

Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Certified Nursing Assistant  
Apprenticeship (CNA-A) Program

This apprenticeship is for CNA I (Basic CNA) students only. CNA IIs (Advanced CNA) and those seeking recertification or to challenge the certification exam through other qualifications are not permitted to accept an apprenticeship. Federal funds allocated to this apprenticeship program specify their usage only for long-term care facilities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has approved funding for IDPH to provide tuition and payroll assistance for CNA Apprentices (CNA-A) and their experienced CNA mentors.

The program will begin with a pilot program whose purpose is to increase retention of CNAs in a facility through appropriate approved education, financial assistance, mentoring, and payroll assistance. Potential CNA students will be required to commit to a work requirement of two years with the sponsoring long-term care facility or risk collection of tuition and other costs. The pilot program will also be used to adjust the program for final release to all facilities in Illinois. The pilot program will consist of ten BNATPs and ten long-term care facilities.

**Requirements for facility participation in the Illinois CNA Apprenticeship Training Program**

1. Be within reasonable distance (within 10 miles) of an approved college-based Basic Nursing Assistant Training Program (BNATP) or be willing to provide transportation for the apprentice if necessary.
2. Have a at least a three-star Medicare rating on Medicare's Care Compare website. If more than one facility in a geographic area wishes to partner with a community college for the CNA-A, the facility with the highest quality (star rating) will be chosen.
3. Have no NATCEP restriction imposed by CMS.
4. Not be operating under a waiver for coverage by licensed nurses.
5. Must have at least on RN who is not the administrator, DON, or ADON who is willing to teach the mentoring program.
6. Agree to host, at a minimum, forty hours of clinical training for CNA students.
7. Have a completed clinical site agreement (contract) with the BNATP.
8. Provide CNAs with at least five years of experience (two years with the facility) willing to serve as mentors. Mentors must meet the experience requirements and complete a two-day mentoring program.

Process:

Facilities interested in a CNA Apprenticeship Program will contact IDPH at [dph.bnatp@illinois.gov](mailto:dph.bnatp@illinois.gov) or by calling 217-785-5569.

IDPH will determine if a facility meets the above requirements.

IDPH will inquire into the Health Care Worker Registry to determine if the CNA meets the total five-year experience requirement and the two-year facility experience requirement for all CNA mentors.

Facility CNA mentors will complete the IDPH-approved mentorship program which will be provided free. Instruction will be provided by an RN in the facility. Documentation of completion will be provided to IDPH.

Facilities and BNATPs may recruit potential CNA students.

Facilities and BNATPs must be in agreement on potential apprentices. Recruitment of CNA-As must be a joint effort between the BNATP and the facility. The facility must coordinate with the BNATP to ensure that the apprentice applicant meets admission criteria to the college. The BNATP must coordinate with the facility to ensure that the applicant is acceptable for hire if not already an employee of the facility.

BNATPs will contact contracted facilities to determine interest in clinical hosting of recruited students in case of a NATCEP restriction imposed before clinical rotations.

Facilities with a CMS-imposed Nurse Aide Training and Competency Evaluation Program (NATCEP) restriction cannot continue to host apprentices in the facility unless a waiver of the restriction(s) is received. Student apprentices may continue with classes and continue with clinicals that began before the restriction was imposed.

Facilities which have recruited potential CNA students will contact the BNATP to determine placement potential. IDPH will facilitate any issues or concerns.

A maximum of eight CNA students per clinical instructor will be approved. Facilities must have a mentor for **each** CNA student. Mentors may mentor more than one CNA student, but not during the same shift.

Potential CNA students will be hired by the facility and trained as Resident Attendants (RA). RAs will be paid the facility's minimum wage by IDPH during training and while working as an RA as long as they are enrolled in a BNATP. Employees desiring to certify as CNAs may continue to work in their normal roles within the facility (e.g., dietary or housekeeping), but wages will not be paid until the student is able to work as a nursing assistant. Credit toward BNATP completion hours is not given for RA training. Nursing Interns are eligible to apply for a CNA Apprenticeship, but all requirements of the apprenticeship program must be met. No credit for previous training will be given.

CNA students will complete the minimum required 16 hours of training as outlined in Title 77 Section 395.150 before beginning clinicals. This training is provided by the BNATP. Skills competencies must be completed before the CNA student can work as a nursing assistant. CNA students can work as Resident Attendants (see Title 77 Section 300.662) until skills competencies are completed. Once skills competencies are completed and documented by the BNATP, the CNA student may work as a nursing assistant with a mentor. The CNA student will be paid the state minimum wage by IDPH until enrollment in a BNATP is achieved and minimum educational requirements are met before working as a nursing assistant. CNA Apprentice candidates must be accepted by the BNATP and must start the CNA training program within thirty days of acceptance or a timeframe set by the BNATP not to exceed ninety days.

