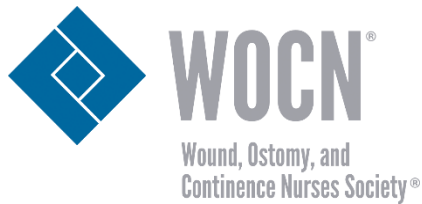




**WOCN**<sup>®</sup> Wound, Ostomy, and  
Continence Nurses Society<sup>®</sup>

# **WOCN SOCIETY AND WOCNCB POSITION STATEMENT: ENTRY LEVEL WOUND, OSTOMY AND CONTINENCE NURSE EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION**





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## Acknowledgments

### WOCN Society and WOCNCB Position Statement: Entry Level Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurse Education and Certification

**Originated By:**

Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™ (WOCN®) and the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board (“Certification Board”)

**Date Completed:**

November 2008

**Date Approved by Board of Directors:**

November 2008

**Date Revised:**

February 2018

**Date Approved by Board of Directors:**

April 17, 2018

## **Statement of Position:**

The WOCN Society supports the minimum of a baccalaureate degree for entry level into WOC specialty nurse practice. Further, the WOCN Society endorses and supports the credentialing program for WOC specialty nursing practice offered by the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board.

## **Introduction**

Wound, Ostomy and Continence (WOC) nursing is a distinct and well-defined field of nursing practice, which is international in scope and based on a tested body of specialty-related, evidenced-based knowledge. WOC nursing specialty practice is consistent with the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS, 2000) definition of a nursing specialty, in that there is an identified need for the WOC nursing specialty and these nursing professionals devote most of their practice to their area of nursing expertise.

A WOC nurse provides acute and rehabilitative care for people with selected disorders of the gastrointestinal, genitourinary, and integumentary systems. The WOC nurse provides direct care to people with abdominal stomas, wounds, fistulas, drains, pressure injuries and continence disorders and participates in assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of patients with wound, ostomy and continence care needs. As a clinician, educator, consultant, researcher and administrator, the WOC nurse plays a pivotal role in the guidance of optimal patient care in multiple healthcare settings, including inpatient, outpatient, long-term care and home health. (WOCN, 2018a).

The premier organizations for the education and certification of wound, ostomy and continence specialty nurses are the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™ (WOCN®) and the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board (WOCNCB®), respectively. The WOCN and WOCNCB believe that a nurse who is responsible for the management of the nursing care of patients with wound, ostomy and/or continence needs can best demonstrate competency by completion of a WOCN Society-accredited, Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Education Program (WOCNEP) and/or certification by the WOCNCB in all of the specialty areas in which they practice. Findings from studies in the United States (Arnold & Weir, 1994; Bolton, et al., 2004; Peirce, Tiffany, Kinsey, & Link, 2008; Westra, et al 2013) and in Canada (Harris & Shannon, 2008) have shown that patients who were cared for by WOC nurses (also known as Enterostomal Therapy Nurses or ETs) had better outcomes in terms of healing rates and/or costs of care compared to patients cared for by non- WOC/ET nurses.

## **The Wound Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society**

Founded in 1968, the WOCN Society is a professional, international nursing society of more than 5,000 health care professionals who are experts in the care of patients with wounds, ostomies and incontinence and who are committed to cost-effective and outcome-based health care. The WOCN Society supports a comprehensive health care system focused on wellness, which maximizes patient health and minimizes long-range costs. WOCN is dedicated to assuring the availability of appropriate care for individuals with wounds, ostomies and incontinence because patients deserve health care that assists them in maximizing their functional status. The WOCN Society encourages the appropriate utilization of specialty nurses to assure that its goal of giving the most beneficial care in the most cost-effective manner is met.

The WOCN Society believes that nursing as a profession enhances health care services to a multifaceted society and includes prevention, health maintenance, therapeutic intervention and rehabilitation. Wound, ostomy and continence care are areas of specialty practice within the framework of nursing that strive to advance the health care and quality of life for all affected individuals.

The WOCN Society believes that continuing education and research provide the basis for current, comprehensive nursing practice for patients with wounds, ostomies and incontinence. Learning may occur on a basic, advanced or continuing education level and combines the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and clinical expertise. The WOCN Society provides quality continuing education for its members and for other health care professionals to enhance and improve WOC nursing practice.

By a process of accreditation, the WOCN Society promotes high standards of education (WOCN, 2018b). To ensure quality education for entry into specialty WOC nurse practice, the WOCN Society has established a mechanism of accreditation for Wound, Ostomy and/or Continence Nursing Education Programs (WOCNEPs). The WOCNEPs are formal, structured programs that are developed by qualified parties, independent of the WOCN Society. A WOCNEP may provide a tri-specialty education program (wound, ostomy and continence care) and/or any of the specialty practice areas individually. The WOCN Society's accreditation of WOCNEPs is a voluntary process and can be provided for up to 7-years. WOCNEPs follow a specific curriculum blueprint designed to ensure intensive didactic education in the specialty areas of wound, ostomy and/or continence nursing practice; professional practice issues, and precepted clinical educational experiences (WOCN, 2017). To qualify for admission to a WOCN Society-accredited education program, the nurse must meet the following criteria:

- A minimum of one year's clinical nursing experience following licensure as a registered nurse
- Current clinical nursing experience within 5 years prior to application to the WOCN Society-accredited program
- Current licensure as a registered nurse
- Baccalaureate degree or higher.

