



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### Category: Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP), Registered Nurse (RN), and Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)

### Title: Continuing Competency Requirements

#### What are the continuing competency requirements for nurses in Washington State?

The following table provides a summary of the continuing competency requirements for nurses in Washington State:

Licensure	Practice Hours	Continuing Education Hours	Action Required
<b>Active RN and LPN</b> <b>*ARNP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 96 hours yearly</li> <li>Will start with the licensee's first full renewal date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 8 hours yearly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yearly requirements start on the first full renewal date, on an individual's birthday</li> </ul>
<b>Retired Active RN and LPN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 24 hours yearly</li> <li>Limited to no more than 90** days per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 8 hours yearly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yearly requirements start on the first full renewal date, on an individual's birthday</li> </ul>
<b>RN and LPN Expired or Inactive &lt; 3 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 96 hours yearly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 8 hours yearly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yearly requirements to start on first full renewal date, on an individual's birthday</li> </ul>
<b>RN and LPN Expired &gt; 3 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must complete a WABON approved refresher course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of a WABON approved refresher course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issued after completion of a WABON approved refresher course</li> <li>Yearly requirements to start on first full renewal date on an individual's birthday</li> </ul>
<b>RN and LPN Endorsement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See requirements for specific licensure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See requirements for specific licensure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After endorsement, the yearly requirements start on the first full renewal date, on the individual's birthday</li> </ul>

\*ARNP licensure is based on a 2-year cycle – ARNPs are required to have an active RN license and must meet the continuing competency requirements for their RN license.

\*\*WABON determines that a "day" is defined as eight (8) hours of practice for the purpose of meeting the continuing practice hour requirement.



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### **How are continuing education hours defined?**

One contact hour is equal to sixty (60) minutes of instruction. Continuing education hours are defined as the time it takes the nurse to complete the continuing education activity. For example, one hour is defined as sixty (60) minutes of education, training, or self-study.

### **How are continuing education credits calculated?**

There is a difference between continuing education credits and contact hours. One contact hour is equal to 60 minutes of instruction. The Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) accepts courses that carry a credit-hour designation using that calculation.

Nurses endorsing into Washington get a full renewal cycle to complete continuing education and active nursing practice hour requirements. This is the same with new graduates, if an individual's birthday is within ninety (90) days of issuing the license, they would have ninety (90) days plus a year to complete continuing competency with the new rules.

### **Are continuing education hours required to have formal continuing education units (CEUs) or credits or continuing nursing education (CNEs)?**

No. The laws and rules do not require any continuing education hours to have formal CEUs or CNEs. The Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) calculates by hours, not by CEU or CNE credits. Training can be through an employer or another entity. Example of earned hours related to nursing practice includes Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS), Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS), health equity, suicide training, telemedicine training, blood borne pathogens-infection control, or reading a journal article.

### **What types of continuing education meet the requirement?**

Any type of continuing education that is related to the practice of nursing meets the continuing education requirement. Training by an employer/institution, self-study training, or accredited courses may be counted. Example of earned hours related to nursing practice includes Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS), Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS), health equity, suicide training, telemedicine training, blood borne pathogens-infection control, or reading a journal article.

### **Can the nurse count the required health equity, suicide prevention, and telemedicine training hours to meet the continuing competency education requirements?**

Yes. Health equity, suicide prevention and telemedicine training can be used to meet the continuing competency education requirements.



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**Is the suicide prevention training required to come from the Washington State Department of Health (WADOH) “Model List” to meet the continuing education requirements?**

Yes. The nurse is required to take a course on the WADOH “Model List” to meet the continuing education requirements.

[Suicide Prevention Training Model List | Washington State Department of Health](#)

**Is the health equity training required to come from the Washington State Department of Health (WADOH) Course List to meet the continuing education requirements?**

No. The training is not required to come from the WADOH course list if the course meets the requirements.

[Health Equity Continuing Education | Washington State Department of Health](#)

**When does the nurse need to complete the initial two hours of health equity continuing education hours?**

Nurses have until their 2026 renewal date to complete the initial two hours of health equity continuing education. Nurses applying for a new license have until their second renewal date to complete the two hours of health equity continuing education. Nurses are then required take additional training every two years.

