

Let's See Your Credentials

Unit. Career Exploration

Problem Area. Health Science Career Pathways

Lesson. Let's See Your Credentials

- **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Define and explain the importance of “credentialing” as it relates to health care.**
- 2 Distinguish between certification, registration, and licensure; describe the implications of each in representing the qualifications of the health care worker and in protecting the patient/client.**
- 3 Discuss continuing education and its role in maintaining skill and competency of health care workers and in ensuring that clients/patients receive competent care.**

- **List of Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

Badasch, S., and Chesebro, D. (2004). *Introduction to Health Occupations*, 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Booth, K. (2004). *Health Care Science Technology: Career Foundations*. New York: McGraw-Hill–Glencoe.

Gerdin, J. (2003). *Health Careers Today*, 3rd ed. St. Louis: Mosby.

Simmers, Louise. (2004). *Diversified Health Occupations*, 6th ed. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Learning.



Simmers, Louise. (2004). *Health Science Career Exploration*. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Learning.

■ **List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities**

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

■ **Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ accredited
- ▶ certification
- ▶ Continuing education units (CEUs)
- ▶ competence
- ▶ credentialing
- ▶ licensure
- ▶ national
- ▶ reciprocity
- ▶ registration
- ▶ registry

■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situation. A possible approach is included here.

The health care industry places a strong emphasis on the process of credentialing. Credentialing is a very formal way of identifying and recognizing individuals who have reached a certain level of competence (aptitude, proficiency, skill) in a particular subject or area. Credentialing helps identify to the public and to professional peers those health care workers who have met certain standards. It helps to ensure that health care workers are accountable for their work. Credentialing helps protect patients and consumers by ensuring that health care workers have attained a certain level of education and have demonstrated the skills required to perform their job. Students intending to pursue a career in health care should understand different methods of credentialing, such as certification, registration, and licensing. They should understand the implications that these have for reflecting the qualifications of health care workers and for ensuring that patients/clients are receiving quality care from competent individuals.

Ask students if they know the difference between certification, registration, and licensing. Ask students to try to define or distinguish between these three types of credentialing. Ask students to give examples of health care careers that might be licensed, certified, or registered. Inform students that it is important for them to understand these concepts as they begin their career preparation.

SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Define and explain the importance of “credentialing” as it relates to health care.

Anticipated Problem: What is “credentialing” and why is it important in health care?

I. Credentialing

- A. **Credentialing** is a very formal way of identifying and recognizing individuals who have reached a certain level of **competence** (aptitude, proficiency, skill) in a particular subject or area.
- B. Credentialing helps identify to the public and to professional peers those health care workers who have met certain standards.
- C. Credentialing helps to ensure that health care workers are accountable for their work.
- D. Credentialing helps protect patients and consumers by ensuring that health care workers have attained a certain level of education and have demonstrated the skills required to perform their job.
- E. The three main methods of credentialing are certification, registration, and licensure.

Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. As an example, students could read Unit 1, Chapter 11 in *Health Care Science Technology*, Chapter 1 in *Health Careers Today*, Chapter 3 in *Introduction to Health Occupations*, Unit 2 in *Diversified Health Occupations*, and/or Chapter 1 in *Health Science Career Exploration*. Use LS-A to supplement a lecture or PowerPoint presentation.

Objective 2: Distinguish between certification, registration, and licensure; describe the implications of each in representing the qualifications of the health care worker and in protecting the patient/client.

Anticipated Problem: What is the difference between certification, registration, and licensure? What implications do these have for the health care worker and the patient/client?

