



## **A NATIONAL CONVENING**

THE VALUE OF CERTIFICATION

*Building the Business Case for Certification*

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*Las Vegas, March 3 – 5, 2016*

*Executive Summary*

## INTRODUCTION

The American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) hosted a gathering of health care leaders and industry specialists, March 3-5, 2016, in Las Vegas, Nevada, to discuss the value of certification in health care practice. The Convening, which brought together more than 100 health care professionals, was an interprofessional event that engaged nurses, physicians, radiology technologists, pharmacists, dieticians, occupational therapists, national credentialing organizations, deans of schools of nursing, hospital representatives, psychometricians, strategic suppliers to the certification sector, and more. The participants were participatory and action oriented, resulting in a prioritized agenda for credentialing research.

## PRESENTATIONS

Subject matter experts led the first day with presentations designed to provide perspective and context for the work. Dr. Jack Needleman provided an informed and in-depth review of the past and ongoing research in health care certifications. Drs. Shannon Carter and James Stobinski described a possible roadmap forward, encouraging the group to focus not on limitations, but on possibilities. Dr. Lynne Grief concluded the presentations with more specific suggestions on particular research topics and approaches.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Facilitators from Stratford Managers then described the framework that would guide the subsequent discussions and activities. Prior to the Convening, the Planning Committee reviewed the relevant literature on the value and benefits of certification. The Committee chose to adopt the Expanded Model for Credentialing Research (IOM, 2015) as its conceptual framework for the meeting. The Model describes the following benefits of certification:

1. Advances safety
2. Clarifies and defines the roles and work of health care providers and other team members
3. Improves organizational culture
4. Improves job satisfaction, empowerment and confidence
5. Improves processes of care
6. Improves quality of care
7. Improves recruitment and retention, employability, and job prospects

8. Is recognized as validation of knowledge in the specialty
9. Provides a measurable return on investment
10. Provides professional support
11. Shapes future practice

## PRIORITY BENEFITS & ACTION PLANNING

Through an action-oriented, iterative process that included analysis of pre-meeting survey results, small-group work, and facilitator-led, interactive activities, the participants synthesized and prioritized the benefits of certification based on three criteria:

1. The extent to which research in this area was feasible, doable and achievable.
2. The importance and impact of research in this benefit area.
3. The required investment of time, money and effort that would be required to conduct research in this benefit area.

Based on these factors and the results of a rank-ordering exercise, the group combined conceptually similar benefits and prioritized the benefits of certification. They proceeded to describe the desired objective for research in these priority areas as defined below:

**Priority Area #1 Improves recruitment and retention/employment and job prospects.**

**Objective** The purpose of this action plan is to demonstrate how certification influences job satisfaction, empowerment and confidence across disciplines and proves its link to recruitment and retention. Additionally, it seeks to examine how job satisfaction leads to positive patient outcomes and satisfaction, and decreases labor turnover costs.

**Priority Area #2 Recognized as validation of knowledge in the specialty.**

**Objective** Research in this area should define "recognized as validation of knowledge" and prove that certified professionals have relevant knowledge of today's practice environment and demonstrate their knowledge. Also of importance is to create a marketing plan to disseminate information that proves the perceived knowledge and validation of certified practitioners.

**Priority Area #3 Improves culture, improves job satisfaction, empowerment, and confidence.**

**Objective** The purpose of research in this area is to validate that certification increases job satisfaction through enhanced empowerment and

confidence and to evaluate the link between certification and job satisfaction and patient outcomes. This priority area creates an opportunity for interprofessional research, for both certified and non-certified practitioners and findings that have implications inside and outside of health care.

**Priority Area #4** **Advances safety, improves processes of care and quality of care.**  
**Objective** The purpose of research in this area is to investigate and demonstrate the link/relationship between certification and processes of care, quality of care and safety. Studies should focus on collecting data to explore and delineate outcomes and impacts of certified practice compared to non-certified practice on: (1) better outcomes or processes of care; (2) patient satisfaction and/or (3) performance outcomes.

Small groups provided further depth and definition to these objectives by creating action plans that included:

1. Major project requirements
2. Work Model
3. First 10 Steps – Action items for the next 12 months
4. Leader identification
5. Support/resources required
6. Who is already working on research in this benefit area?
7. What work is underway on this certification benefit area?
8. What immediate actions are necessary?
9. Who might be interested in taking a lead role in these next steps?

## SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

The Convening generated momentum to undertake research on the value of certification. The desired outcomes were achieved in that action plans and identified next steps were produced. As a result, there is a significant opportunity to build on this momentum and advance a focused research agenda.

Convening participants are encouraged to use this Executive Summary and its contents as a roadmap for pursuing research activities that address established benefits of certification. It may be helpful to consider next steps that focus on the research priorities: (1) as they align with initiatives that are already in place within certification, credentialing, licensing, academic and health care provider organizations; (2) that are logical next steps for

organizations and agencies based on the work already being done; and/or (3) that are strategic and focus on research that will support initiatives that organizations wish to embark on. It is important to seek opportunities to partner on interprofessional areas of interest. Working collaboratively within and among the health care certification community, we can realize our vision of establishing evidence that demonstrates the value of certification to practitioners, employers, patients and the public.