**Is the telemedicine training required to come from the Washington State Telehealth Collaborative?**

No. While the [Washington State Telehealth Collaborative](#) provides a free telemedicine training course, it does not need to be done through this program as long as it meets the training requirements.

[Washington State Medical Professional Telemedicine Training](#)

**Can the nurse count volunteer hours to meet the practice hour requirement?**

Yes. Practice hour requirements can be paid, unpaid, or as a volunteer performing nursing care.

**What activities qualify as practice hours?**

Practice is interpreted liberally. Any job or position that requires or recommends a nursing license would meet the criteria as any activity performed as an employee or volunteer that is within the legal scope of nursing practice. Examples of qualified activities include bedside nursing, teaching nursing, supervising nursing care, consulting, clinical experience in a nursing program, caring for a family member or friend, faith-based nursing, insurance nursing, coordinating/managing care, researching, regulatory nursing, paralegal nursing, or publishing/authoring.



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**Is the Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) accredited to provide continuing education units (CEUs) or continuing nursing education (CNEs)?**

No. The WABON is not accredited to provide CEUs or CNEs.

**Can online education classes count towards continuing education hours?**

Yes. Continuing education hours may be obtained through successful completion of an online (including a self-study course) or in-person course if it is related to nursing practice.

**Can an independent study or research project be counted towards continuing education hours or practice hours?**

Yes. An independent study or research project may be counted towards practice or continuing education hours.

**Is a nurse who is enrolled in nursing school, a graduate program, or advanced nursing education program required to meet the continuing competency practice and education hours?**

No. Nurses who are enrolled in nursing school, a graduate program, or have completed prerequisite classes for, an advanced nursing education program are exempt from the continuing competency requirements during their current review period.

**Can the advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP) use the continuing education hours required to maintain their ARNP license to meet the requirements for their registered nurse (RN) licensure?**

Yes. The ARNP is allowed to use continuing education hours taken to meet the requirements for their ARNP license if taken during the RN renewal year, on the individual's birthday.

**How is a "day" defined when determining hours to meet the practice hour requirement?**

The Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) determined that a "day" is defined as eight (8) clock hours of practice for the purpose of meeting the continuing practice hours.

**Can providing nursing care for a family member be counted for practice hours?**

Hours can be counted for active nursing practice hours when providing nursing care for a family member, friend, or neighbor whether this is in a paid or unpaid position following the nursing process and applying nursing practice. Documentation of care provided is required and the nurse must follow the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).



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**Can preparation time count as practice hours for a nursing-related educational presentation?**

Yes. Time used to prepare and present a nursing-related educational presentation can count for practice hours. An alternative is to count these for continuing education hours. They cannot be used as both.

**What are the current continuing education and practice hour requirements for the active nursing license renewal period for licensed practical nurse (LPN) and the registered nurse (RN)?**

The LPN and RN with an active nursing license must complete eight (8) hours of continuing education related to nursing practice and ninety-six (96) practice hours during the renewal date, the individual's birthday.

**What are the current continuing education and practice hour requirements for the licensed practical nurse (LPN) and registered nurse (RN) with a retired-active nursing license?**

The LPN and RN with a retired-active nursing license must complete eight (8) hours of continuing education related to nursing practice. Practice hours are limited to a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours during the renewal period and not more than ninety (90) hours during the renewal date, the individual's birthday.

**Is a nurse with an inactive or expired license required to complete continuing education hours?**

No. Completion of continuing education and practice hours are not required with an inactive or expired nursing license.

**What are the continuing competency requirements for a nurse to reactivate a license if it is been inactive or expired for more than a year?**

If a nursing license is expired or inactive **for more than one year**, and the nurse has not held an active nursing license in any U.S. jurisdiction, the nurse must complete ninety-six (96) hours of active nursing practice and eight hours of continuing nursing education within one year of reactivation.

If the nursing license is expired or inactive **for more than three years**, and the nurse has not held an active nursing license in any U.S. jurisdiction, the nurse must complete a WABON approved [Refresher Course](#). The individual will be issued a limited educational license to enroll in the course. The license is valid only while working under the direct supervision of a preceptor and is not valid for employment as a nurse.



