✓ Know your issue! Read the background information provided in the toolkit before beginning any communication or work on this issue.

✓ Visit your state board of nursing’s website and become familiar with its recent activities, paying special attention to upcoming hearings, comment periods, etc., that relate to CONTINUING EDUCATION, MAINTENANCE OF COMPETENCE, RN LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS/RENEWAL, and CERTIFIERS. See https://www.ncsbn.org/index.htm for a list of board of nursing contacts and website links.

✓ Familiarize yourself with your state practice act, advisory opinions, and any other relevant position statements of your board of nursing. NOTE: States may have detailed continuing education, continued competence, and certification requirements for CNAs, LPNs, and APRNs. An argument may be that RNs need similar (parity) requirements to also keep pace with advancing scopes of practice and changing healthcare dynamics.

✓ Know how your board of nursing is structured. Is it autonomous or part of a larger ‘umbrella’ structure where decision makers may be situated in a Department of Professional Regulation or Health? What relationship does the Governor’s office and/or legislators have with your board of nursing? How do employers and nursing associations in your state view the board?

✓ Call, email or write the board of nursing staff person who recommends changes for RN licensure renewal requirements and/or continued competence initiatives. In most states this will be the Executive Director or Practice/Education Manager or Director. Discuss with that person any plans regarding the issues of continuing education and/or maintenance of competence for RNs. Outline what you are advocating for and take a ‘pulse’ as to staff’s response or suggested action. Offer to be a current or future resource on issues on which you are an expert. Staff has multiple responsibilities and can always use credible sources of information now or down the road. This also will help board staff see you as an ally, not just someone demanding a change.

✓ If your Board of Nursing does not seem responsive to this issue, contact the Governor’s staff to see who can assist with this issue and/or your state legislators. Everyone is part of your state’s government and should be responsive to your inquiries, even if they do not personally agree.

✓ Develop a broad-based coalition of supporters! Who are your allies? Consumer/patient safety advocates, employers of nurses across all care settings, state chapters of the Organization of Nurse Executives, schools of nursing, physicians, state nurses associations, ABNS certification boards and their certified nurses, and state hospital associations may all be resources whom you can tap. Think specifically about the make-up of your state and who would be helpful and supportive of this cause. The more allies you bring to the table, the more likely you are to succeed.

✓ Organize a leadership team. It will assist with pre-planning and ground work assignments.
✓ Make sure a communication chain is established for succinct and well-thought messaging both external and internal to the coalition.

✓ Identify the organizations or specific people that may not favor your position and consider ways in which you can invite them to the table to discuss the issue and perhaps gain consensus on an approach that will address their concerns also. For example, some nursing unions and associations may be apprehensive about advocating for additional requirements for their members, so try and focus them on the patient safety aspect of continued education to promote quality patient care. Agreeing to a neutral position may be a win-win with some organizations.

✓ Know the internal politics of your state board of nursing. Who tends to align themselves with each other? Who are the opponents within the group? Do you or anyone in your coalition know one of the board members who may be able to provide some insight into previous discussions on this issue? What types of information can you provide for the board of nursing to give them an evidence-based perspective of the issue?

✓ A face-to-face meeting is the most effective way of communicating with your board of nursing. Arrange to have leaders of your coalition meet with the executive director of your state board of nursing to discuss the issue.

✓ Make sure you are following established regulatory procedures. Submit comments on regulations being promulgated, come to board meetings, and speak out in open forums and during identified comment periods. REMEMBER, the Board of Nursing is a resource for all its licensed nurses in the state; they work for the citizens of your state!

✓ Keep a record of conversations and ideas. Remember to include BCEN in your communications loop.

11/29/15