II. Certification, registration, and licensure

A. Certification

1. **Certification** is a complicated credential and is generally given for recognition. It recognizes and certifies that a person has fulfilled certain requirements for education and the performance of specific skills.
2. Certification usually involves an assessment (test) of some sort and an evaluation of education and/or work experience.
3. Certification is usually a voluntary process sponsored by a non-governmental agency, association, or organization. The organization or agency is often **national** in scope (operating throughout the United States, as opposed to being in just one state).
4. Being “certified” means that an individual has met the standards and qualifications established by the professional organization(s) that regulate, oversee, or monitor that particular career. If an individual meets the standards, a certificate or statement is issued by the organization.
5. Because it is usually voluntary in nature, an individual does not necessarily need to be certified to practice a profession.
6. Although certification is most often a voluntary process offered by a non-governmental agency, there are some exceptions. Occasionally state agencies will issue certificates to individuals who have completed education and training at an approved training center. Technical schools, colleges, and universities can also offer certificate programs.
7. The certificate program should be **accredited** by a reputable expert organization in order for the certificate to be meaningful. (In other words, the school has had its certificate program approved by experts in the industry.) The school offers the training. When the student completes the program, he or she is eligible to take the certification exam. This certification exam is offered by an independent organization recognized as an expert in the field.
8. Example: A student enrolls in a Nuclear Medicine Technology certificate program at a community college. The Nuclear Medicine Technology certificate program is accredited by the Joint Review Committee on Educational Programs in Nuclear Medicine in association with the Society of Nuclear Medicine, the American Medical Association, the American College of Radiology, and the American Society of Radiologic Technologists. Program graduates are allowed to sit for two national certification exams: the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT) and the Nuclear Medicine Technologist Certification

Board (NMTCB). After successful completion of these exams, the individual will be a Certified Nuclear Medicine Technologist (CNMT).

9. Examples of other certified positions include certified dental assistant, certified laboratory technician, certified medical assistant, and certified nursing assistant.

B. Registration

1. **Registration** is a formal way of gathering and maintaining a “registry.”
2. A **registry** is an official record (or list) of all the individuals who have met the qualifications for an occupation.
3. A registry is maintained by the regulating agencies that administer the tests for people entering this occupation.
4. Registration is required in some health occupations but not in all.
5. Examples of registered positions include registered nurses, registered respiratory therapists, registered animal technicians, and registered dietitians.

C. Licensure

1. Of the three types of credentialing, **licensure** is the most restrictive and refers to the process of a governmental agency (usually the state) authorizing an individual to work in a given occupation.
2. The state issues licenses to protect the practice and the title. Only licensed individuals (who have met the educational requirements) are permitted to practice, and only those who are licensed are permitted to use the title. As a result, if a profession is licensed, it is illegal for an individual to practice the profession without a license. In addition, it is illegal to use the title if you do not have a license.
3. Example: The profession of registered nurses is a licensed profession. The State of Illinois Department of Professional Regulation issues licenses to practice to qualified registered nurses. A registered nurse who did not obtain a license cannot practice and cannot use the title “RN.”
4. The Health Science Technology occupations that require a license vary from state to state; the requirements and procedures for obtaining a license may also vary. However, an individual usually must complete an approved educational program, pass a state board exam, and maintain certain standards. Some states require that an individual show proof of continuing education to renew his or her license. But again, requirements vary from state to state and according to the various occupations.
5. Because licensing requirements vary from state to state, it may not be easy for a health care worker licensed in one state to obtain a license to work in another state. If a licensed individual wants to work in another state, he or she must check with the state authorities (Department of Professional Regulation) to see if there is a reciprocity agreement between the states.
6. A **reciprocity** agreement refers to an agreement between two states to recognize and honor the licenses from each other’s state.
7. There are many licensed professions. A few examples include physicians, nurses, dentists, physical therapists, and emergency medical technicians.

Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. As an example, students could read Unit 1, Chapter 11 in *Health Care Science Technology*, Chapter 1 in *Health Careers Today*, Chapter 3 in *Introduction to Health Occupations*, Unit 2 in *Diversified Health Occupations*, and/or Chapter 1 in *Health Science Career Exploration*. Use LS-A to supplement a lecture or PowerPoint presentation.

