



HEALTH MINISTRIES  
ASSOCIATION • INC.

## **CERTIFICATION VERSUS CERTIFICATE:**

### **What's in a Name**

Defining the difference between certification and receiving a certificate of completion is an important distinction in any profession.

Within the professional specialty practice of faith community nursing, it remains an important distinction to help all faith community nurses identify themselves professionally and properly, when achieving either distinction.

Both professional organizations and educational institutions often use the words certification and certificate frequently, sometimes interchangeably. Understanding the differences between these two options is essential to you as a professional, a consumer of educational services and to present yourself accurately to the public.

#### **Certification**

Certification, like the ANCC conferred RN-BC designation, refers to an earned credential that demonstrates the holder's specialized knowledge, skills, and experience. Certification was awarded by a third-party, nongovernmental entity, as in the case of faith community nursing, which is awarded by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

Certification candidates receive their credential only after meeting strict eligibility criteria and successfully completing the defined certification process. Credentials are nationally recognized and portable, meaning your credentials will follow you if you move from one organization to another. And unlike certificate programs, professional certification programs include ongoing requirements that must be met to keep the certification current. The recertification process ensures that credential holders have maintained a level of expertise in their specialty and that they participate in activities that support competency in their specialty.

#### **Certificates**

A certificate program is an educational program that awards a certificate after completing the program. Certificate programs or educational offerings are geared toward obtaining specific skills or knowledge. While certificate programs may award a certificate of attendance or participation, they do not award a credential. For the faith community nurse completing any Faith Community

Nurse Foundations Course, they receive a certificate of completion from the institution offering the educational program.

Both professionally and legally, there are no additional initials that the faith community nurse may add to their name following the completion of a certificate program. {See memo re: use of FCN}

**We recommend that you visit the link below for a full comparison of Certification versus Certificate provided by our nurse colleagues at the American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants {AALNC}**

<http://www.aalnc.org/page/certification-vs.-certificate> (legal nurse consultants)