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## KENTUCKY BOARD OF NURSING

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Andy Beshear  
Governor

January 7, 2022

Members of the Interim Joint Committee on Health, Welfare, and Family Services  
700 Capitol Ave. Loop  
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Senators and Representatives:

At a recent meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Health and Family Services, there seemed to be some confusion over the issue of the accreditation of nursing programs. Historically, nursing programs developed in a different manner from other professional education programs, such as medicine or pharmacy. The early training programs were hospital-based. They only became part of a college/university in the early twentieth century. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the state nursing boards to approve the establishment of schools of nursing. The boards set the standards that a program of nursing had to follow. Standards are necessary to assure the quality of the program. The program needs to educate the student in the profession so that it produces competent graduates.

In other professions, the professional accrediting body sets the standards. For example, in medicine, medical schools are accredited by a professional organization, the Liaison Committee on Medical Education and are recognized by the medical licensure board. There was no similar organization for nursing early in its history.

When we use the term accreditation as it applies to professional programs such as nursing, it has a double meaning. There is what is called national or regional accreditation that applies to the governing institution, that is, the college or university of which the program is a part. The accrediting organization must be recognized by the United States Department of Education (US DOE). In Kentucky, regional accreditation is provided by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The Board of Nursing's administrative regulation 201 KAR 20:260 requires that the governing institution either be SACS accredited or hold a recognized national accreditation.

The term accreditation also applies to national nursing accrediting bodies and referred to as Programmatic Accreditation. There are three such organizations. The first one is the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). It traces its roots back to 1917 as the National League of Nursing Education. It was recognized by the U.S. DOE in 1952. The second one is the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). CCNE was formed by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) in 1969. Finally, there is the Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation (CNEA) which was established in 2016. Each organization has published standards that programs of nursing that it accredits must adhere to.

At the present time, national nursing accreditation is voluntary in Kentucky. The Board has recently filed amendments to its administrative regulations, 201 KAR 20:280 and 360, which would make national nursing accreditation mandatory.

I hope that this letter has cleared up any confusion over nursing accreditation. If you have any further questions, please feel free to call me at (502) 429-3300 or Jeffrey R. Prather, the Board's General Counsel at (502) 429-3300. You can also email me at [Kelly.Jenkins@ky.gov](mailto:Kelly.Jenkins@ky.gov) or Jeff at [Jeffrey.Prather@ky.gov](mailto:Jeffrey.Prather@ky.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Jenkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly Jenkins, Executive Director