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**Is a nurse with an active Washington State license or a nurse with a multi-state license (MSL) who does not practice in Washington, but practices in another state, required to meet the continuing education and practice hour requirements?**

Yes. A nurse with a Washington State license or a MSL must meet the continuing education and practice hour requirements regardless of which state they practice or reside in.

**Do continuing education or practice hours completed in another state or country meet the requirement?**

Yes. The education or practice hours can be completed in another state or country if they meet the required education and practice hours and are related to nursing practice.

**How does the nurse choose what continuing education to take?**

Continuing education should relate to the nurse's area of professional practice, specialty areas, or areas identified through reflection and self-assessment for professional growth.

**Is a nurse who gets a license through the endorsement process and in between their birthdate, required to get the full nursing practice and continuing education hours by their first renewal date?**

No. The Washington State nursing renewal cycle is based on the nurse's birthdate. A nurse endorsing into Washington state will have a full renewal cycle to complete continuing education and practice hour requirements.

**Is a new graduate who gets a license required to get the full nursing practice and continuing education hours by their first renewal date?**

It depends. The Washington State nursing renewal cycle for licensure is on the nurse's birthdate. A new graduate nurse who gets the initial license within ninety (90) days of license issuance, would not need to meet the continuing practice hour and continuing education hour requirement until the full renewal cycle.

**Can continuing education or practice hours be carried over if more continuing education or practice hours are completed during the renewal period?**

No. nurses cannot carry over any hours to the next renewal period.

**Does the nurse need to send in documentation to the Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) of practice hours or continuing education hours to renew a nursing license?**

No. The nurse does not need to send in documentation to renew a nursing license.



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### **How long should continuing education hour and practice hour documentation be retained?**

The Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) recommends keeping these documents for at least two years.

### **Are there circumstances in which the Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) asks the nurse to send in documentation of practice or continuing education hours?**

The WABON may ask for documentation of nursing practice and continuing education hours during a disciplinary investigation.

### **What types of documentation demonstrate compliance with continuing education requirements?**

The following documentation demonstrates compliance with continuing education hour requirements:

- Certificate of satisfactory course completion.
- Certificate from a nationally recognized certifying body.
- Meeting minutes or meeting attendance rosters documenting participation in professional nursing organizations or employer-sponsored educational events.
- Certificates of completion of attending conferences.
- Final transcript or transcript of classes documenting current progress towards an advanced degree in a field related to nursing practice.
- Documentation of completion of a nursing research project as the principal investigator, co-investigator, or project director, such as a summary of findings, thesis, dissertation, abstract, or granting agency summary.
- Publication or submission for publication to a health care-related article, book chapter, or other scholarly work.
- Presentation on a health care or health care system related topic with documentation such as a program brochure, agenda, course syllabi, or a letter from the offering provider identifying the nurse's participation.
- Documentation of an independent study.
- Advanced education toward an advanced degree at an accredited college or university.





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### **What types of documentation demonstrate compliance with practice hour requirements?**

The Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) recommends maintaining an electronic or paper log of practice hours. Examples of documentation include:

- Payroll slips accompanied by a copy of your position description.
- Employer verification statement.
- Transcripts/documentation of school attendance.
- Detailed log of practice hours with a signature from a supervisor, medical provider, patient family member, or other appropriate person with awareness of the care provided.
- Presentation materials created and documentation information related to the training or presentation provided.

### **Is there a grace period for a late renewal?**

No. There is no grace period for those reactivating their license from expired or inactive license status. A renewal fee is due on an individual's first birthday after reactivation. Keep in mind, once the license is reactivated into "active" status, an individual must renew on their birthday even if it is a week later.

### **Laws and Rules**

[RCW 18.79.110 Duties and Powers](#)

[WAC 246-840-200 Purpose Statement](#)

[WAC 246-840-21 Definitions](#)

[WAC 246-840-220 Continuing Competency Requirements – Active Status](#)

[WAC 246-840-222 Continuing Competency Requirements – Health Equity Training](#)

[WAC 246-840-230 Continuing Competency Audit Process and Compliance](#)

[WAC 246-840-250 Continuing Competency Requirements – Reactivation from Expired Status](#)

[WAC 246-840-260 Continuing Competency Requirements – Reaction from Inactive Status](#)

[WAC 246-840-361 Continuing Education Hours for ARNP License Renewal](#)