

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists

Quality Anesthesia for 150 Years

What is a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist?

A Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) is an advanced practice nurse who specializes in the administration of anesthesia. CRNAs work with other healthcare providers (surgeons, anesthesiologists, dentists, podiatrists, and others) to provide safe, high-quality anesthesia care to patients undergoing a variety of surgical, obstetric, diagnostic, and pain management procedures. They provide anesthesia in all fifty states, all branches of the military, and in many foreign countries. In the United States, CRNAs administer more than 33 million anesthetics to patients each year, and are the primary providers of anesthesia in the rural United States and in the military.

During the course of anesthesia care, CRNAs monitor the patient, provide airway management as necessary, administer anesthetic agents and pain medications, perform nerve blocks if needed for pain management, and treat side effects and complications of surgical and anesthesia care. CRNAs provide care to patients of all ages, from newborns to the elderly. They provide care in all settings, from physician offices to surgical centers to community hospitals to large academic medical centers. CRNAs provide care for patients undergoing all types of procedures, including complex neurosurgery, open heart surgery, and transplants.

Educational Preparation of CRNAs

Prior to their graduate education in anesthesia, CRNAs have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, an active license as a Registered Nurse, and at least one year of acute care nursing experience. Graduate education in anesthesia includes 24-36 months of intensive academic preparation and hands-on clinical training at large community hospitals or academic medical centers. Depending on the length of the educational program, graduates are awarded either a masters' or doctoral degree. Graduates must then pass a rigorous National Certification Examination in order to practice as a CRNA. In total, it takes a minimum of seven years of higher education and professional nursing experience to prepare a CRNA for practice.

Scope of CRNA Practice Nationally and in Ohio

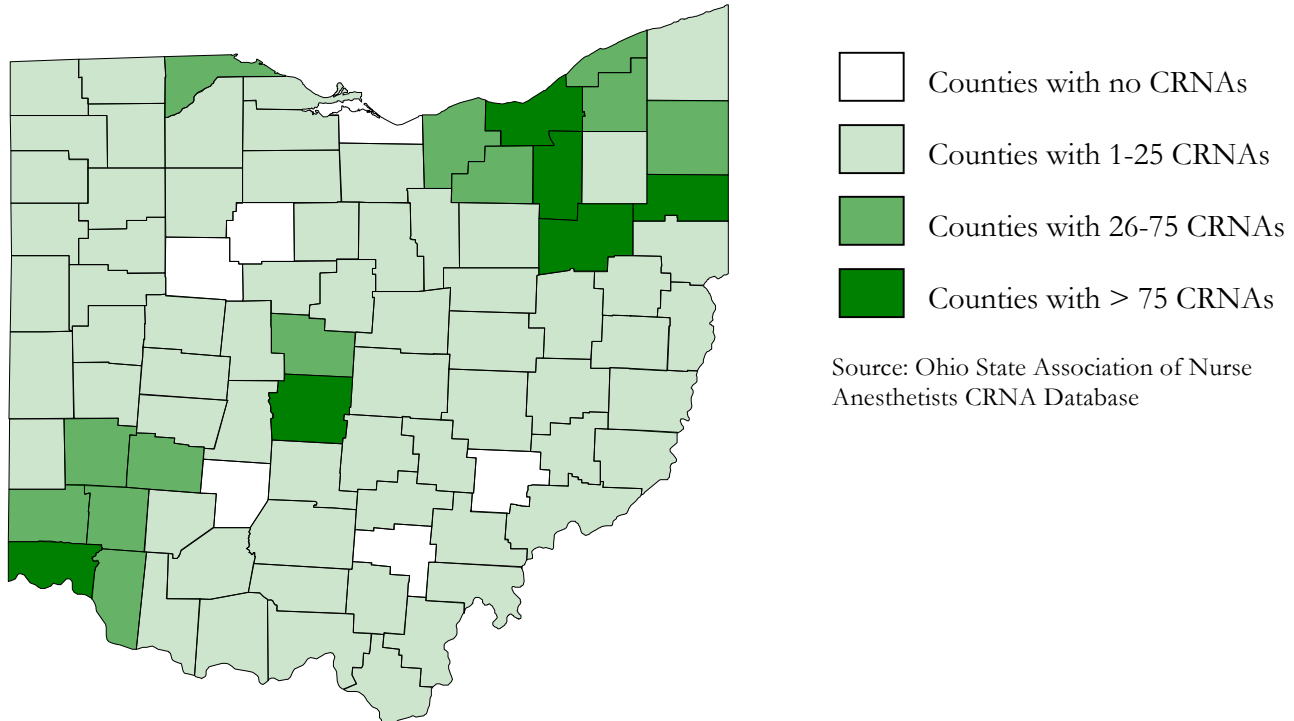
According to the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, the scope of a CRNA's practice includes (but it not limited to):

