

## STAFFING

**1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for Certified Nursing Assistant, GS-621, appointed under 38 U.S.C. §7401(3) and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B).

**2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:**

a. This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. This new qualification standard is necessary for full conversion of the nursing assistant occupation from the Title 5 competitive service employment system into VA's Title 38 Hybrid excepted service employment system in accordance with the "Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010" (Public Law 111-163). Authority is given to the Secretary of the VA under 38 U.S.C. § 7402 to prescribe qualifications for occupations identified in 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3). The pages in this revision are to be inserted in part II of VA Handbook 5005. This new qualification standard will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 that is maintained on the [Office of Human Resources Management Web site](#).

b. In order to apply this new qualification standard, all Nursing Assistants must receive an initial special boarding by the applicable Professional Standards Board. Initial special boarding should be completed no later than September 30, 2014.

(1) For employees on VA rolls as of May 5, 2010, a promotion resulting from the initial special boarding will be effected retroactive to the beginning of the first pay period after all qualification requirements at the higher grade (including level of assignment) were met, but no earlier than May 5, 2010.

(2) For employees appointed after May 5, 2010, a promotion resulting from the initial special boarding will be effected retroactive to the beginning of the first pay period after all qualification requirements at the higher grade (including level of assignment) were met, but no earlier than the effective date of their appointment.

(3) Special advancements for achievement will be retroactive to the beginning of the first pay period following the accomplishment on which the advancement is based but no earlier than May 5, 2010, or the date of appointment, whichever is later.

**3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.

**4. RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing.

**5. RESCISSIONS:** None.

**CERTIFIED BY:**

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY  
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/  
Stephen W. Warren  
Executive in Charge and Chief Information Officer  
Office of Information and Technology

/s/  
Gina S. Farrissee  
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\*Use in conjunction with the OPM Standard.

[APPENDIX G46. CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT QUALIFICATION STANDARD  
GS-621

Veterans Health Administration

**1. COVERAGE.** The following are requirements for appointment as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). These requirements apply to all VHA CNAs in the GS-621 series, including non-certified Nursing Assistants who are grandfathered under this standard.

**2. BASIC REQUIREMENTS**

a. **Citizenship.** Citizen of the United States. (Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with chapter 3, section A, paragraph 3g, this part.)

b. **Education or Training.** One year above high school with courses related to the CNA occupation. Completion of an intensive, specialized, occupation-related course of study of less than one year which resulted in attaining certification as a nursing assistant may also meet in full the experience requirements for GS-3.

c. **Certification**

(1) Certification as a CNA by a State is a basic requirement for all grade levels.

(2) Once certified, CNAs must maintain a full, active and unrestricted certification to remain qualified for employment. Loss of certification will result in removal from the GS-621 CNA series and may result in termination of employment.

d. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019.

e. **English Language Proficiency.** CNAs must be proficient in spoken and written English in accordance with VA Handbook 5005, part II, chapter 3, section A, paragraph 3j.

f. **Grandfathering Provisions.** All Nursing Assistants employed in VHA on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the series and grade held that are part of the basic requirements of the occupation. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements required in this standard, but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:

(1) All Nursing Assistants employed in VHA on the effective date of this qualification standard who do not possess a current State Certification will not be titled as a Certified Nursing Assistant and will retain the title of Nursing Assistant.

(2) Employees who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis, until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.

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(3) Employees initially grandfathered into this occupation, who subsequently obtain additional certification that meets all the basic requirements of this qualification standard must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.

(4) If an employee who was retained (grandfathered) under this provision leaves the occupation, the employee loses protected status of the grandfathering provision and must meet the full VA qualification standard basic requirements in effect at the time of reentry to the occupation.

### 3. GRADE REQUIREMENTS

#### a. Creditable Experience

(1) **Knowledge of Current Practice.** To be creditable, the experience must have required the use of knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with the current practice.

(2) **Quality of Experience.** To be creditable, CNA experience must be documented on the application or resume and verified in an employment reference, or through other independent means.

(3) **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience as a CNA is creditable according to its relationship to the full-time workweek. For example, a CNA employed 20 hours a week, or on a 1/2-time basis, would receive 1 full-time workweek of credit for each 2 weeks of service.

b. **Grade Determinations.** In addition to the basic requirements for employment, the following criteria must be met when determining the grade of candidates.

