



Neonatal Therapy Recertification Applicant Handbook 2024

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Section 1. Neonatal Therapy Certification Overview

Definition of Neonatal Therapy Certification:

Neonatal therapy certification identifies occupational and physical therapists and speech language pathologists who have demonstrated the appropriate amount of experience, knowledge and commitment to serve high-risk infants in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

Definition of a Neonatal Therapist:

A neonatal therapist is an occupational therapist, physical therapist, or speech-language pathologist who delivers holistic, direct patient care and consultative services to premature and medically-complex infants in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Neonatal therapists are an essential part of the NICU team. Using an integrated, neuroprotective, family-centered model, neonatal therapists provide highly specialized and individualized therapeutic interventions in the NICU. These interventions support optimal long-term development, prevent adverse sequelae, and nurture the infant-family dyad. Neonatal therapists also provide education to the family and NICU team. Definition from the National Association of Neonatal Therapists (NANT).

Neonatal Therapy Certification Board (NTCB) Mission Statement:

It is the mission of the NTCB to recognize and advance inter-professional neonatal therapy practice through evidence-based certification standards including validation of clinical experience and knowledge essential for effective delivery of neonatal therapy.

Neonatal Therapy Certification Board Vision Statement: The vision of the NTCB is to build a body of certified neonatal therapists (OT, PT, SLP) who can provide safe, effective, and evidence-based services to at-risk infants and their families.

What Does Certification Mean?

Certification is designed to test the knowledge and abilities required to perform a particular job, in this case that of a neonatal therapist. When one successfully passes a certification examination, he or she can declare professional competence for a specialized area of practice. A profession is elevated if performance standards are created and a certification program is required in order to obtain employment in the specialty area. Certification in neonatal therapy identifies those therapists who have demonstrated the expertise to work independently in the NICU.

Why is Neonatal Therapy Certification Important?

Neonatal therapy is considered an advanced area of practice. With growing numbers of therapists in NICUs and the need to define competencies for a neonatal therapist working with high-risk infants in this environment, the process of establishing neonatal therapy certification

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was initiated. A survey in 2013 indicated that there was a pool of at least 275 neonatal therapists in the US, the majority of whom agreed with the need for a certification process for neonatal therapists. In 2016, another survey revealed a pool of at least 482 neonatal

therapists, 97% of whom indicated an interest in neonatal therapy certification. While application for certification is voluntary, the value added to the profession is essential to promote a minimum level of competency for the NICU therapist.

All Applicants Held to Same Standards:

No specific groups of individuals were or will be grandfathered into certification, based on level of experience, expertise, or otherwise. All applicants will be required to meet the same standards of portfolio submission and examination. The first certificate recipients consisted of NTCB Board members and NANT leadership in 2017. They completed the same process of application but engaged in a pilot test for the certification exam as the psychometrics were evaluated. This meant the NTCB took a 136-item test and the NANT leadership took a 134-item test (with six members taking an almost final 102-question version to assess the time allotment for the exam).

The Credentialing Body:

The credentialing body for the certification of neonatal therapists is the Neonatal Therapy Certification Board (NTCB).

Relationship of NTCB to NANT:

The Neonatal Therapy Certification Board (NTCB), formerly the Neonatal Therapy National Certification Board (NTNCB), was established by the National Association of Neonatal Therapists (NANT). However, due to criteria established by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE), the NTNCB maintained a completely separate leadership structure from NANT and separated from NANT to become the independent, non-profit, Neonatal Therapy Certification Board (NTCB) in 2020. The NTCB applauds NANT for recognizing the importance of professional certification and appreciates its role in fostering excellence in neonatal therapy.

Certified Neonatal Therapist Acknowledgment:

Therapists who meet the requirements for certification receive notice via email and mail with a lapel pin and certificate with the CNT designation. A web page on the neonatal therapy certification website has an updated list of certified neonatal therapists for public view. CNTs are invited to a private Facebook page for collaboration and communication with the NTCB and other CNTs following certification status.

Basic Versus Mastery Certification:

Neonatal therapy is recognized as an advanced practice area by AOTA, APTA and ASHA as it requires specialized training and skills in balancing therapeutic interventions with medical complications and vulnerability of the developing high-risk infant. Although there is no current certification process for NICU-based therapists, several organizations have developed guidelines

and defined what roles therapists should serve in the NICU. While therapy practice in the NICU implies a certain level of advanced training, and many therapists practicing in this area are master clinicians, neonatal therapy certification was developed as a basic neonatal therapy certification, based on the definition established by Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE): “A certification program is designed to test the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform a particular job, and, upon successfully passing a certification exam, to represent a declaration of a particular individual’s professional competence (ICE, 2013).” While additional pathways of certification may be considered in the future, the initial neonatal therapy certification is offered as a basic certification that aims to ensure basic training and knowledge needed for independent practice in the NICU.

Interdisciplinary Nature of Neonatal Therapy Certification: The therapeutic process in the NICU includes the use of an interdisciplinary team of PT, OT and SLP. All disciplines have a unique contribution to improving outcomes of the high-risk infants in the NICU, while sharing some common knowledge that enables their participation as part of the team in the NICU setting.

