

2026

**AAOHN
NATIONAL
CONFERENCE**

APRIL 26-28, 2026
ORLANDO, FLORIDA
ROSEN SHINGLE CREEK

**SEAL THE DEAL: THE
POWER OF SPECIALTY
CERTIFICATION!**

Betty Sanisidro
DNP, MSN, RN, COHN-S, APHN-BC, FAAOHN
Executive Director
ABOHN



Board Certification: Engage Excellence

ACCREDITATION STATEMENT: The American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, Inc. (AAOHN) is accredited as a provider of nursing continuing professional development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

CONTACT HOURS: .75

Successful completion: Complete the evaluation form for this session.

DISCLOSURES: None of the planners or presenters for this activity have a relevant financial relationship to disclose with ineligible companies

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LEARNER OUTCOMES

Based on this education, the learner will...

1. Identify three benefits of certification.
2. Describe the requirements to becoming a certified occupational health nurse and maintaining certification
3. Explain how certification can contribute to an OHN's professional pathway
4. Recognize recent changes to the ABOHN exams, industry changes over the last 6 years, and current pass rates of ABOHN exams.



AGENDA

- Certification overview
- Benefits of nursing specialty certification
 - Highlights of ABOHN 2023 Practice/Job Analysis
 - Recent changes to ABOHN exam development & dissemination
 - Impact of changes
- Certification examination preparation





CERTIFICATION IS...

...a *voluntary* process by which a **nongovernmental agency** grants **time-limited recognition** to individuals who have met **predetermined, standardized criteria** through formal assessment.

- Measures **broad knowledge and skills** in a specialty area.
- **RN licensure** ensures *entry-level competence*; **certification** goes further—validating **specialized knowledge, clinical experience, and judgment**.



CERTIFICATION VS. CERTIFICATE

Key Differences

Certification

- ✓ Earned credential that **demonstrates specialized knowledge, experience, and skills**
- 🔍 Focuses on **job role** or professional practice
- 🕒 **Longer**, broader in scope
- 📄 Requires **assessment and validation** by a certifying body

Certificate

- 🎓 **Educational program** that awards a document upon completion
- 🧠 Focuses on a **specific skill set or topic**
- ⌚ **Shorter**, narrower in scope
- ✓ Usually does **not require ongoing validation**



THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF NURSING CERTIFICATION

Certification is more critical than ever as it serves as:

- ✓ A mechanism for professional self-governance
- 🛡️ A safeguard for public protection
- 🔄 A foundation for evolving models of healthcare delivery

Why it matters:

- Certification provides a framework to assess the relationship between:
 - Nursing practice
 - Care delivery environments
 - Educational preparation
 - **Outcomes** such as patient safety, quality of care, and clinical effectiveness

Bottom Line:

Establishing and upholding rigorous nursing credentials is a powerful demonstration of the profession's commitment to excellence, accountability, and continuous improvement.



CERTIFICATION & NURSING EXCELLENCE

Enables Standardized Excellence Across Settings

- Supports **mobility across geographic regions**
- Aligns expectations for **regulators and employers**
- Demonstrates **competence trusted by stakeholders**

Drives Professionalism & Retention

Certification and ongoing education foster a culture of:

- 📊 **Accountability**
- 🧠 **Lifelong learning**
- 👛 **Workforce stability**

Improves Patient & System Outcomes

- **74% of patients** prefer hospitals with more certified nurses
- Certification benefits **patients, clinicians, and employers**
- Enhances **safety, quality, and trust** in care delivery

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BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION FOR NURSES



Educational Growth

Certification prep promotes lifelong learning and confirms advanced clinical knowledge.



Professional Respect

Earning a credential demonstrates commitment, expertise, and credibility to peers and employers.



Expanded Job Opportunities

Certified nurses are more competitive in the job market and are viewed as valuable organizational assets.



Career & Salary Advancement

Credentials help nurses achieve higher pay and qualify for promotions and leadership roles.



Sustained Motivation

Maintaining certification encourages ongoing development through continued competency.



Personal Fulfillment

Nurses report increased pride, confidence, and a sense of accomplishment through certification.

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WHY EMPLOYERS VALUE NURSING CERTIFICATION

Competitive Hiring Advantage

Organizations that prioritize and hire certified nurses stand out in a tight labor market and attract top-tier talent.



Support for Career Growth

Backing nurses in their educational advancement fosters a culture of development, engagement, and loyalty.



