



Professional Designation for CRNAs in Pennsylvania

Act 60 (Senate Bill 416) of 2021

BACKGROUND:

For years, Pennsylvania had been one of just two states that failed to recognize “certified registered nurse anesthetist” in some form. With no definition for nurse anesthetists under the state’s Professional Nursing Law, CRNAs in Pennsylvania were recognized only as registered nurses (RNs). On June 30, 2021, Gov. Tom Wolf signed into law Senate Bill 416, now **Act 60 of 2021**, which grants formal title recognition to the state’s CRNAs.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

State law supersedes state regulation. That means passage by lawmakers and enactment by Gov. Tom Wolf officially grants formal title recognition for CRNAs in Pennsylvania. **The law is now in effect.**

As part of the new designation, CRNAs will be **required to pay a state licensing fee**, which has not been determined. That process is ongoing and could take several months. It is important to note, however, that **Act 60 will not result in more education requirements.** Those requirements are set by the National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA), and they will not change because of this new law.

Besides formal title recognition, Act 60 also expands the providers that CRNAs are permitted to work with to include **podiatrists.**

Act 60 also reinforces and clarifies language as already defined by the Nurse Practice Act, State Board of Nursing, and Ambulatory Surgical Facility regulations as it pertains to physician involvement by stating that **CRNAs work cooperatively under the overall direction of a physician**, thus formalizing the status quo.

Before this law, many CRNAs specifically were adversely affected. That all changes with the new law and pending updates to the regulations.

Pennsylvania CRNAs who serve in the military previously had to secure designation in another state to serve as an armed forces anesthesia provider because our commonwealth did not officially recognize CRNAs. The state’s new designation law now will allow **Pennsylvania-based military CRNAs to fulfill their role** without having to pay more to travel out of state to obtain CEUs or to meet other legal and financial requirements to stay licensed and credentialed.

CRNAs long have been on the frontline of care. Yet, before Act 60, Pennsylvania-based CRNAs could not be part of response teams simply because they lacked formal credentials. **Act 60 enhances Pennsylvania’s crisis response capabilities.**

Even at home, Pennsylvania CRNAs could not respond fully to the state’s COVID-19 emergency preparedness plan. Health-care systems sought out the **unique skillset of CRNAs during the health crisis**, but many felt restricted by the way the state licenses CRNAs and would not allow nurse anesthetists to provide advanced, critical care services, even though it is within their clinical experience and scope of practice. **The new law allows CRNAs to be used to the fullest extent of their education and training in a hospital setting.**

Students who study at one of Pennsylvania’s 13 nurse anesthetist programs will **no longer have to wait as long as six months to get credentialed** in out-of-state facilities. Because Pennsylvania did not formally license CRNAs, other state boards had to verify that the students met the requirements necessary to be classified appropriately there. Of course, with formal designation in Pennsylvania, **Act 60 will help to retain these advanced care professionals.**

Professional designation for CRNAs in Pennsylvania will help us achieve our shared mission of keeping patients safe, ensuring access to quality care, and reigning in rising health-care costs.