1. Performing and documenting a preanesthetic assessment and evaluation of the patient, including requesting consultations and diagnostic studies; selecting, obtaining, ordering, and administering preanesthetic medications and fluids; and obtaining informed consent for anesthesia.
2. Developing and implementing an anesthetic plan of care.
3. Initiating the anesthetic technique, which may include: sedation, local, regional, or general anesthesia.
4. Selecting, applying, and inserting appropriate noninvasive and invasive monitoring devices for continuous evaluation of the patient's physical status.
5. Selecting, obtaining, and administering the anesthetics, accessory drugs, and fluids necessary to manage the anesthetic.
6. Managing a patient's airway and pulmonary status.
7. Facilitating emergence and recovery from anesthesia by selecting, obtaining, ordering and administering medications, fluids, and ventilatory support.
8. Discharging the patient from a postanesthesia care area and providing postanesthesia follow-up evaluation and care.
9. Managing acute and chronic pain.
10. Responding to emergency situations by providing airway management, administering emergency fluids and drugs, and using basic or advanced cardiac life support techniques.

Each state is responsible for determining the scope of practice of licensed individuals within that state. In Ohio, the scope of practice of a CRNA is specified in the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 4723.43, section B, known as the Nurse Practice Act (NPA). The ORC states that CRNAs can select, obtain, and administer medications to patients, and perform all aspects of perioperative anesthesia care consistent with their education and certification. CRNAs are supervised by a physician, dentist, or podiatrist when performing anesthesia care functions. There is no legal requirement to be supervised by an anesthesiologist.

CRNAs in Ohio

There are more than 1,800 CRNAs in the state of Ohio, representing 4% of the nation's CRNA workforce. They also represent the majority of anesthesia providers in the state of Ohio. CRNAs provide anesthesia care in hospitals, freestanding surgical centers, physician's offices, dentists' offices, VA medical centers, and endoscopy centers. These facilities are located in both urban and rural areas. Depending on the facility, some CRNAs in Ohio work independently of anesthesiologists, and some work with anesthesiologists.



Economic Importance of CRNAs to Ohioans

- A recent study demonstrated that anesthesia care provided by a CRNA is the most cost-effective method of anesthesia care delivery¹. This helps to decrease the cost of delivering healthcare.
- CRNAs are the least costly type of anesthesia provider to employ and educate.
- CRNAs provide the majority of rural anesthesia in the state of Ohio.
- Ohio has 34 critical access hospitals (CAHs), typically located in rural, medically underserved areas in Ohio. More than half of these hospitals employ CRNAs as the sole anesthesia providers. Of the 88 counties in Ohio, 14 counties have CRNAs as the sole providers of anesthesia. This allows patients in rural and medically underserved areas to have access to affordable, high quality anesthesia care.

¹Hogan PF, Seifert RF, Moore CS, Simonson BE. (2010) Cost effectiveness analysis of anesthesia providers. *Nursing Econ*, 28 (3): 159-169.

Further Information

CRNAs have both a national and state professional organization. For more information about the history of nurse anesthesia, professional CRNA practice, and how CRNAs are shaping the future of healthcare, please contact us.

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