Attracting High-Quality Staff

Facilities that value certification are more likely to hire nurses with proven motivation, clinical expertise, and commitment to excellence.



Signal of Organizational Quality

Certification validates the facility's investment in high standards of care and workforce capability, distinguishing it from competitors.



Proof of Excellence

Credentialed staff serve as a clear marker of excellence—enhancing credibility with patients, stakeholders, and accrediting bodies.



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HOW PATIENTS BENEFIT FROM CERTIFICATION



Knowledge Translated into Care

Certified nurses apply advanced skills, evidence-based practice, and clinical judgment directly to patient care.



Higher Quality Outcomes

Preparation and maintenance of certification drive ongoing learning, leading to measurable improvements in care quality and safety.



Improved Patient Health

Emerging evidence shows that certification is associated with better health outcomes—patients receive care in environments that prioritize excellence and continuing competence.



Enhanced Care Processes


Certified nurses contribute to streamlined, consistent care delivery that enhances the patient experience and reduces risk.

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PERCEPTION & VALUE OF CERTIFICATION

Perception Drives Value: What Employers Believe About Certification

 A Voice of the Customer (VoC) study conducted by the **National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT)** explored how stakeholders perceive the value of certification.

Key Findings: Employers Believe Certified Professionals...

- ✓ **Have enhanced professional credibility** (70%)
- ✓ **Stay more current** with developments in the field (64%)
- ✓ **Engage more in evidence-based practice** (62%)
- ✓ **Stand out** among peers in the profession (58%)
- ✓ **Are better prepared** for the demands and challenges of practice (58%)

 **Takeaway:** Perception **isn't just image—it's influence.**

What stakeholders believe about certification **shapes hiring, advancement, and patient trust.**

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KEY INDUSTRY SHIFT IMPACTING HEALTHCARE & CREDENTIALING

The Great Resignation

- 47 million Americans left their jobs in 2021 — a historic high.
- In November 2021 alone, 4.5 million people quit — the highest monthly total in two decades.

Federal & Regulatory Shifts

- Evolving legislation is reshaping policy and practice expectations.
- Increased scrutiny on healthcare standards and scope of practice.

Deregulation Trends

- Loosening of requirements in some fields is disrupting standardization and credentialing norms.

Financial Pressures

- Budget constraints are forcing organizations to reduce or eliminate services, impacting staffing and education investments.

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IMPLICATIONS FOR OHNS

Policy Area	Key Change	Implications for OHNs
OSHA Enforcement	Broader inspections; ergonomics focus	Strengthen safety programs, equipment, training
Violence Prevention	Proposed federal standard	Lead planning and training initiatives
COVID-19 Rules	ETS terminated; reporting requirements rolled back	Adjust protocols to conform with standard OSHA rules
OSHA NPRMs	Respiratory, duty clause, advisory clause changes	Review and comment, update internal policy guidance
NIOSH / HHS Cuts	Staff, research loss	Seek alternate data sources, monitor occupational research gaps
Deregulation	Broader rollback of workplace protections	Advocate and educate for worker safety frameworks



IMPACT TO OHNs

1

Increased facility enforcement: Attention to patient handling, ergonomics, workplace violence, and biological hazards means OHNs must support stronger safety programs, training compliance, equipment availability, and documentation.

2

Policy advocacy focus: With OSHA and NIOSH capacity shrinking, OHNs may need to fill gaps through local initiatives, partnerships, or professional organizations.

3

Engagement with NPRMs: Proposed respiratory standard changes and enforcement policy shifts are open for public comment. OHNs should consider contributing professional perspectives before the September 2, 2025 deadline.

4

Advocacy on violence prevention legislation: The proposed federal standard may reshape practice expectations—OHNs can be voices for evidence-based, feasible program design at legislative and facility levels.

5

Research continuity concerns: Cuts to NIOSH and HHS may limit research that informs evidence-based occupational nursing practice—raising the importance of state-level collaborations and external partnerships.

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RISE IN CREDENTIALS

56% of credentialing agencies have reported an increase in certification demand over the last year.

Women's enrollments in professional certifications increased to 43% in 2021, up from 27% in 2019.

Of candidates who earned certifications in 2020, 86% planned to pursue additional certifications within the next 12 months.

