



# Position Statement

## **Title Protection for the Clinical Nurse Specialist**

### **Background**

There is an opportunity to provide clarity regarding appropriate use of the title Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) and related job descriptions. Employers are utilizing the title CNS to describe positions or staff that do not meet the education, certification, or licensure requirements to use the CNS title.

Role ambiguity of the CNS leads to burnout, increased job stress, and risk of a nurse practicing outside of their scope.<sup>1-5</sup>

CNSs have a direct impact on patient outcomes through promotion of evidence-based practice (EBP).<sup>6,7</sup>

This position statement supports only using the title Clinical Nurse Specialist as an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) who meets the education and practice requirements for certification and licensure. Eligibility to be called a CNS requires an active unrestricted RN license and graduate or master's degree from an accredited Clinical Nurse Specialist program. This includes completion of at least 500 clinical hours and coursework in advanced assessment, advanced pharmacology, and advanced physiology/pathophysiology.<sup>8</sup>

### **NACNS's Position**

The title of Clinical Nurse Specialist can only be bestowed by state nursing authorities on those who meet the education and practice requirements for certification and licensure.

### **Supporting Information**

Title protection recognizes the CNS's unique role by ensuring healthcare systems have consistent standards for licensure and titling which qualify the licensed and titled CNS to be utilized to their fullest scope of practice.<sup>9</sup>

Title protection facilitates clear and consistent expectations for the APRN role of a CNS within a healthcare system. Clear and consistent expectations contribute to increased patient safety, improved patient outcomes, protocol development, EBP usage, educational mentorship, fiscal responsibilities through cost savings and cost avoidance.<sup>10</sup>

Title protection and full practice authority allow the CNS to be consistently identified as a licensed independent provider and an APRN as intended by the Future of Nursing 2030 report and the APRN Consensus Model.<sup>8,11</sup> CNSs provide for continuous outcome improvement, reduced costs, and high-quality equitable care to patients.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

Through title protection, patients can have confidence that the healthcare organizations and providers treating them possess the appropriate qualifications, training, and expertise necessary to make informed healthcare decisions. Title protection promotes transparency, trust, and accountability between healthcare systems and the communities they serve. This results in enhancing overall quality of care and patient safety.<sup>10</sup>

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