Objective 3: Discuss continuing education and its role in maintaining skill and competency of health care workers and in ensuring that clients/patients receive competent care.

Anticipated Problem: What is continuing education, and what is its role?

III. Continuing education

- A. As mentioned above, some states require that certain health science technology professionals show proof of continuing education to maintain or renew their license to practice. For example, many states require registered nurses to obtain 24–48 hours of **continuing education units (CEUs)** every one to two years in order to renew their license.
- B. The occupations required to do this vary from state to state, as do the number of CEUs.
- C. Some certifying organizations also require continuing education in order for an individual to maintain certification (or recertify).
- D. The rationale behind continuing education requirements is to promote professional accountability. It also protects the patient and consumer by helping ensure that health practitioners possess knowledge of current medical practices and treatments. In addition, it encourages continued growth and development in the field.
- E. Many forms of continuing education exist. For example, health care workers can enroll in a college class, attend a short workshop, participate in an in-service, or attend a seminar or a symposium.
- F. Many health care workers attend continuing education programs on their own and at their own expense, but many employers offer free programs at the job site.
- G. The amount of credit given for each continuing education program usually depends on its length. Each hour of education is worth a certain amount of CEUs, depending on the organization authorizing the credit.
- H. Health care workers should be aware of their state’s requirements for continuing education for their respective careers. They should also be aware of the requirements of any organization from which they seek certification.

Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. As an example, students could read Unit 1, Chapter 11 in *Health Care Science Technology*, Chapter 1 in *Health Careers Today*, Chapter 3 in *Introduction to*

Health Occupations, Unit 2 in Diversified Health Occupations, and/or Chapter 1 in Health Science Career Exploration. Use LS–A to supplement a lecture or PowerPoint presentation.

- **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. Questions at the ends of chapters in the textbook may also be used in the review/summary.

- **Application.** Application can involve one or more of the following student activities:
 - ◆ Ask students to research careers in health care that are registered and licensed or to research careers in health care in which certification is available or recommended.
 - ◆ Generate a class discussion on how registration, certification, licensure, and continuing education benefits the health care worker, the health care delivery system, and the patient/client population. Discuss the role of local authorities, state governments, and health care organizations and associations in maintaining the competency of health care workers.

- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

■ **Answers to Sample Test:**

Part One: True or False

1. F
2. T
3. T
4. T
5. F
6. F
7. T
8. F
9. T
10. F
11. F
12. T
13. T
14. F
15. T

Part Two: Multiple Choice

1. c
2. a
3. d
4. c
5. c

Part Three: Matching

1. b
2. c
3. a
4. b
5. d

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► Part One: True or False

Instructions: Write T for true or F for false.

- ___ 1. All health care workers must be certified in order to practice their occupation.
- ___ 2. It is important for students to obtain information for their particular state (or the state they plan to work in) when checking requirements for health occupations.
- ___ 3. For most health careers, completing an accredited program is required before certification, registration, and/or licensure will be granted.
- ___ 4. Credentialing is a formal way of identifying and recognizing individuals who have reached a certain level of skill in their field.
- ___ 5. A measure of someone's competence has to do with how many years he or she attended school.
- ___ 6. The process of credentialing health care workers does not affect the patient, the consumer, or the public in any way.
- ___ 7. Certification, registration, and continuing education are the three main forms of credentialing.
- ___ 8. Certification is usually a mandatory ("you must do it") form of credentialing.
- ___ 9. It is important that certificate and degree programs be accredited by a reputable organization that is considered an expert in the field.
- ___ 10. Registration and licensure requirements are the same for every state.
- ___ 11. Certification is the most restrictive type of credentialing.
- ___ 12. Continuing education requirements vary from state to state.
- ___ 13. Continuing education promotes professional accountability and responsibility.



- ___ 14. A health care worker who is licensed in one state can automatically work in any other state.
- ___ 15. Licensing is usually controlled by a governmental organization.

