

# Position Statement

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## Education and Certification for Nurse Life Care Planners

**Status:** Original Statement

**Authored by:** American Association of Nurse Life Care Planners (AANLCP®\*) and the Certified Nurse Life Care Planner (CNLCP®\*\*) Certification Board

\*AANLCP® is a registered trademark of the American Association of Nurse Life Care Planners

\*\*CNLCP® is a registered trademark of the CNLCP® Certification Board

**Purpose:** This position statement serves as a resource for current, as well as prospective nurse life care planners, for identifying, exploring and promoting educational opportunities and nurse life care planning certification (CNLCP®).

**Statement of AANLCP® and CNLCP® Certification Board Position:** The American Association of Nurse Life Care Planners (AANLCP®) and the CNLCP® Certification Board affirm that nurse life care planning is a nursing specialty practice that all nurse life care planners should actively promote through education and the attainment of certification.

The American Nurses Association (ANA) recognizes that “all nursing practice, regardless of specialty, role, or setting, is fundamentally independent practice” (ANA Scope and Standards, 2010, p.24). Additionally, the registered nurse is responsible for assessing individual competence and is committed to the process of lifelong learning. Registered nurses develop and maintain current knowledge, skills and abilities through formal academic programs and continued education and seek certification when available in their areas of practice. As independent practitioners, registered nurses are individually accountable for all aspects of their practice (ANA Social Policy, 2010, p.30-31). The activities in which individual registered nurses engage in the total scope of nursing practice are dependent upon each individual’s education, experience, role, and the population they serve. (ANA, Scope and Standards, 2010, p.2)

The primary role of the nurse life care planner is to develop a client specific lifetime plan of care utilizing the nursing process. The plan contains an organized, comprehensive, and evidenced based approach that estimates current and future healthcare needs. Also included, are the associated costs and frequencies of items and services, which can be utilized as a guide in various applicable sectors (e.g., private, medical-legal, case management).

This specialty practice predates formalized training programs, certification and/or the formation of specialty organizations. It evolved from the case management, rehabilitation nursing and insurance sectors where the importance of proactive collaboration and coordination of continuum of care needs for the ill and injured were first recognized and implemented. Expanded knowledge regarding these needs emerged from consultation with interdisciplinary medical/ancillary teams, attorneys, and through participation in educational endeavors (e.g., seminars etc.) pertaining to the long-term treatment needs of the chronically

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ill and catastrophically injured. Formalized educational programs/courses followed and now serve as the basis for training resources for nurses entering this specialty.

### *Initial Education*

Numerous educational opportunities are available to nurses who are interested in entering the field of nurse life care planning. A structured introduction to the specialty practice of nurse life care planning is highly recommended. Various comprehensive courses are available.

### *Continuing Education*

The AANLCP® annual conference, webinars, and the AANLCP® *Journal of Nurse Life Care Planning* provide educational opportunities for continued development of expertise within this nursing specialty. Ongoing education relevant to the field of nurse life care planning is considered a key element in the recertification process.

While AANLCP® and the CNLCP® Certification Board do not recommend, nor endorse any one particular educational program, the following criteria should be considered when choosing life care planning educational endeavors:

### *Educational Programs*

Universities, colleges, and for-profit, as well as not-for-profit organizations offer life care planning education. In assessing the value of any given program, the reputation and accreditation of the sponsoring institution should be considered along with the program's course content. Nurse life care planning educational opportunities should be grounded in nursing science, which utilizes essential elements of the nursing process, critical thinking, and evidence-based practice. Advanced educational courses, which include application of clinical practice guidelines, outcomes evaluation and contribution to nurse life care planning research, should be considered as well.

### *Program Directors and Instructors*

AANLCP® and the CNLCP® Certification Board recommend that nurse life care planning education programs be developed and presented by nurse life care planning educators in collaboration with other specialty practitioners such as physicians, therapists, attorneys, etc. The qualifications of the program directors and instructors should include a solid knowledge base in the application of the nursing process. Of further importance is actual nurse life care planning experience that incorporates the nursing process, the ability to articulate and substantiate care plan recommendations, and a proven track record within the specialty field of life care planning.

### *Curriculum*

AANLCP® and the CNLCP® Certification Board recommend that A Core Curriculum for Nurse Life Care Planning and the CNLCP® Examination Content Outline ([www.ptcny.com/PDF/CNLCP.pdf](http://www.ptcny.com/PDF/CNLCP.pdf)) be utilized as the framework for educational programs, as well as use of current resources in course material (e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles, medical and nursing texts). Courses of study vary in length; and, nurses are encouraged to choose a course of study that meets their professional needs and goals.

## *Certification*

In 1999, AANLCP® established the American Association of Nurse Life Care Planners Certification Board to develop and administer the Certified Nurse Life Care Planner (CNLCP®) certification exam. In 2009, The Certified Nurse Life Care Planner (CNLCP®) Certification Board was incorporated as a separate entity and is recognized by the AANLCP® as the Association's certifying body.

The goal of the CNLCP® Certification Board is to promote a level of expertise and professionalism in nurse life care planning. Nurse life care planners must meet the specified educational and nursing requirements in order to be eligible to earn the CNLCP® designation through examination or reciprocity. As with many clinical nursing certification programs, the CNLCP® credential is designed for those nurses who have demonstrated experience and knowledge within the specialty. Achieving CNLCP® certification is an expected goal for those who are committed to professional practice.

Many life care planning educational programs offer a certificate of course completion; and, in some cases, evidence of having passed an examination relevant to the course material. Such certificates should not be confused with the nurse life care planner certification (CNLCP®) offered by the CNLCP® Certification Board, which is affiliated with the AANLCP®.

## **Accreditation**

The CNLCP® Certification Board is in the process of obtaining accreditation through the Accreditation Board for Nursing Specialty Certifications (ABNSC, formally known as the American Board of Nursing Specialties or ABNS).

## **Summary/Conclusion**

Nurse life care planning is a well-recognized specialty practice within the field of nursing. Standards regarding entry into this specialized field, certification and ongoing education opportunities are essential.

Educational programs developed and taught by experienced nurse life care planners/educators, currently practicing in this specialty field, are preferable.

AANLCP® supports certification through the CNLCP® Certification Board.

This position statement is the outcome of extensive discussions and dialogue about the *AANLCP® Scope and Standards of Practice* and the *AANLCP® Code of Ethics*.

**Resources:**

American Association of Nurse Life Care Planners, *Standards of Practice*, 2008, Salt Lake City, UT.

American Association of Nurse Life Care Planners, *Scope of Practice*, 2011, Salt Lake City, UT.

American Nurses Association, *Nursing Scope and Standards of Practice*, 2010, Silver Spring, MD.

American Nurses Association, *Nursing's Social Policy Statement*, 2010, Silver Spring, MD.

