence \(ICE\)](#).

What if my certification is “retired”?

If the certification is “retired,” it will still qualify as long as the certification was accredited at the time the certification was earned. The certification must have been continuously maintained by the nurse through the certification’s renewal process.

Is the Certified Navigator – Breast Advocate (CN-BA) credential from the National Consortium of Breast Centers (NCBC) a qualifying certification that meets compliance with Standard 4.2?

No, this is not an accredited nursing certification.

Is the Breast Health Clinical Navigator (BHCN™) certification from the National Consortium of Breast Centers (NCBC) a qualifying certification that meets compliance with Standard 4.2?

Yes, this certification is accredited and qualifies to meet Standard 4.2.

Is the CBPN-IC credential for oncology nursing a qualifying certification that meets compliance with Standard 4.2?

No, this certification is not accredited.

Is the Oncology Nursing Society’s Chemotherapy/Biotherapy Certificate Course a qualifying certification that meets compliance with Standard 4.2?

No. But the contact hours earned to maintain the certificate meet the NCPD requirement for Standard 4.2.

Is the Certified Registered Nurse Infusion (CRNI) credential a qualifying certification that meets compliance with Standard 4.2?

Yes, this certification is accredited and qualifies to meet Standard 4.2.

Does certification through the Academy of Oncology Nurse and Patient Navigators (AONN+) qualify?

The Oncology Nurse Navigator-Certified Generalist (ONN-CG) credential meets compliance with Standard 4.2.

Does certification through The Joint Commission meet compliance with Standard 4.2?

No. The Joint Commission does not grant oncology nursing certification to individuals, so it does not meet compliance with Standard 4.2.

How Many Contact Hours are Required?

How many Nursing Continuing Professional Development (NCPD) contact hours are required to meet Standard 4.2?

Nurses required to meet compliance with Standard 4.2 must complete 36 cancer-related NCPD contact hours each accreditation cycle if they do not hold a current, cancer-specific nursing certification.

When a new individual program or a new network program applies for accreditation, how many NCPD contact hours must nurses accrue for the initial site visit?

For a program undergoing its initial site visit, nurses required to meet compliance with Standard 4.2 who have been employed at the facility for at least one calendar year must accrue at least 12 NCPD contact hours or hold a qualifying oncology nursing certification.

This requirement applies to both new individual programs and new network programs.

When do newly hired nurses need to start accruing NCPDs?

The nurse must start accruing NCPD contact hours as of January 1 following the date of hire.

For example, if a nurse is hired March 1, 2022, the nurse will need to start accruing NCPDs as of January 1, 2023.

Can a nurse earn all 36 hours within one year of the accreditation cycle?

Yes, that is acceptable.

If a nurse is on leave, are they still required to earn all 36 hours of continuing education?

In most cases yes, nurses on leave must still accrue the required hours of continuing education because completing the 36 hours of continuing education may be completed at any time across the 3-year accreditation cycle. Specific circumstances will always be taken into consideration and the program is always encouraged to discuss their situation with their assigned site reviewer.

If a nurse is employed for 13 months during the accreditation cycle, but not a calendar year, (e.g., September 2021 to October 2022) does the nurse need to meet the standard?

No. NCPDs need to be accrued as of January 1 after the date of hire. If a nurse leaves prior to December 31 of that year, the nurse does not need to demonstrate compliance for that calendar year.

For example, if a nurse was hired in September 2021 and leaves the facility in October 2022, no NCPDs are required to be submitted for compliance.

If a nurse was hired in September 2021 and leaves the facility in October 2023, the nurse would need to accrue NCPDs for calendar year 2022.

If a newly hired nurse is not employed by the facility during the full three-year accreditation cycle. How many contact hours must the nurse accrue?

The nurse must average at least 12 NCPDs per calendar year for the number of calendar

years employed during the accreditation cycle.

For example, if the nurse is employed for two calendar years during the three-year accreditation cycle, then the nurse must demonstrate completion of 24 NCPDs. Oncology nurses who provide care to oncology patients, whether contracted or employed etc., are expected to meet criteria with this standard.

If a nurse is employed for 18 months (one calendar year and 6 months) during the accreditation cycle, does the nurse have to obtain 12 NCPDs or 24 NCPDs?

The nurse would need to accrue 12 NCPDs for the full calendar year that the nurse was employed.

If a nurse is not yet eligible for Oncology Certified Nurse (OCN) certification, are the 36 NCPDs still mandatory?

Yes, if the nurse works for more than one calendar year and is one of the professionals included within the scope of this standard.

What is Applicable Continuing Education?

Are Continuing Medical Education (CME) hours accepted in lieu of NCPD?

Yes.

Can CME be used for all 36 hours of continuing education?