► **Part Two: Multiple Choice**

Instructions: Write the letter of the correct answer.

- ___ 1. A process by which a government agency authorizes individuals to work in a given occupation after the person has completed an approved education program and passed a state board exam is _____.
a. registration
b. certification
c. licensure
d. authorization
- ___ 2. Sometimes, in order to renew a license or maintain a certification, a health care worker must obtain additional hours of education called _____.
a. CEUs
b. BTUs
c. SIUs
d. CEOs
- ___ 3. When the state government issues a _____ for a particular profession, only those with the _____ are permitted to practice and to use the title.
a. certificate
b. registration
c. CEU
d. license
- ___ 4. If a licensed individual wants to work in another state, what type of agreement must exist between the states?
a. reversible agreement
b. contractual agreement
c. reciprocity agreement
d. registration agreement
- ___ 5. Registration, certification, and licensure are methods of _____.
a. continuing education
b. reciprocity
c. credentialing

► **Part Three: Matching**

Instructions: Write the letter of the best answer for each definition.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| a. registration | c. certification |
| b. licensure | d. all of the above |

- ___ 1. The most restrictive form of credentialing
- ___ 2. Usually a voluntary process
- ___ 3. Method of maintaining an official record of individuals who have met certain qualifications
- ___ 4. Protects the practice and the title
- ___ 5. Method of credentialing

Let's See Your Credentials

Overview

Students in Health Science Technology will discuss the effectiveness of various institutions (state government, certifying organizations consisting of experts in a particular health care field, colleges and other educational institutions) in meeting certain needs of the health care industry, individual health care workers, and society in general through credentialing procedures such as certification, registration, and licensure. Students will accomplish this by typing an essay (using a handout of specific questions as a writing guide) or by typing their answers to specific questions from a handout. Students' answers/essays will be evaluated accordingly:

- ◆ *Knowledge:* Identify needs of health care workers, the health care industry, and society in general that may have led to credentialing procedures such as registration, certification, and licensure of health care occupations; identify the parts that state government, professional certifying organizations or agencies, and colleges and other educational institutions play in these credentialing procedures.
- ◆ *Reasoning:* Analyze the impact and degree of effectiveness the state government, professional certifying organizations/agencies, and colleges and other educational institutions have on meeting the identified needs of health care workers, the health care industry, and society in general; analyze the impact and effectiveness of credentialing procedures such as registration, certification, and licensure.
- ◆ *Communication:* Prepare a type-written essay or type-written answers to specific handout questions so that essay/answers are focused, well organized, and clearly explained; express all ideas in a way that provides evidence of knowledge and reasoning skills.

Procedures

1. In order to understand the roles and interactions of individuals and groups in society, students should experience sufficient learning opportunities to develop the following skill:
 - ◆ Analyze the effectiveness of different types of institutions (educational, governmental, charitable) in meeting similar social needs.

Students considering pursuing a career in the health care industry should be aware of the credentialing procedures that are common, and often required, for various health care occupations. Students in Health Science Technology education should be able to distinguish the difference between registration, certification, and licensure. In addition, students should understand the roles that the state government, professional certifying agencies and organizations, and educational institutions play in these credentialing procedures. HST students should also understand how these credentialing procedures meet certain needs of the health care industry, the individual health care worker, and

society in general. This assessment aligns with the National Knowledge and Skills “Systems” and “Teamwork” Standards.

