

So You Would Like to Become a Legal Nurse Consultant – Now What?

As the longtime Pittsburgh AALNC Membership Chair, calls regarding entry into the practice of legal nurse consulting frequently come into my office. My Administrative Assistant (and the AALNC Contact Person), Kathy, and I have been answering questions from nurses interested in legal nurse consulting for many years now. We thought it might be helpful to outline some of the frequently asked questions. Our responses to those questions are based on many years of talking with prospective members, as well as observing the evolution of Pittsburgh Chapter members' practices.

What training do I need to become an LNC?

In recent years the most frequently asked question usually relates to education for LNCs. At times individuals call seeking somewhat urgent advice, indicating they have checked into an LNC course and that payment is required immediately to assure enrollment. Other times, the individual has been considering a specific course and wants to know whether AALNC recommends that course.

AALNC offers an online LNC course and information regarding that course can be found at the national organization website, www.aalnc.org. AALNC does not endorse or recommend the services and/or products of other organizations, but does suggest individuals make informed choices by joining local chapters and learning more through networking.

Pittsburgh AALNC strongly supports the recommendation to join the local chapter and begin networking before considering any LNC training. The time and financial investment involved can be significant. We believe it may be well worth postponing the LNC education decision in order to learn more about LNC practice and where *you* might fit in. We tell all nurses considering legal nurse consulting that the best way to decide which course, if any, is needed or appropriate is to:

- Talk to practicing LNCs about how they got started
- Learn the many roles of the LNC in the medical legal arena
- Consider what type of LNC practice would be your niche in the field
- Get a sense of whether LNC practice is actually the right choice for you

Legal nurse consulting is a specialty practice of nursing. LNC education and/or certification are not required for entry into practice. LNC practice is ever changing, growing and developing. Despite what you might have heard or read, it is not usually easy or magically lucrative. Most importantly, being a Registered Nurse qualifies you to be an LNC. We believe that each interested individual should explore the field to determine if it is right for you. Nevertheless, some feel more comfortable after having taken a class or a course. Our primary suggestion is only that you take your time in learning more about legal nurse consulting practice before devoting time and money to educational programs.

Does the Pittsburgh Chapter provide mentors to assist new LNCs with entry into practice?

The Pittsburgh Chapter does not provide a mentoring program. Most practicing LNCs are in relatively demanding job and/or self employment situations that are not appropriate for formal mentoring programs. However, membership in the local chapter provides opportunities to meet LNCs and make contacts. Networking is a key part of our purpose and practice. The support and friendship available from other chapter members is invaluable and often professionally beneficial.

Do I need to be certified to practice as an LNC?

Certification is not required to practice as an LNC. Professional certification demonstrates an individual's experience and knowledge in a profession or specialty practice within a profession.

AALNC endorses the LNCC (Legal Nurse Consultant Certified), which is the legal nurse consulting certification available through the American Legal Nurse Consultant Certification Board (ALNCCB). Please visit the ALNCCB website (<http://www.aalnc.org/lnc/>) for more detailed information on LNCC certification.