Section 2. Recertification For Certified Neonatal Therapists

Timing of Recertification:

- Recertification is required every 5 years
- Recertification application cycles are bi-annual, either on January 1st through March 31st, or July 1st through September 30th, depending on when your certification expires. • Application process should take approximately 20 minutes if all documentation ready • Review of recertification application will take up to three months

Method of Submission for Recertification

Documents: • Applicant portal

Pathways to Recertification:

There are 2 different pathways to getting recertified as a neonatal therapist 1.) Provide proof of 2000 hours NICU practice and 60 hours NICU professional education OR... 2.) Retake the certification exam and achieve a passing score

NICU Specific Practice Requirements:

Must complete a minimum of 2000 hours over the 5 year certification period May include any of the following:

Direct patient care in the NICU
Teaching or clinical instruction
Mentoring other neonatal therapists
Professional presentations (i.e. presentations to NICU staff or at conferences) Research, quality improvement, and/or publication
NICU program development
Leadership/boards/advisory teams related to the NICU
NICU related product development, training, or testing

NICU Specific Professional Education Requirements:

Must complete a minimum of 60 hours of professional education related to NICU clinical practice over the 5 year certification period.

CV Requirements:

Updated to date of application
List specific time dedicated to the NICU over past 5 years
List Activities performed in the NICU over past 5 years
List all other certifications held during last 5 years

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Examination Requirements:

Examination is NOT required unless you are pursuing pathway 2 of recertification and opting to take exam in lieu of presenting proof of NICU experience and education.

The Auditing Process:

The NTCB randomly audits 10% of our applications both for recertification and initial certification. Audits only apply to people using recertification via practice hours and education (Pathway 1). You will be notified if you are selected for an audit via email. If you are selected for an audit, your supervisor will be contacted by a member of the NTCB team to verify your practice hours and we will ask that you upload your continuing education certificates that you have listed. You will have 7 days to upload your certificates. Additionally, if we are unable to reach your supervisor with the contact information you provided in your application, we may reach out to you for assistance with this.

Helpful hints when completing your application:

Gather and organize your information BEFORE you start your application.

How to Save Your Progress and Get a Link to Continue Later:

1. Click on **“Save and Continue Later”** to save your progress.
2. **Enter** your **registered** email address.
3. Select **“Send Link”** to have the link sent to your registered email address.
4. **Important:** Do not close your browser until you receive the link in your email.

Checklist of Requirements Needed for Recertification Pathway

- 1:**
- o Email address you used for original certification
 - o Email address where you may receive email 5 years from now
 - o Current Name, address, phone number
 - o Full face view photo taken within the past year
 - o Completed recertification application
 - o Updated CV (listing all NICU-related activities over past 5 years)
 - o Certificates for NICU courses you have taken (do not need to upload unless audited)
 - o current professional license (US) OR a professional credential (international)
 - o license or registration number
 - o state
 - o phone number of licensing board
 - o email of licensing board
 - o web address of licensure board or other organization with online public registry for currently credentialed therapists
 - o information about other licenses held in other states
 - o any additional circumstances related to credentialing.
 - o Evidence of NICU Experience (2000 hours)
 - o Start and End Dates of your NICU related experience
 - o Organization's name and type of organization
 - o Supervisor's phone number/email
 - o Evidence of NICU Professional Education (60 hours)
 - o Conference/Webinar Title
 - o Date
 - o Course Instructor
 - o Website of course offering if available
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- o \$350 recertification fee

Requirements for Recertification Pathway 2:

- o Email address you used for original certification
- o Email address where you may receive email 5 years from now
- o Current Name, address, phone number
- o Full face view photo taken within the past year
- o Completed recertification application
- o Updated CV (listing all NICU-related activities over past 5 years)
- o Current licensure/professional credential info (as indicated by the location in which you

practice)

- o license or registration number
- o state
- o phone number of licensing board
- o email of licensing board
- o web address of licensure board or other organization with online public registry for currently credentialed therapists
- o information about other licenses held in other states
- o any additional circumstances related to credentialing.
- o \$350 recertification fee
- o Passing score at or above 80% (72/90) on certification exam

STEPS to Recertification Application Process:

You can access the recertification application by signing in using the same email you used when you originally applied for certification. Click the 'recertification application'.

Step 1:

- Email address
- Other email address (where you may receive email 5 years from now)
- Name
- Former/other names
- Address
- Country
- Phone number
- *Upload a picture (full face view photo taken within the past year)
- *Upload Curriculum Vitae (updated to date of application with specific time dedicated to the NICU and activities performed in the NICU delineated and all other certifications held noted)

Step 2:

- Current license number (or registration number)

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- State licensed in (or location of registration or location where the applicant works if graduation from an approved school is the credential required to practice)
- Phone number of licensure board (or other organization that can verify credentialing)
- Email of licensure board (or other organization that can be reached to verify credentialing)
- Web address of the licensure board or other organization if they have an online public registry with a search function for currently credentialed therapists
- Information about other licenses held in other states

- Any additional circumstances that relate to credentialing if not already captured in other questions

Step 3:

- *Upload copy of current license (registration or credential)

Step 4:

- Indicate if you are applying for recertification by taking the exam or providing evidence of your experience and education over the past 5 years

Step 5:

- If you are submitting evidence of your experience and education (not retaking the exam), identify the start and end dates of your NICU related experience and details about the organization, including type of organization, supervisor, and phone number/email

Step 6:

- If you are submitting evidence of your experience and education (not retaking the exam), identify 60 hours of courses/conferences/webinars you have engaged in including, title, dates, course instructor, and website of course offering if available

Step 7:

- Sign the legal statement and attestation
- Sign with a digital signature

Step 8:

- Pay the \$350 recertification fee

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(Optional) complete other metrics to help us track those who recertify (whether currently working in the NICU, what level, how many beds, discipline, how many years as a therapist, how many years practiced in NICU)

Review of the recertification application will take up to three months.

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