2. Prior to completing this assessment, students should have had the opportunity to learn about (and distinguish between) credentialing procedures such as registration, certification, and licensure as they relate to health care workers. Students should also have had the opportunity to learn about and discuss the purpose for such credentialing procedures and how they serve the needs of the health care industry, the individual health care worker, and society in general. These objectives can be accomplished by listening to an instructor’s lecture on the topic, participating in a class discussion, and by viewing the Let’s See Your Credentials PowerPoint presentation that accompanies that lesson.
3. Health Science Technology students will review and discuss the assessment task and how the rubric will be used to grade their work.
4. In this assessment, HST students will discuss the effectiveness of various institutions (state government, certifying organizations consisting of experts in a particular health care field, colleges and educational institutions) in meeting certain needs of the health care industry, individual health care workers, and society in general through credentialing procedures such as certification, registration, and licensure.
5. Each student will address the topic noted above in one of two ways: either by writing an essay (using the “Let’s See Your Credentials” handout questions as a guide) or by typing answers to the questions on the handout.
6. Students should be encouraged to write in complete sentences and to add graphic organizers (Venn Diagram) that might help them emphasize their points as they answer the questions.
7. Each student’s performance will be evaluated using the rubric. Add each student’s scores to determine the performance level.

Time Requirements

One to two class periods (50 minutes each)

Resources

- ◆ Student Instructions sheet
- ◆ Let’s See Your Credentials handout
- ◆ Let’s See Your Credentials rubric
- ◆ Paper and writing utensils
- ◆ Computers with word processing program

Let's See Your Credentials

In this exercise, you will discuss the effectiveness of various institutions (state government; professional certifying organizations consisting of experts in a particular health care field; colleges and other educational institutions) in meeting the needs of the health care industry, individual health care workers, and society in general through credentialing procedures such as certification, registration, and licensure. You will accomplish this task in one of two ways:

1. Compose and type an essay of your own that addresses the topic above. (Be sure that your essay is focused and well organized and that you use the questions on the “Let’s See Your Credentials” handout as a guide for writing your essay.)
2. Copy the questions from the following handout. Then type your answers to each of these questions, making sure your answers are focused, thorough, and clear.

Your essay/answers should be in complete sentences, using proper spelling, punctuation, and grammar. (Use Spell Check / Grammar Check.) **You may choose to add graphic organizers, such as a Venn Diagram, to help you emphasize your points.**

1. Discuss the effectiveness of various institutions (state government; professional certifying organizations consisting of experts in a particular health care field; colleges and other educational institutions) in meeting the needs of the health care industry, individual health care workers, and society in general through credentialing procedures such as certification, registration, and licensure.
2. Choose one way to accomplish this task:
 - a. Compose and type an essay that addresses this topic, using the handout questions as a guide.
 - b. Copy the questions from the handout and then type your answers to each question.
3. If you choose to write an essay, be sure that it is clear and well organized.
4. If you choose to type your answers to the questions on the handout, be sure your answers are thorough and clear.
5. Essay/answers should be in complete sentences and should follow conventions of proper English (grammar, spelling, punctuation). Use Spell-Check / Grammar Check.
6. You may choose to add graphic organizers (Venn Diagram) if they help emphasize your points.

Let's See Your Credentials

Things to Think About and Questions to Answer

(Answer all questions in Part I and Part II.)

Part I.

Think about why the processes of registration, certification, and licensure were created. Think about why they were necessary.

1. What were some of the needs of the health care industry that may have led to these credentialing procedures?
2. What were some of the needs of health care workers that may have led to these credentialing procedures?
3. What were some of the needs of society in general that may have led to these credentialing procedures?

Think about similarities and differences in the needs of these groups. Consider using a graphic organizer to illustrate your points as you answer the questions above.

Part II.

Consider the three credentialing procedures of registration, certification, and licensure. Think about the institutions or organizations that are involved in these procedures: state government, professional certifying organizations or agencies, and colleges and other educational institutions.

4. What part does the state government play in the credentialing of health care workers? Whose needs are they meeting, and are they effective in meeting those needs? How/why?
5. What credentialing procedures do professional, certifying organizations or agencies perform? Whose needs are they meeting, and are they effective in meeting those needs? How/why?
6. How important are colleges and other educational institutions? What part do they play in the credentialing process? Whose needs are they meeting, and are they effective in meeting those needs? How/why?



