Nurses need to remind and encourage their employers to support, reward, and even require certification by RNs in their areas of specialty practice. All nurses have an ethical and legal duty to maintain their nursing competence. There are states that do not require continuing education or certification for RNs, so it is imperative that the employers of nurses ensure that they maintain their nursing competencies.

Steps to encourage support for certification of RNs in the workplace

- Discuss with your immediate supervisors and key nursing stakeholders in your hospital, floor, unit, setting of care, the need for certification for RNs in their respective specialties. Gauge their opinions and obtain their ideas on next steps, allies, and public relation efforts necessary for facility leadership buy-in to support RN specialty nurse certification.
- Promote hospital or other employer-offered benefits to attain RN specialty certifications, e.g., professional development funds, employee resources to support continuing education and attainment of certification.
- Utilize nurse education sessions/brown bag lunches/other open forums to educate, discuss and promote the benefits of RN specialty nurse certifications. Encourage nurses from a wide array of RN specialties to discuss their fields’ options for professional certification. Differentiate certification from continuing education, stressing that nurses who obtain certification certainly achieve continuing education, but certification is the measurement — it is an awarding of a higher level of knowledge and skill beyond a RN license.
- Schedule meetings to encourage the senior leadership of the facility to buy-in and support this important endeavor. Push to have RN specialty certification formally recognized by the employer through recognition, advancement, and/or salary.

Checklist of Benefits to Employers of RNs Holding Certifications

- Increases patient safety and satisfaction.
- Enhances utilization of evidence-based guidelines into practice.
- Signifies professional recognition of up-to-date RN experience, knowledge, and skills.
- Promotes a culture of professionalism and retention.
- Allows facilities to demonstrate to patients and competitors that their nursing workforce is highly skilled and experienced.
- Creates confident nurses through validation of a nurse’s expert knowledge and skills.
- Meets patients’ preference for certified RNs. (Validated by a survey from the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, patients prefer hospitals that employ nurses with specialty certification – three in four respondents said that, given a choice, they are much more likely to select a hospital that employs a high percentage of nurses with specialty certification. Accessed at http://www.aacn.org/wd/certifications/content/benefitstopnurs.pcms?menu=certification)
- Improves risk management through increased continuing education and experience that optimally prepares the nurse to make informed decisions. (According to leading insurance providers, discounts on malpractice premiums are available to nurses who are certified in their specialties. For example, BCEN-certified nurses, who are members of the Emergency Nurses Association, receive a 10% savings through the Nurse Service Organization and certified acute and critical care nurses receive a 10% savings through Marsh Affinity Services.)