

# Fraud Detection Guidance for Employers and Educators

## Purpose

To provide guidance to nursing education programs, employers and others who assess nursing applicants for advanced study, employment, certification and other uses.

## Context

There is no immunity to fraud. It is experienced by almost every sector in the population. It is costly and devastating to those who are subject to it. When it invades the health professions, it becomes a serious health concern, a risk to public safety and violates public trust in the health care system. For this reason, this guidance is issued to nursing programs, employers, accreditors and others to increase awareness and help institute methods of fraud detection and prevention.

Fraud in nursing can present itself via a fraudulent nursing program or other deceitful or counterfeit methods. Mechanisms that may be used to deceive nursing regulatory bodies (NRBs), employers, educators and others can include:

- Obtaining a false nursing diploma/degree without having completed an approved nursing program; this can include a program that sells a nursing diploma/degree without providing sufficient education;
- Buying or forging a counterfeit license;
- Lying about one's experience, background, past work history; or
- Covering up a criminal background.

Individuals then use the fake credentials to apply for a nursing license, apply for a job or enroll in an advanced nursing program. Prevention requires awareness and astute detection methods. It is essential that everyone is aware that fraud exists and of some basic methods that may prevent it. To assist with this identification, basic guidance for detecting fraudulent credentials is provided.

## Recommendations

While there is no guarantee that these recommendations will prevent fraudulent individuals from entering your institution, if your institution does not already employ these methods, they should be added to your current processes for further protection.

1. Provide initial and ongoing fraud detection training for all individuals who will be reviewing and accepting applicants for your institution or agency.
2. Identify and close loopholes that evade rules or the law.
3. Fraudulent individuals look for the easiest entry routes. If your institution/agency has fewer requirements than others, be extra vigilant.
4. Check [nursys.com](https://nursys.com) to ensure every applicant has a valid unencumbered license.
5. Make sure the program where the applicant graduated was approved by the NRB in the state where the program is located.

6. Check references. Many cases where the applicant has provided deceitful information on an application can be identified by verifying references. Special attention should be given to former employers and institutions of higher learning. Ask for a business email address if one is not provided.
7. Review all transcripts and other documents carefully. Details on reviewing transcripts or other documents for potential fraud can be found in NCSBN's *Licensure of Internationally Educated Nurses Resource Manual* ([https://www.ncsbn.org/public-files/23\\_IEN\\_manual.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/public-files/23_IEN_manual.pdf), pages 19–25).
8. Educational institutions and practice settings alike should have an Institution e-Notify account and enroll all their nurses. e-Notify, a component of, [nursys.com](https://www.nursys.com) is a free nurse licensure notification system where institutions can receive real-time notifications about nurses enrolled in a nursing education program or employed at their institution. The system provides licensure and publicly available discipline data directly to the institutions as the information is entered into the Nursys database by NRBs. Nursys is the only national nurse licensure and disciplinary database. If an NRB identifies a nurse with fraudulent credentials and revokes his/her license, that information will immediately be reported to the Nursys database and to e-Notify institution account holders. Educators and employers will quickly receive a message about the license revocation and can take appropriate actions.
9. Be alert to red flags such as inconsistencies in the information on applications and transcripts (e.g., time to completion of degree, sequencing of courses, etc.) or criminal background checks. Although a red flag does not directly indicate guilt or innocence, a red flag serves as a warning sign for inconsistency and the need for additional investigation.
10. Report to your NRB any nurse who has been deceitful, provided fraudulent information to your institution or you feel is unsafe. This will prevent these nurses from moving to another institution and threatening the safety of others. Once the NRB takes action, the information will be placed into Nursys alerting others about that individual.

It is important to recognize that the majority of nurses are honest, competent and caring individuals, so the public has no need for concern. This, however, serves as a reminder to schools and employers that there are occasional opportunists who may cover up their background to obtain a job, attend a nursing program or use fraudulently obtained credentials to pose as a nurse and seek employment.

### **The following organizations and individuals support the Fraud Detection Guidance for employers and educators:**

- National Council of State Boards of Nursing
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- American Association of Critical-Care Nurses Certification Corporation
- American Nurses Association
- American Organization for Nursing Leadership
- Missouri State Board of Nursing
- National League for Nursing
- Organization for Associate Degree Nursing
- Washington State Board of Nursing
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- Robin Newhouse, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, Dean and Distinguished Professor, Indiana University School of Nursing, Deputy Chair, University Clinical Affairs Cabinet, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, IU Health
- Patricia M. Noga, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, representing the American Organization for Nursing Leadership
- Karen Rose, PhD, RN, FGSA, FAAN, Dean and Professor, The Ohio State University, College of Nursing
- Linda D. Scott, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FNAP, FAAN, Dean and Professor, School of Nursing, University of Wisconsin-Madison; President-Elect, American Academy of Nursing
- Lepaine Sharp-McHenry, DNP, RN, FACDONA, Dean and Professor, University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Nursing
- Leigh Small, PhD, RN, CPNP-PC, FNAP, FAANP, FAAN, Dean and Professor, Michigan State University College of Nursing
- Julie Zerwic, PhD, RN, FAHA, FAAN, Kelting Dean and Professor, University of Iowa, College of Nursing

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