Let's See Your Credentials

- ◆ Exceeds standard (11–12 total points)
- ◆ Meets standard (8–10 total points)
- ◆ Approaches standard (5–7 total points)
- ◆ Begins standard (1–4 total points)

	Knowledge of evidence from social sciences: facts and supporting details; themes/issues; concepts/ideas.	Reasoning: Analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of evidence.	Communication: Demonstrates knowledge and reasoning through written or graphic communication.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key concepts/themes/issues/ ideas are thoroughly identified, defined, and described. • Significant facts and supporting details are included and accurately described. • Has little or no factual inaccuracies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and logically organizes almost all relevant evidence. • Uses appropriate and comprehensive critical thinking skills to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize evidence. • Reaches informed conclusions based on the evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all ideas are expressed in a way that provides evidence of student's knowledge and reasoning processes. • Essay/answers/graphics are clear, well focused, and thoroughly supported. • Reflects substantial organization. • Reflects good attention to detail.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key concepts/themes/issues/ ideas are identified, defined, and described. • Facts and supporting details are included. • May have a major factual inaccuracy, but most information is correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and organizes most of the relevant evidence. • Uses partial critical thinking skills to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize evidence. • Reaches informed conclusions based on the evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most ideas are expressed in a way that provides evidence of the student's knowledge and reasoning processes. • Essay/answers/graphics demonstrate a focus and thesis with several narrative gaps. • Reflects adequate organization. • Reflects some attention to detail.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some key concepts/themes/ideas are identified, defined, and described. • Some facts and supporting details are included. • Has some correct and some incorrect information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies some relevant evidence and omits most of the other evidence. • Uses unclear, inappropriate, or incomplete critical thinking skills to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize evidence. • Reaches incomplete or inaccurate conclusions based on the evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some ideas are expressed in a way that provides evidence of student's knowledge and reasoning processes. • Reflects inadequate focus and thesis. • Reflects weak or inadequate organization. • Insufficient attention to detail.

	Knowledge of evidence from social sciences: facts and supporting details; themes/issues; concepts/ideas.	Reasoning: Analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of evidence.	Communication: Demonstrates knowledge and reasoning through written or graphic communication.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few/no key concepts/themes/ ideas/issues are identified, defined, or described. Few or no facts or supporting details are included. Information is largely inaccurate, absent, or irrelevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important evidence relevant to the problem is not identified. Critical thinking skills are absent. Conclusions are lacking, absent, or unclear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost all ideas are unclear or poorly defined/described. Reflects little or no focus; lacks a thesis. Reflects poor or no organization. Reflects poor or no attention to detail; contains multiple errors.
Score			

This rubric was adapted from the Social Science Rubric from the Illinois State Board of Education Web site.

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The health care industry places a strong emphasis on the process of credentialing, which is a very formal way of identifying and recognizing individuals who have reached a certain level of competence (aptitude, proficiency, skill) in a particular subject or area. Credentialing helps identify to the public and to professional peers those health care workers who have met certain standards and helps ensure that health care workers are accountable for their work; it helps protect patients and consumers by ensuring that health care workers have attained a certain level of education and have demonstrated the skills required to perform their job. The three main methods of credentialing are certification, registration, and licensure.

Certification

Certification is a complicated credential. Generally speaking, it is given for recognition. It certifies that a person has fulfilled certain education requirements and has specific skills. It usually involves an assessment (test) of some sort and an evaluation of education and/or work experience. Certification is usually a voluntary process instituted by a non-governmental agency, association, or organization. The organization or agency is often national in scope (operating throughout the United States, as opposed to just one state.) Being “certified” means an individual has met the standards and qualifications established by the professional organization(s) that regulate, oversee, or monitor that particular career. If an individual meets the standards, a certificate or statement is issued by the organization. Because it is usually voluntary in nature, an individual does not necessarily need to be certified to practice a profession.