Certification offers:

- Transferability
- Enhanced professional profile and CV
- Advancement in new or current role
- Increased specialized knowledge
- Can reduce employers' legal exposure through management of regulatory requirements such as OSHA, FMLA, ADA, DOT, HIPAA
- Enhances disease management and health promotion skills
- Augments competence and on-the-job productivity

The reasons given for the demand:

- COVID-19 pandemic
- Increased demand from individuals
- Increased demand from employers

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SNAPSHOT OF CERTIFIED OHNs

- **Certified nurses in all specialties from the U.S. and Canada**
 - **Over 1 Million**
 - **134 Specialties**
 - **67 Nursing organizations issue 95 credentials**
- **Approximately 2,000 certified occupational health nurses**

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CERTIFICATIONS OFFERED



Core Credentials

- Certified Occupational Health Nurse (COHN)
- Certified Occupational Health Nurse-Specialist (COHN-S)



Additional Specialty Credential

- Case Management (CM)



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Investing IN & Advocating FOR Ourselves

Bridging Business & Clinical Value through Certification

Identified Gaps

- Limited **business acumen** among clinical professionals
- Lack of tools to quantify the **value of certification programs**

Building the Business Case

- Need for skills to effectively present **return on investment (ROI)**
- Common misconception: *“We're not a revenue-generating department”*
- Opportunity: Shift the narrative to **cost avoidance, risk reduction, and value creation**

Metrics That Matter

- Development of **cost aversion** and **impact** metrics
- Showcase certification as a **strategic investment** in quality, safety, and staff retention

So... What Does This Have to Do With Certification?

- **Perception:** Elevates professional credibility and organizational trust
- **Growth & Development:** Encourages continuous learning and internal leadership pipelines
- **Empowerment:** Equips teams to advocate for their own value and impact

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ABOHN 2023 PRACTICE ANALYSIS SURVEY

- ABOHN conducted a Practice/Job Analysis in 2023 to identify the job activities of occupational health nurses (OHNs).
 - Conducted every 5-7 years or more frequently contingent on needs/changes.
- In national certification examination programs, the examination specifications (ES) must appropriately reflect task responsibilities of all groups who will participate to ensure that the ES and resulting exam include tasks that are important for the target practitioners.
- ABOHN appointed a Practice Analysis Advisory Committee (PAAC) to develop a description of the scope of practice and to create a Job Analysis Survey (JAS) of OHNs and develop the Examination Specifications (ES) for all 3 examinations:
 - **Certified Occupational Health Nurse (COHN)**
 - **Certified Occupational Health Nurse – Specialist (COHN-S)**
 - **Case Management (CM)**

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Three Major Activities of Survey

Three major activities that comprised the job analysis process:

1. Job Analysis Committee Meeting

2. Job Analysis Survey

- The live survey was sent to 5,000 OHN professionals on March 21, 2023, and remained open through May 7, 2023. The number of individuals that initially responded were 686. After analysis, the final usable responses were 483.

3. Development of Examination Specifications



NEW EXAM CONTENT OUTLINES

What we learned:

A lot has changed due to and since the pandemic

Exam competency areas needed to be updated

Task list was not inclusive enough

How we responded:

- PAAC reviewed the task and knowledge area survey platform and performance results.
 - Estimated the exam content area weights after reviewing the results. The draft content weighting was developed by calculating the criticality value (mean importance rating multiplied by the mean frequency rating) and then determined a percentage weight based on the relative weight of the criticality value for each content area.
- New blueprints developed for all three exams
- ABOHN BOD reviewed and approved the new ECOs in June
- All items were re-classified by July
- New exam forms published in September



COHN Content Areas

2018	2024
1. Clinician Role	1. Clinical Practice and Case Management
2. Coordinator Role	2. Risk and Compliance
3. Advisor Role	3. Program Management and Quality Assurance
4. Case Manager Role	

2018	2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 Task Statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41 Task Statements

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COHN-S Content Areas

2018	2024
1. Clinician Role	1. Clinical Practice and Case Management
2. Manager Role	2. Risk and Compliance
3. Educator Role	3. Program Management and Quality Assurance
4. Consultant Role	4. Operations and Business Management
5. Case Manager Role	

2018	2024
• 60 Task Statements	• 58 Task Statements

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CM Content Areas



2018	2024
1. Fitness for Work	1. Clinical Practice and Case Management
2. Occupational Disability	2. Risk and Compliance
3. Non-Occupational Disability	3. Program Management and Quality Assurance
4. Case Manager Concepts	

2018	2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 Task Statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37 Task Statements