#### (1) GS-3 CNA (Entry Level)

(a) **Experience, Education and Certification.** None beyond the basic requirements.

(b) **Assignments.** Individuals assigned as GS-3 CNAs are considered to be at the entry level and are closely supervised.

#### (2) GS-4 CNA

(a) **Experience.** One year of specialized experience as a CNA or experience in another medical field (licensed practical nurse, health technician, hospital corpsman, etc.), performing technical and nursing skills requiring knowledge of the human physical and emotional states, therapeutic communication, and technical skills required for basic and intermediate treatments;

**OR,**

(b) **Education.** Successful completion of 2 years above high school in an accredited institution with courses related to nursing care, health care or in a field of study appropriate to the specialization of the position, such as education in a program for psychology, psychiatric, or operating room technicians; AND

(c) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSAs:

1. Ability to provide a range of patient/resident care and contribute to the completion of the nurse care plan and recovery of patients/residents.
2. Ability to observe patients/residents' or resident's physical or emotional status and refer deviations and/or problems to supervisor in a timely manner.
3. Ability to properly use equipment, materials and supplies in simple diagnostic and treatment procedures such as bladder scan, continuous passive motion device, blood glucose monitoring machine, specimen collection, etc.
4. Ability to communicate effectively with patients/residents, their families and other health professionals.

(d) **Assignment**

1. Individuals assigned as GS-4 CNAs are considered to be at the intermediate or developmental level and are closely supervised. CNAs at this grade level function as a member of the nursing care team and assist higher graded CNAs, licensed nursing staff, and other members of the care team in the care of patients/residents receiving outpatient care, home or community living care or other patients/residents who are in acute, sub-acute, or chronic states of illness. The significant factor is that they provide care under close supervision and refer issues/questions to supervisors, higher graded CNAs or other healthcare professionals.
2. In this role, the Nursing Assistant functions as a member of the nursing care team and assists higher graded CNAs, licensed nursing staff, and other members of the care team in the care of patients/residents receiving outpatient care, home or community living care, or other patients who are in acute, sub-acute, or chronic states of illness. The Nursing Assistant in this role provides care under close supervision and refers issues/questions to supervisors, higher graded CNAs, or other healthcare professionals.

(3) **GS-5 CNA (Full Performance Level)**

(a) **Experience.** One year of progressively responsible assignments and experience equivalent to the GS-4 level which demonstrates knowledge, skills, and abilities that are directly related to the specific assignment. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the professional KSAs in subparagraph (c) below;

**OR,**

(b) **Education.** Successful completion of a 4-year course of study above high school leading to a bachelor's degree that included 24 semester hours of courses related to health care or possession of a bachelor's degree; AND

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(c) **Demonstrated KSAs**

1. Ability to assist in the full range of nursing care to patients/residents with physical and/or behavioral problems in a hospital, long term care or outpatient setting under the direction of a Registered Nurse and/or Licensed Vocational Nurse/Licensed Practical Nurse.
2. Ability to communicate orally with patients/residents, families, interdisciplinary team and other personnel. This includes serving as a preceptor to new CNAs by assisting with the coordination of their orientation and overseeing/assessing their practical experience while in a clinical setting.
3. Ability to recognize and react to emergent patient/resident care situations and intervene while waiting for assistance. For example, recognizing need for basic life support, controlling bleeding and assisting with behavior crisis, etc.

(d) **Assignment.** This is the full performance level for CNAs. CNAs at this grade level function as a member of the nursing care team and assist licensed nursing staff in the care of patients/residents receiving outpatient care, home or community living care or other patients/residents who are in acute, sub acute or chronic states of illness. The distinguishing factor is that patient/resident assignments typically involve more complex nursing needs which can vary within a range of predictable to unpredictable requirements. CNAs at this level also assume more of a peer education/mentorship role.

**NOTE:** *Students/trainees may be appointed in accordance with 38 U.S.C. 7405(a)(1)(D). See Part II, Chapter 3, paragraph 5 of VA Handbook 5005.*

**4. DEVIATIONS**

- a. The appointing official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for CNAs in VHA whose composite record of accomplishments, performance, and qualifications, as well as current assignments, warrant such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the proposed grade.
- b. Under no circumstances will the education/training or certification requirements be waived.
- c. The placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, in VHA Central Office.

**Authority 38 U.S.C. 7402, 7403]**