

# Protecting California's Healthcare Consumers

## What is the Board of Registered Nursing?

The Board of Registered Nursing (BRN) is a State agency within the Department of Consumer Affairs that licenses and regulates registered nurses (RNs) in California. The BRN is responsible for implementation and enforcement of the Nursing Practice Act which details the functions of the Board and establishes a nine-member board to serve as the BRN decision-making body.

## Who serves on the Board?

The Board consists of four members of the public and five registered nurses. The five registered nurses include two direct-patient care nurses, one advanced-practice nurse, a nurse administrator, and a nurse educator. The Governor appoints two of the public members and all five RNs. The Senate Rules Committee and the Speaker of the Assembly each appoint one public member. Each member serves a four-year term and can be reappointed, but cannot serve more than two consecutive terms.

The mission of the Board of Registered Nursing is to protect the health and safety of consumers by promoting quality registered nursing care in California.

To accomplish this, we:

- Establish and uphold competency standards, provide guidance and interpretation, prevent patient harm, and intervene with discipline and rehabilitation.
- Serve the public in a customer-oriented, well-managed, and respectful manner.
- Provide employees with the opportunity for satisfying work in an atmosphere of shared commitment.



## Who does the BRN license and regulate?

There are more than 400,000 registered nurses in California providing healthcare services in a variety of settings and specialties.

### RNs use a variety of titles in their practice, including:

- Certified nurse anesthetist.
- Certified nurse midwife.
- Clinical nurse specialist.
- Nurse practitioner.
- Public health nurse.
- Psychiatric/mental health nurse



### RNs practice in multiple settings, including:

- Health departments.
- Health maintenance organizations.
- Home health agencies.
- Hospitals.
- Private practice.
- Schools.
- Skilled nursing facilities.

## What does the BRN do to protect consumers?

- Sets educational standards for nursing programs that prepare students to become licensed as registered nurses.
- Approves California nursing programs. Approximately 143 nursing programs have been approved because they meet BRN educational standards.
- Evaluates licensure applications. To be licensed the applicant must complete the educational requirements, pass the national licensing exam, and clear a criminal background check.
- Issues and renews licenses. The RN license must be renewed every two years.
- Issues certificates. The BRN issues certificates to eligible public health nurses, nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, nurse midwives, and clinical nurse specialists. The BRN also maintains a list of eligible psychiatric/mental health nurses.

- Takes disciplinary action. Grounds for discipline focus on behaviors that place patients at risk of harm. The disciplinary action depends on the nature and severity of the violation and what is necessary to protect the public. The disciplinary action becomes a part of the RN's file and is accessible to the public.
- Manages an Intervention Program. The BRN's Intervention Program is an alternative to the discipline process for nurses whose practice may be impacted due to substance use disorder or mental illness. This confidential program protects the public while enabling the nurse to be rehabilitated.
- Offers 24-hour online license look-up verification at [www.dca.ca.gov](http://www.dca.ca.gov). Access our Web site to find out if a person is licensed as an RN; if the license is active, inactive, or lapsed; if the nurse has any BRN certificates; and if there is any disciplinary action against the license. If you need further assistance, call the BRN at (916) 322-3350 during regular business hours for assistance.

## What consumers can do

Healthcare consumers can help protect themselves and the public by reporting to the BRN suspected violations of the Nursing Practice Act, such as registered nurses practicing in an unsafe or unprofessional manner, unlicensed persons illegally providing nursing care, and any issues that affect the education and practice of California RNs.

If you have a complaint about other healthcare professionals licensed by the Department of Consumer Affairs, go online to [www.dca.ca.gov](http://www.dca.ca.gov) or call (800) 952-5210 for assistance.