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Impact of Changes

Pass Rate Comparison

	Jan. – July 2024 (PSI)	Jan. – July 2025 (ASC)
COHN	47% Pass Rate 17 Total (8 pass/9 fail)	73.5% Pass Rate 49 Total (36 pass/13 fail)
COHN-S	53% Pass Rate 32 Total (18 pass/16 fail)	72.8% Pass Rate 62 Total (45 pass/17 fail)
CM	100% 3 Total	85% 7 Total (6 pass/1 fail)

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NURSING SPECIALTY ACCREDITATION



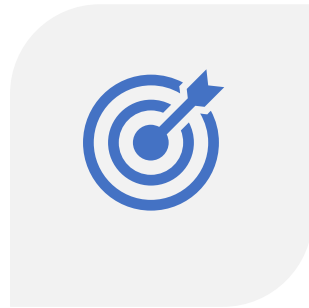
- Accreditation organizations require demonstration of competency / expertise
 - Successful testing
 - Work experience
 - Continuing education
 - Recertification every 3-5 years

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AMERICAN BOARD FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NURSES



**MISSION IS TO PROMOTE A
STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE IN
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NURSING
THROUGH CREDENTIALING**



**ABOHN IS THE SOLE
CERTIFYING AGENCY FOR
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
NURSES**



**CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS MEET
THE RIGOROUS STANDARDS FOR
ACCREDITATION BY NATIONAL
COMMISSION FOR CERTIFYING
AGENCIES (NCCA)**

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VALUE PROVIDED BY ABOHN

- Job Postings – Specific to credential holders
- Networking Opportunities
- Facebook and LinkedIn
- Resources
- Online database directory of current certified OHNs
- Career Guide
- ABOHN Report Spring and Fall Issues
- Weekly emails with updates and helpful information
- Continuing Education Links
- Digital Badges – includes your certification credentials, number, expiration date
- Advocacy of the OHN specialty

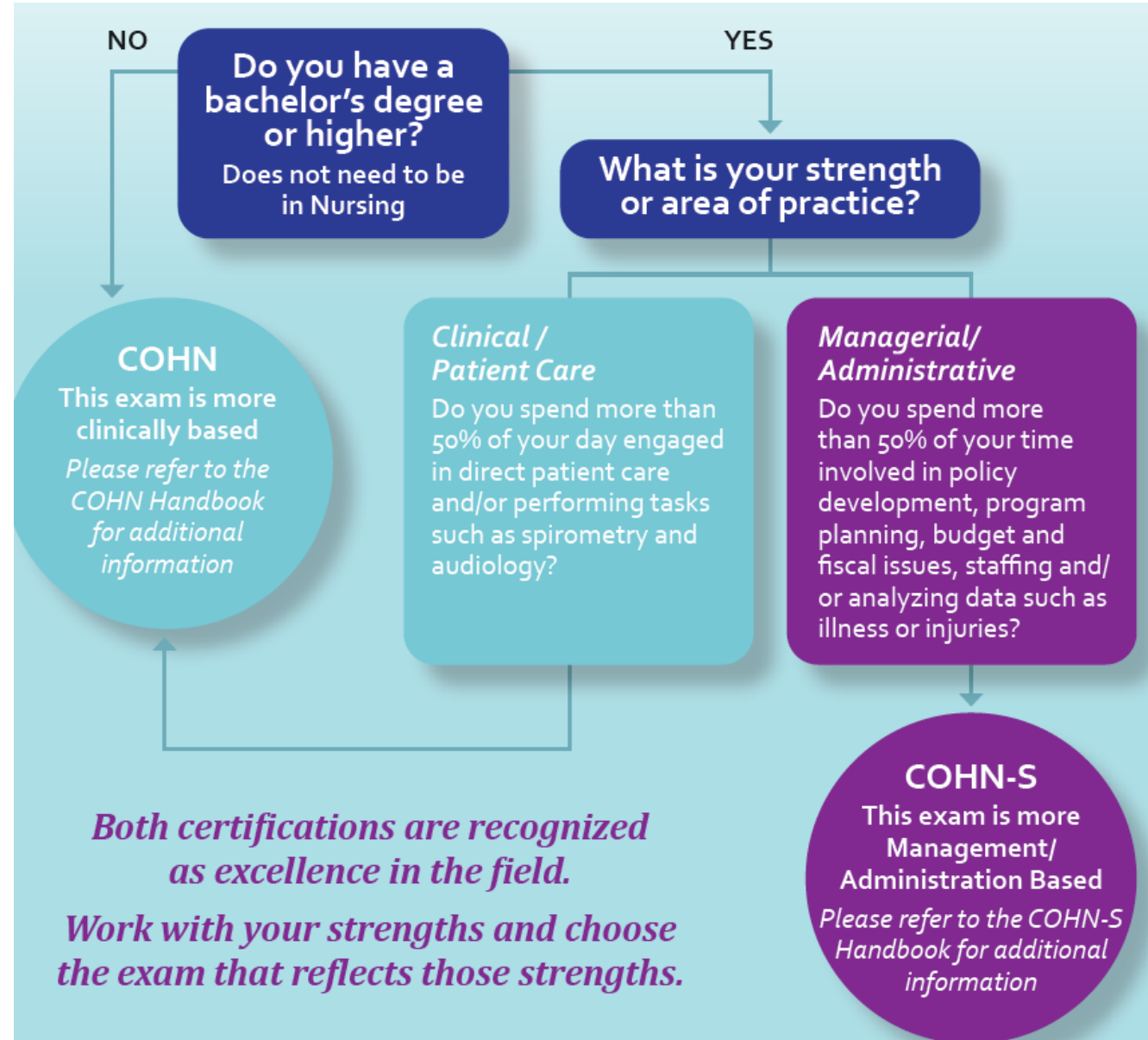
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CHOOSING AN EXAM

