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Credentialing Adds Credentials to Nurses

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INTRODUCTION:

Liberty cannot be established without morality, nor morality without faith.

- Alexis de Tocqueville

Credentialing is the process of establishing the qualifications of licensed professionals, organizational members or organizations, and assessing their background and legitimacy including granting and reviewing specific clinical privileges, and medical or allied health staff membership.

A credential is an attestation of qualification, competence, or authority issued to an individual by a third party with a relevant *or de facto authority or assumed competence to do so*.

Many health care institutions and provider networks conduct their own credentialing, generally through a credentialing specialist or electronic service, with review by a medical staff or credentialing committee. It may The process is generally an objective evaluation of a subject's current licensure, training or experience, competence, and ability to provide particular services or perform particular procedures.

Background

Statutory, regulatory, and credentialing requirements are critical elements that affect advanced practice nurses in this dynamic healthcare climate. The challenge that faces the profession is to ensure public protection through balanced solutions, to prevent over regulation and burdensome requirements (CNS, 2003).

Advanced Practice Registered Nurse describes a licensed registered nurse prepared at the graduate degree level as a Clinical Nurse Specialist, Nurse Anesthetist, or Nurse Practitioner. APRNs have acquired advanced specialized clinical knowledge and skills to provide safe and effective healthcare.

Licensure is intended to protect the public from unsafe practitioners by determining and testing for a basic level of safety (CNS, 2003). Subsequently, after obtaining licensure a registered professional nurse has a legal and ethical commitment to perform competently within their scope of practice and ensure that all educational and practice requirements are met. It is a professional responsibility to engage in professional networking, peer review, utilization of standards of care and clinical practice guidelines, and the evaluation of outcomes of care.

Definition

Credentialing is the "process of obtaining, verifying and assessing the qualifications of a health care practitioner to provide patient care, treatment, and services in or for a health care organization" (TJC, 2004).

Examples of credentials

- academic diplomas,
- academic degrees,
- certifications,
- security clearances,
- identification documents,
- badges, passwords, user names, keys, powers of attorney,
- publications, such as scientific papers or books, may be viewed as similar to credentials by some people, especially if the publication was peer reviewed or made in a well-known journal or reputable publisher.

APRN should be an:

- Completed an accredited graduate-level education program
- Maintains continued advanced competence

- Acquired advanced clinical knowledge and skills
- Practice builds upon the RN competencies
- Educationally prepared to assume responsibility and accountability for health promotion and/or maintenance and assessment, diagnosis, management of patient problems, including pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic interventions
- Has sufficient clinical experience

Types and documentation of credentials

1. Diplomacy

In diplomacy, credentials, also known as a letter of credence, are documents that ambassadors, diplomatic ministers, plenipotentiary, and *chargés d'affaires* provide to the government to which they are accredited, for the purpose, chiefly, of communicating to the latter the envoy's diplomatic rank. It also contains a request that full credence be accorded to his official statements. Until his credentials have been presented and found in proper order, an envoy receives no official recognition. The credentials of an ambassador or minister plenipotentiary are signed by the head of state. Diplomatic credentials are granted and withdrawn at the pleasure of the issuing authority, based on widely varying criteria. A receiving government may reject a diplomat's credentials by declining to receive them, but in practice this rarely happens.

2. Medical credentials

In medicine, the process of credentialing is a detailed review of all permissions granted a medical doctor or nurse practitioner at every institution at which he or she has worked in the past, to determine a risk profile for them at a new institution. It vets the practitioner for both receiving practice insurance and the ability to bill to insurance for patient care. As well, it certifies legal and administrative body requirements, such as the Joint Commission. Medical practitioners must also have credentials in the form of licenses issued by the government of the jurisdictions in which they practice, which they obtain after suitable education, training, and/or practical experience. Most medical credentials are granted for a practice specific group. They may also be withdrawn in the event of fraud or malpractice by their holders. Typically they require continuing education validation and renewal to continue practice.

3. Information technology

Credentials in information systems are widely used to control access to information or other resources. The classic combination of a user account number or name and a secret password is a widely-used example of IT credentials. An increasing number of information systems use other forms of documentation of credentials, such as fingerprints, voice recognition, retinal scans, Public key certificate, and so on.

4. Operator licensing

Operators of vehicles such as automobiles, boats, and aircraft must have credentials in the form of government-issued licenses in many jurisdictions. Often the

documentation of the license consists of a simple card or certificate that the operator keeps on his person while operating the vehicle, backed up by an archival record of the license at some central location. Licenses are granted to operators after a period of successful training and/or examination.

5. Cryptography

Credentials in cryptography establish the identity of a party to communication. Usually they take the form of machine-readable cryptographic keys and/or passwords. Cryptographic credentials may be self-issued, or issued by a trusted third party; in many cases the only criterion for issuance is unambiguous association of the credential with a specific, real individual or other entity. Cryptographic credentials are often designed to expire after a certain period, although this is not mandatory. An x.509 certificate is an example of a cryptographic credential.

6. Identification

Credentials that simply establish a person's identity are very widely used. Documentation usually consists of an identity card (sometimes a credential that is also used for other purposes, such as an automobile driver's license), a badge (often machine-readable), etc., issued by a trusted third party after some form of identity verification. Many identification documents use photographs to help ensure their association with their legitimate holders. Some also incorporate biometric information, passwords, PINs, and so on to further reduce the opportunities for fraud. Identification credentials are among the most widely counterfeited credential.