## **Wound Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board: Credentialing**

The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board (WOCNCB) is a professional organization dedicated to promoting the highest standard of consumer care and safety by providing credentialing in the areas of wound, ostomy and continence nursing. The WOCNCB has its own governing board and is a distinct and separate organization from the WOCN Society. The purpose of credentialing programs is to protect the public by establishing standards for professional practice, and to assess individual nurses' knowledge and skills related to practice.

This assures consumers that the certified professionals have met standards of practice. The National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA) Guide To Understanding Credentialing Concepts states, "End-of-course examinations should not be allowed to substitute for professional credentialing examinations, because these examinations are not designed for, and are therefore not valid for, these purposes" (National Organization for Competency Assurance, 2005, p. 8). The WOCNCB is the only body providing certification for wound, ostomy and/or continence care nurses that is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS). ABNS (2000) and NCCA

(2004) both adhere to a stringent and comprehensive accreditation process based on accepted standards of testing.

WOCNCB provided extensive documentation demonstrating that it met the 18 ABNS standards of quality and the 24 NCCA accreditation standards. By meeting these high standards for accreditation, WOCNCB demonstrates a commitment to the development and administration of a legally defensible and psychometrically sound certification program. The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board (WOCNCB®) has certified over 8,000 nurses since 1978 in the areas of wound, ostomy, continence, and foot care nursing.

The WOCNCB certification is voluntary. Nurses who hold WOCNCB credentials have demonstrated their commitment to and knowledge of WOC nursing practice by meeting stringent, predetermined standards and passing a rigorous comprehensive wound, ostomy and/or continence examination(s). WOCNCB credentialing provides formal recognition of this commitment to high standards in wound, ostomy and continence nursing. Certification provides formal recognition of knowledge as a wound, ostomy and/or continence care nurse beyond that gained from traditional nursing, education programs.

The WOCNCB stands firmly in its belief that WOC certification improves the level and quality of patient care by defining and maintaining competency within the WOC specialties. Furthermore, certification provides a competitive advantage for employment and promotes job satisfaction. The nurse who chooses to certify demonstrates a commitment to WOC nursing practice and patient protection. Credentials are awarded for a five-year period. Recertification can be achieved by means of examination or a portfolio process through the Professional Growth Program (PGP) (WOCNCB, 2018).

### **Eligibility for Certification**

The WOCNCB's predetermined eligibility requirements must be met before a candidate is permitted to take the initial examination. Eligibility requirements include current licensure as a registered nurse with a baccalaureate degree. Additionally, the nurse must document completion of one of the following educational options:

- Graduation from a WOCN Society accredited educational program (WOCNEP). A tri-specialty program offering education for wound, ostomy and continence management includes at least 240 hours of student contact, 120 hours of didactic, and 120 hours of clinical patient care. A specialty course provides at least 100 hours of student contact that includes at least 40 hours of didactic, 40 hours of clinical patient care, and 20 additional hours distributed according to the students' learning needs per specialty area (wound, ostomy and/or continence management).
- Completion of 1,500 hours of clinical practice in WOC nursing and 50 continuing education contact hours and/or graduate level course work in WOC nursing, within the last five years, for each specialty for which certification is being pursued (375 of the clinical hours must be within the past year). The clinical practice hours and continuing education contact hours /course work must be directly related to the specialty for which certification is sought.

Demonstrating eligibility for certification by the WOCNCB through documented evidence of intensive education and clinical experience, beyond what can be attained in a short course that does not include focused clinical practice, helps ensure that the nurse who attempts the examination is prepared to deliver comprehensive patient care.

## **Credentials**

The following WOCNCB credentials are registered trademarks and are awarded based on the successful completion of the examination(s) or the portfolio process.

<b>CWOCN®</b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Continence Nurse
<b>CWCN®</b>	Certified Wound Care Nurse
<b>COCN®</b>	Certified Ostomy Care Nurse
<b>CCCN®</b>	Certified Continence Care Nurse
<b>CWON®</b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Nurse
<b>CFCN®</b>	Certified Foot Care Nurse
<b>CWOCN- AP®</b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Continence Nurse Advanced Practice
<b>CWON –AP®</b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Nurse Advanced
<b>CWCN-AP®</b>	Certified Wound Care Nurse Advanced Practice
<b>COCN –AP®</b>	Certified Ostomy Nurse Advanced Practice
<b>CCCN – AP®</b>	Certified Continence Care Nurse Advanced Practice



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