Although certification is typically a voluntary process offered by a non-governmental agency, there are some exceptions. Occasionally state agencies will issue certificates to individuals who have completed education and training at an approved training center.

Technical schools, colleges, and universities can also offer certificate programs, but the certificate program should be accredited by a reputable expert organization in order for the certificate to be meaningful. (In other words, the school has had their certificate program approved by experts in the industry.) The school offers the training, and when the student



completes the program, he or she is eligible to sit for the certification exam. This certification exam is offered by an independent organization recognized as an expert in the field.

The following is an example of how a certificate program at a local community college works: A student enrolls in the Nuclear Medicine Technology certificate program, which is accredited by the Joint Review Committee on Educational Programs in Nuclear Medicine in association with the Society of Nuclear Medicine, the American Medical Association, the American College of Radiology, and the American Society of Radiologic Technologists. Program graduates are allowed to sit for two national certification exams: the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT) and the Nuclear Medicine Technologist Certification Board (NMTCB). After successful completion of these exams, the individual will be a Certified Nuclear Medicine Technologist (CNMT). Examples of other certified positions include certified dental assistant, certified laboratory technician, certified medical assistant, and certified nursing assistant.

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Examples of registered positions include: registered nurses, registered respiratory therapists, registered animal technicians, and registered dietitians.

Licensure

Of the three types of credentialing, licensure is the most restrictive; it refers to the process of a governmental agency (usually the state) authorizing an individual to work in a given occupation. The state issues licenses in order to protect both the practice and the title. Only licensed individuals (who have met the educational requirements) are permitted to practice, AND only those who are licensed are permitted to use the title. In other words, if a profession is licensed, it is illegal for an individual to practice the profession without a license, AND it is illegal to use the title if you do not have a license. (For example, the profession of registered nurse is a licensed profession. The state of Illinois issues licenses to practice to qualified registered nurses. A registered nurse who did not obtain a license cannot practice and cannot use the title “RN.”)

The health occupations that require a license vary from state to state; the requirements and procedures for obtaining a license may also vary. However, usually an individual must complete an approved educational program, pass a state board exam, and maintain certain standards. Some states require that individuals show proof of continuing education to renew their license. But again, requirements vary from state to state and according to the occupation. Because the requirements vary, it may not be easy for a health care worker licensed in one state to obtain a license to work in another state. If a licensed individual wants to work in another state, he or she must check with the state authorities (e.g.,

Department of Professional Regulation) to see if there is a reciprocity agreement between the states.

There are many licensed professions. These are just a few examples: physicians, nurses, dentists, physical therapists, and emergency medical technicians.

Continuing Education

Maybe you have heard the expression “Learning is a lifelong skill.” It has never been more true than in the field of health care. Continuing education, staff education, and staff development are terms that you will become very familiar with when you enter a health occupation.

As mentioned above, some states require that certain health occupations show proof of continuing education to maintain or renew their license to practice. For example, many states require registered nurses to obtain 24–48 hours of continuing education units (CEUs) every one to two years to renew their license. The occupations that are required to do this vary from state to state, as do the number of required CEUs. Some certifying organizations also require continuing education for an individual to maintain certification (or recertify).

The rationale behind continuing education requirements is to promote professional accountability. It also protects the patient and consumer by helping ensure that health practitioners possess knowledge of current medical practices and treatments. In addition, it encourages continued growth and development in the field.

There are many forms of continuing education. Health care workers can enroll in a college class, attend a short workshop, participate in an in-service, or attend a seminar or a symposium. These are just a few examples. Although many health care workers attend continuing education programs on their own and at their own expense, many employers offer free programs at the job site.

The amount of credit given for each continuing education program usually depends on how long it lasts. Each additional hour of education is worth a certain amount of CEUs, depending on the organization authorizing the credit. Health care workers should be aware of their state’s requirements for continuing education for their respective careers. They should also be aware of the requirements of any organization from which they seek certification.