7. Security clearances

In military and government organizations, and some private organizations, a system of compartmenting information exists to prevent the uncontrolled dissemination of information considered to be sensitive or confidential. Persons with a legitimate need to have access to such information are issued *security clearances*, which can be tracked and verified to ensure that no unauthorized persons gain access to protected information.

8. Trade credentials

Some trades and professions in some jurisdictions require special credentials of anyone practicing the trade or profession. These credentials may or may not be associated with specific competencies or skills. In some cases, they exist mainly to control the number of people who are allowed to exercise a trade or profession, in order to control salaries and wages.

9. Academic credentials

The academic world makes very extensive use of credentials, such as diplomas, certificates, and degrees, in order to attest to the completion of specific training or education programs by students, and to attest to their successful completion of tests and exams. Documentation of academic credentials usually consists of a printed, formal

document designed to last a lifetime without deterioration. The issuing institution often maintains a record of the credential as well. Academic credentials are normally valid for the lifetime of the person to whom they are issued. Receiving these credentials often leads to increased economic mobility and work opportunity, especially for low-income people.

10. Paperless credentialing

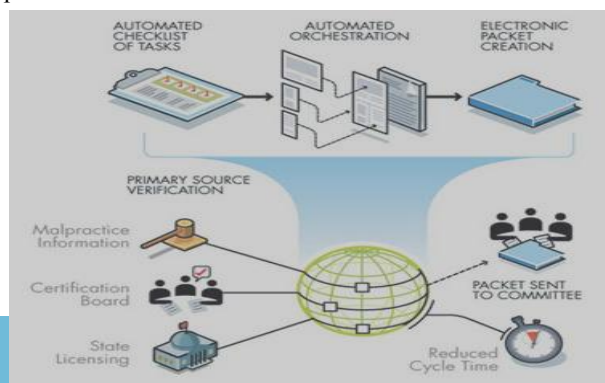
Paperless credentialing is the process of doing credentialing through a software package. With the internet, many web-based programs have been created to help automate the process of paperless credentialing.

Position of Nurses on this issue

- The nursing profession must be integrally involved in the coordination and control of any licensure/credentialing/re-credentialing system for professional registered nurses (RNs).
- RN licensure is required to practice as an APRN.
- A master's degree appropriate in the specialty is required for entry into advanced practice.
- It is the legal and ethical responsibility of the APRN to practice competently within the scope of nursing practice.
- The credentialing process for advanced nursing practice should be under the auspices of the State Education Department and the State Board for Nursing.
- The APRN credentialing/re-credentialing process must be cohesive, unified and include: formal education, specialty clinical certification, continuing education, clinical practice experience, and a means of validating clinical competence.
- A coordinated credentialing/re-credentialing system is the preferred methodology for the validation of continued clinical competence of the APRN

Process of credentialing

The Credentialing solution enables health plans to reduce their credentialing costs and network liability. It automates the provider credentialing lifecycle, including: intake, primary source verification and committee review management. Additionally, it manages the re-credentialing process



Challenges in credentialing:

- Ensuring minimal network liability through accuracy of credentialing
- Continuous external change in provider credentialing data, including sanctions
- Periodic change in primary source content and access
- Multiple manual and error prone look-ups of primary verification sources
- High cost paper-based tracking of credentialing
- Difficulty in electronic exchange of data with downstream systems
- Cost effective support for delegated credentialing

Key Benefits:

- Administrative cost reduction across credentialing operations
- Increased staff performance through automated credentialing workflows
- Enhanced cycle time management and trending through increased process visibility
- Reduced redundant data entry and improved data accuracy through trading partner integration
- Enabling increased service excellence through reduction of administrative burden on providers
- Increased ability to electronically share credentialing information across the enterprise

Significance of credentialing

Credentialing is important because it ensures that all licensed employees share a common understanding of the best practices for their industry.

Quality Assurance

Credentialing helps ensure that professionals have the education, knowledge, and competence needed to perform their work.

Objective Qualifications

Credentialing gives employers objective criteria with which to evaluate prospective employees' qualifications.

Continuing Education

Credentialing usually requires workers to take regular continuing education courses to keep them up to date on trends and developments in their industry.

Professional Networking

Licensing and credentialing systems give workers a professional network through which they can exchange ideas and leads.

Features

- Customized Credentialing Services (CCS) and Kroll Background Screening Group, Inc., (KBSG) are companies that are hired in the credentialing process; to look into an individual and their background and make sure that they meet all of the standards and criteria. In addition to the above, they may also check a candidate's standing in the

National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB), their American Medical Association (AMA) profile and, if they are graduates of a foreign medical school, an ECFMG Status will be examined (Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates).

TIME FRAME:

Healthcare Credentialing is generally conducted

- Prior to employment,
- During their preliminary application and interview.

Their credentialing is monitored and checked from then on in set intervals.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APRN:

- APRNs effectively participate in the development, review, and approval of future changes to the credentialing/re-credentialing criteria and process.
- APRNs clinical competency be addressed through methods such as mandatory continuing education defined by the state and/or certifying body, national nursing and/or specialty certification; peer review; clinical practice requirements; and independent record review.
- The credentialing and competence assessment process is unified, cohesive, and cost effective.
- Second licensure for APRN practice will not be required.

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