Clarification: RAs must be trained by the facility. An application for a separate RA training program that meets the criteria in Title 77 Section 300.662 must be approved by IDPH before training of an RA can begin. IDPH will pay the Resident Attendant the state minimum wage for up to 30 days while this person works as an RA. IDPH will continue to pay the state minimum wage after the RA is enrolled in a BNATP and for up to an additional 120 days.

Sample schedule:

1. Potential CNA apprentice is identified. Apprentice is given the minimum of 18 hours of RA training. After successful completion of this training, IDPH will pay the RA the state minimum wage (\$12.00 per hour at the time of creation of this document) for up to 30 days for work performed as an RA.
2. At the end of 30 days (but does not have to start the program for up to 90 days), the RA must be enrolled in a BNATP. If the RA is accepted by the BNATP and agrees to the training and work requirements, IDPH will pay for up to 30 days of the RAs salary. RAs may continue to work as an RA if they are not accepted by the BNATP, but IDPH will not contribute to these salaries.
3. Once skills competency has been shown in the BNATP, the CNA Apprentice can work limited hours as a nursing assistant with a mentor at all times. *The mentor cannot teach skills that are contradictory to what is taught in the BNATP and outlined by IDPH in the Performance Skills Manual.* The CNA Apprentice cannot work more than four hours daily and with no more than four residents at a time. CNA-As should not be scheduled to work the same day that classes or clinicals are held. The CNA-A can continue to work in the facility as an RA for the duration of the BNATP. Pay from IDPH would end after 30 days. CNA-As who cannot work while going to school (dependent on the schedule from the BNATP) would not be paid by IDPH until actual work as a nursing assistant begins. This can be for up to 120 days before or after certification.
4. Facilities can require that the apprentice become certified before working in the facility. IDPH will pay for the education, but no salary reimbursement will be made until the CNA-A begins working.
5. CNA Apprentices must take and pass the certification exam within 30 days of completion of the BNATP. *No exceptions.* The CNA student has three chances and 12 months to pass the certification exam, however, CNA Apprentices must become certified within 30 days of

completion of the BNATP. They may continue with the additional two attempts to pass the certification exam, but their apprenticeship has ended with the first failure and all salary reimbursement ceases.

Mentors must work one on one with a CNA student for the first 7 days (minimum of 56 hours) of employment *after certification is achieved*. After 7 days/56 hours, the new CNA can work independently, but cannot be assigned more than four residents for the first fourteen days after the 7 day/56 hour orientation period.

The CNA student is paid the facility's starting wage by IDPH for up to 120 days or until the student has achieved certification.

The CNA mentor will be paid \$2.00 per hour by IDPH for every hour mentored. The facility will continue to pay the regular facility salary for the first 120 days of mentorship. Facilities will be required to report any absenteeism by mentors. Excessive absenteeism by mentors defined as more than four absences in a 120-day period for any reason will result in revocation of that mentor's ability to mentor students for 120 days. Absenteeism in any subsequent 120-day mentoring period will result in permanent revocation of mentor credentials.

CNA students will be paid the state minimum wage by IDPH until certification is achieved. CNA students who achieve certification will then become facility employees and payment of salaries will become the responsibility of the facility.

CNAs must commit to a two-year employment agreement to be entered into the CNA apprenticeship program. CNAs who leave employment (through voluntary or involuntary termination) before the employment commitment period has expired are responsible for repayment of all tuition and of all salaries paid by IDPH during the first 120 days. CNAs who fail to repay will result in revocation of certification.

Facilities which receive a NATCEP restriction from CMS during a training period will be allowed to continue with any CNA education for *those already enrolled and actively participating in a BNATP*. *No additional CNA students will be allowed to be enrolled for that facility.*

Facilities which do not maintain a three-star rating from CMS will be allowed to continue with any CNA education for *those already enrolled and actively participating in a BNATP*. *No additional CNA students will be allowed to be enrolled for that facility until the three-star rating is restored.*

BNATPs which do not maintain at least a 90% first-time pass rate for apprentices will be placed on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for 120 days or through the next educational period wherein students are actively enrolled. If the first-time pass rate does not increase to at least 90% by the end of the CAP period, the BNATP will be withdrawn from participation in the apprenticeship program.

### **Pilot**

Ten BNATPs with at least ten participating facilities. A maximum of eight CNA-A students per BNATP/facility will be approved every 120 days or every semester. CNA-A students will be

enrolled a maximum of 8 students at a time. Additional CNA-A students can be enrolled after each section of 8 students has completed the BNATP.

The pilot period would end after 320 students have become certified. At that time additional BNATPs and facilities would be allowed to participate should IDPH decide to continue the CNA apprenticeship program.

The contact person for the program is:

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