Yes.

Does in-house education count?

Yes. As long as the educational activity is approved to award CME or NCPD and the topic is cancer-specific, in-house continuing education may be used to meet Standard 4.2.

Is in-house education offered by the CoC-accredited program required to award NCPD or CME in order to count toward Standard 4.2?

Yes. Programs must first submit an application to an appropriate NCPD or CME provider before the educational activity can be approved to award NCPD or CME credit. The activity must award NCPD or CME credit.

Do multidisciplinary conferences/tumor boards/cancer conferences qualify as continuing education?

Yes, as long as NCPD contact hours or CME credit is awarded for attendance.

Can multidisciplinary conferences/tumor boards/cancer conferences be used for all 36 nursing contact hours?

Yes, as long as NCPD contact hours or CME credit is awarded for attendance.

What are examples or sources for NCPD contact hours specific to clinical trial/clinical research nurses that meet this standard?

Any NCPD qualifies as long as it covers cancer care/cancer topics. The [Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation](#) (ONCC) and [Oncology Nursing Society](#) (ONS) provide lists of suggested NCPD.

Can the NCPD/CME be on any cancer topic?

Yes.

Can up-to-date contact hours be counted toward the continuing education requirement?

Yes, if all requirements for receiving NCPD are completed.

Do college credits qualify as Continuing Education Units (CEU) under this standard?

No. NCPD or CME must be awarded, and the education must address cancer care/cancer topics.

Can the nurse providing the oncology-related education count those CEUs for themselves?

No. In line with requirements by ANCC, these will not count under Standard 4.2.

What Documentation is Required?

What documentation is required to demonstrate compliance with Standard 4.2?

Programs will complete a CoC-provided template that lists each applicable RN, nurse navigator, and APRN. Information on the certification or required continuing education must be provided.

It will not be required that certificates be uploaded in the Pre-Review Questionnaire (PRQ), however, the site reviewer may choose to review certification certificates or continuing education certificates on-site or within three days of the site visit.

What qualifies as evidence of “progress toward certification”?

Examples of sufficient documentation would be contact hours per year or demonstrating that the exam is scheduled.

What if Compliance is Not Feasible?

Effective: January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2024

If the cancer program determines it is not currently capable of meeting the measures of compliance required by Standard 4.2, the program is allowed to develop and implement a corrective action plan to help achieve compliance. The corrective action plan must outline the specific issue(s) affecting compliance, and the interventions that will be implemented to achieve compliance. The corrective action plan must be complete within 12 months of the program’s non-compliant rating for this standard. The corrective action plan must also be documented in the cancer committee meeting minutes. At the end of the corrective action plan, the cancer program must be fully compliant with Standard 4.2: Oncology Nursing Credentials.

The corrective action plan is a **temporary** compliance pathway for 2023 and 2024 site visits only.

Best Practices for Standard 4.2

The following are compiled best practices for achieving compliance with Standard 4.2 related to continuing education.

- Increase the number of oncology certified nurses by promoting/incentivizing certification. Some ideas for this include:
 - Require for clinical ladder advancement
 - Participate in the [ONCC FreeTake](#) Program
 - Offer reimbursement for certification/renewal fees
 - Promote or reimburse for preparation/review courses for oncology certification
 - Provide incentives for units with the highest certification rates
- Utilize a learning management system where education can be assigned, tracked and reported on centrally.
 - Assign oncology content annually to meet the requirements
 - Develop a system for routinely checking completions/compliance
 - Some examples of programs used by organizations include [HealthStream](#), [ONS All Access](#), and [Cornerstone](#)
- Minimize tracking of externally obtained CE credits through offering credits within the organization to meet the requirement, thereby centralizing attendance tracking and credit distribution. Examples where these offerings can be embedded include:
 - Oncology content in annual required education day
 - New nurse orientation
 - Monthly lunch and learns/webinars
 - Multidisciplinary tumor boards
 - Grand Rounds (medical or nursing)
 - Journal Clubs
- Don't wait for the end of the accreditation period to monitor compliance from staff. Have staff turn in credits on a monthly (1 credit per month), quarterly (3 credits per quarter), or annual basis (12 per year).
 - Organizations have found that nurse managers who keep a tracking list and enter credits more frequently have less trouble managing tracking the data
 - Organizations with a clear escalation process for non-compliant staff aids in adherence
- Leverage and promote free offerings from various areas and create group activities/time carve outs to collect certificates. Below is a list of some examples of locations for free oncology credits but is in no way all inclusive.
 - [Big List of Free CEs](#)
 - [Prime Oncology CME](#)
 - [Oncology Nursing Podcasts](#)
 - [Leukemia & Lymphoma Society](#)
 - [NCCN Education Offerings](#)