- Practice analysis in 2023 found that the primary focus of COHN continues to be clinical/patient care, and the primary focus of COHN-S is Managerial/ Administrative
- Both certifications are recognized as demonstration of excellence in the field





ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

COHN

- Active RN license
- 3000 hours experience in occupational health nursing within the past five years

COHN-S

- Active RN license
- 3000 hours experience in occupational health nursing within the past five years
- Baccalaureate or higher degree (does not have to be in nursing)

CM

- Currently active as a COHN or COHN-S
- Additional 10 continuing education hours in case management



APPLYING FOR THE EXAM

Apply online: www.abohn.org

Fees

- \$150 - Application
- \$400 - Core Exam
- \$250 - CM Exam

Required Documentation

- Nursing license
- Job description
- College transcripts/degree (COHN-S only)



CM EXAM INFORMATION

Case Manager (CM)

- COHN or COHN-S in active status
- Submit 10 hours of CM continuing education

Examination Focus (OHN CM practice)

- Fitness for work
- Occupational disability
- Non-occupational disability
- Case management concepts



EXAM ADMINISTRATION



Computer-based tests

Must be scheduled



Offered year-round

Administered by ASC



Security

Identification required



Timing

3 hours (core exams)

2 hours (CM)

*Practice test not timed



Core exams comprised of 135 multiple choice questions with an additional 25 pre-test questions



CM exam comprised of 100 multiple choice questions with an additional 10 pre-test questions

PREPARATION



IN 2021, ABOHN SOUGHT TO OBTAIN DATA REGARDING THE POSSIBLE FACTORS AFFECTING SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING CERTIFICATION



