

COA Statement Regarding Alternative Method to Meet Clinical Experiences Requirements for Programs with Spring 2020 Completion Dates

In response to COVID-19's impact on nurse anesthesia programs the COA has investigated programs with Spring (i.e., April, May, and June) 2020 completion dates and potential alternative methods for meeting clinical experiences requirements for SRNAs not meeting the requirements.

To investigate the impact of COVID-19 on programs a survey was sent to 48 programs identified as having completion dates in Spring 2020. The purpose of the survey was to obtain data on clinical experiences for SRNAs scheduled to complete their programs during this period and identify SRNAs who could no longer continue in clinical rotations and have not yet met the COA's minimum requirements for clinical hours and experiences.

The COA reviewed the results of the survey, guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, as well as statements related to COVID-19 and its impact on clinical education released by other nursing accreditors. After careful consideration the COA approved an Alternative Method for the use of simulated experiences to meet up to 20% of the following types of clinical experiences:

1. Mask management
2. Tracheal intubation
3. Alternative tracheal intubation/endoscopic techniques
4. Endoscopic techniques
5. Spinal
6. Epidural
7. Peripheral blocks
8. Arterial puncture/catheter insertion
9. Central venous catheter placement
10. Intravenous catheter placement

EXAMPLE of the ALTERNATIVE METHOD:

For the above 10 types of clinical experiences, the COA will reduce the minimum requirement for actual cases to 80% of the current total. Programs may use simulated clinical experiences to meet the remaining 20%. For example, the COA requires SRNAs obtain 250 tracheal intubations. Under the Alternative Method SRNAs must obtain at least 200 actual tracheal intubations, and the remaining 20% (i.e., 50 experiences) can be completed using simulated experiences.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The alternative method for meeting the clinical experiences requirements is applicable only for those programs with completion dates in Spring (i.e., April, May, or June) 2020. Additionally, the COA has not made any changes to its requirement for clinical hours: all students must obtain 2,000 clinical hours as defined in the Glossary of the Standards. The COA will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on nurse anesthesia programs and determine if the Alternative Method will apply to future program completion dates.

The COA has worked with the National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA) to ensure SRNAs meeting the case experiences requirements using the Alternative Method will be eligible to sit for the National Certification Examination (NCE). Please note the Alternative Method will not result in any change to the process for submitting NBCRNA transcript data. The minimum required clinical experiences reported to NBCRNA (as well as recorded in electronic systems such as Typhon and Medatrax) will remain unchanged. For each of the 10 types of clinical experiences that may be partially met through the use of simulation, you should enter the total of the actual experiences *plus* any simulated experiences as one number in the correct area of the record of clinical experiences.

The COA expects programs to continue to maintain accurate and detailed clinical experiences records including those obtained using simulation for all SRNAs. Program administrators and SRNAs must still affirm that all academic course work and clinical experiences represented are complete and accurate. The attestation statement applies to all programs with completion dates in April, May, or June 2020, including those using the Alternative Method.

While the COA approved the Alternative Method in order to assist SRNAs whose Spring 2020 program completion has been negatively impacted by COVID-19, it is expected programs will act in accordance with travel restrictions and any institutional, state or federal guidelines to ensure the health and safety of SRNAs. The COA appreciates that some programs may not have access to simulation labs or other resources; however, the intent of the Alternative Method is to expedite SRNAs' meeting the clinical experiences requirements when COVID-19 and institutional restrictions allow access to simulated experiences. Further, the COA recognizes some SRNAs may be delayed in completing their programs even with the Alternative Method. Programs are reminded that the COA does not consider delays in program completion for individual SRNAs as a change in COA-approved program length.

In closing, the COA reaffirms its support for actions being taken by programs to ensure the health, safety, and security of SRNAs, faculty, patients, and other stakeholders. Questions related to the above Alternative Method or COVID-19 can be submitted using the "Contact Us" section of the COA website, or by contacting the accreditation office directly at (847) 655-1160 or accreditation@coacrna.org.