WEB BASED SURVEY WAS DISTRIBUTED TO SUCCESSFUL EXAM CANDIDATES FROM 2018 - 2020



DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS WAS COMPLETED

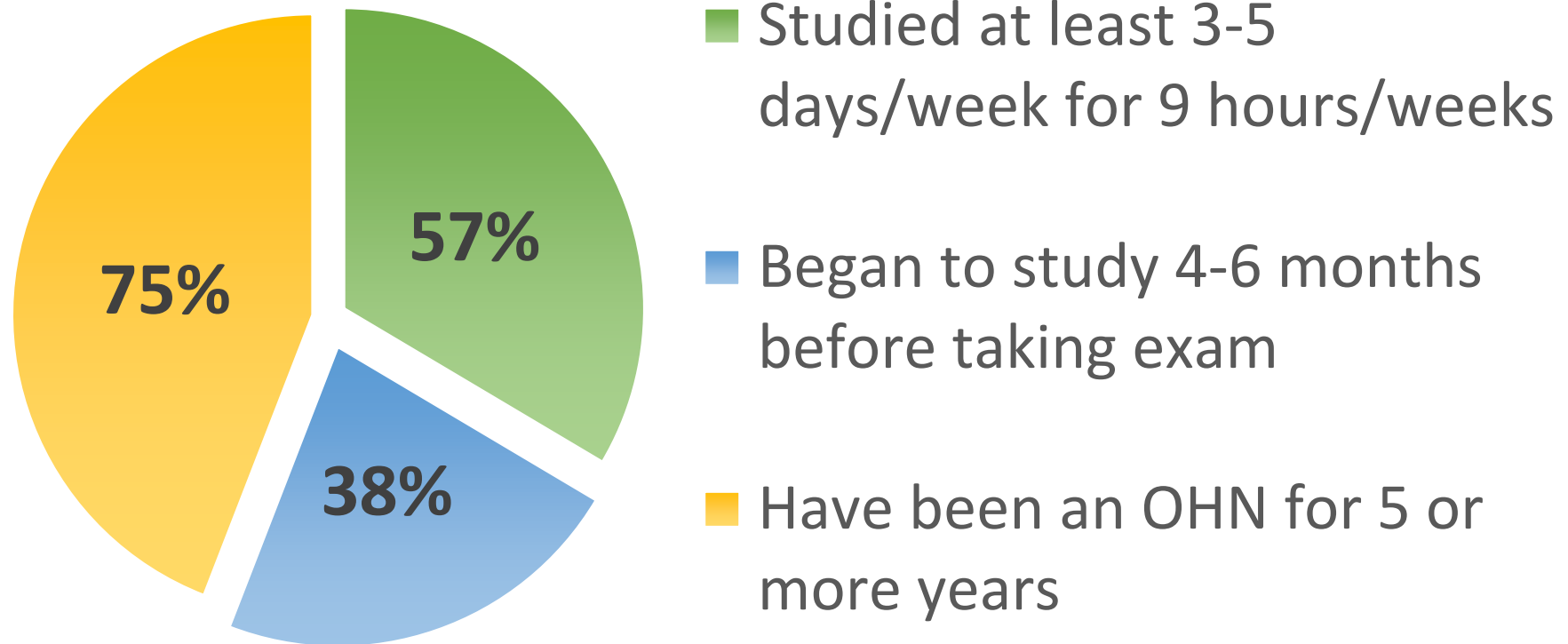


RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM 69 SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES FOR A 27.6% RESPONSE RATE (N=250)

FINDINGS

- **Successful exam candidates participate in a wide variety of preparation techniques, including:**
 - **Examination Review Courses**
 - **Candidate Handbooks**
 - **ABOHN CSATs**
 - **Examination Blueprints**
 - **Group or Individual Study**
 - **Journals**
 - **Books**
 - **Online Resources**

EXPERIENCE & STUDY TIME



SUMMARY OF RESULTS



**A CONSISTENT
STRUCTURED STUDY
PLAN IS AN
INDICATOR OF EXAM
SUCCESS**



**SUCCESSFUL EXAM
CANDIDATES USED
AAOHN CORE
CURRICULUM, OHN
REVIEW COURSE, AND
ABOHN CSATS TO
PREPARE FOR THE
EXAM**



**EACH PERSON NEEDS
TO TAKE AN
INDIVIDUALIZED
ASSESSMENT OF STUDY
PATHS TO ASSURE
THEIR SUCCESS**



**CERTIFICATION IS
AVAILABLE TO
INTERNATIONAL OHN'S**



**TO APPLY FOR AN
EXAMINATION, GO
TO [WWW.
ABOHN.ORG](http://WWW.ABOHN.ORG)**

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AVAILABLE RESOURCES

ABOHN Handbooks - Key Resource

- Blueprints
- Core content
- References

CSATs (Certification Self Assessment Tests)

Study materials and preparation courses

Study Buddy Program



SUMMARY

✓ Why Get Certified?

- Validates **expertise** and **professional judgment**
- Demonstrates **commitment** to excellence in OHN

☀ Benefits of Certification

- Recognition as a **leader** in the field
- Opportunities for **career growth** and **financial rewards**
- Encourages **lifelong learning** and **personal development**

🔗 Why ABOHN?

- Provides **ongoing professional support**
- Respected, nationally recognized certifying body

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THE WORK IS NOT DONE!

- Exam development is a constant and evolving process
- ABOHN remains committed to it's *Mission*
 - To promote a standard of excellence in occupational health nursing through credentialing.
- As of June 18, 2025, live remote proctoring is available!
- New candidate survey is being prepared for 2026 dissemination.
- Current credential holder new CE offerings coming 2026!
- Calls for SME committees.



NEXT STEP:

Invest in Yourself & Your Future!



Questions?



Please contact ABOHN office at info@abohn.org



Website: www.abohn.org

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