



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PO Box 47890 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7890 Tel: 360-236-4030 • TTY Relay: 800-833-6388

December 28, 2023

The Honorable Jay Inslee
 Governor of the State of Washington
 Post Office Box 40002
 Olympia, Washington 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee:

RCW 18.88A.087 requires the Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) and the Department of Health to recognize alternative (bridge) training options for home care aides (HCAs) and medical assistants (MAs) to qualify for the nursing assistant-certified (NA-C) credential. It requires the secretary of health, in consultation with WABON, to report annually to the governor and legislature on progress made to advance certified HCAs and MAs into nursing assistant practice. This is our eleventh report.

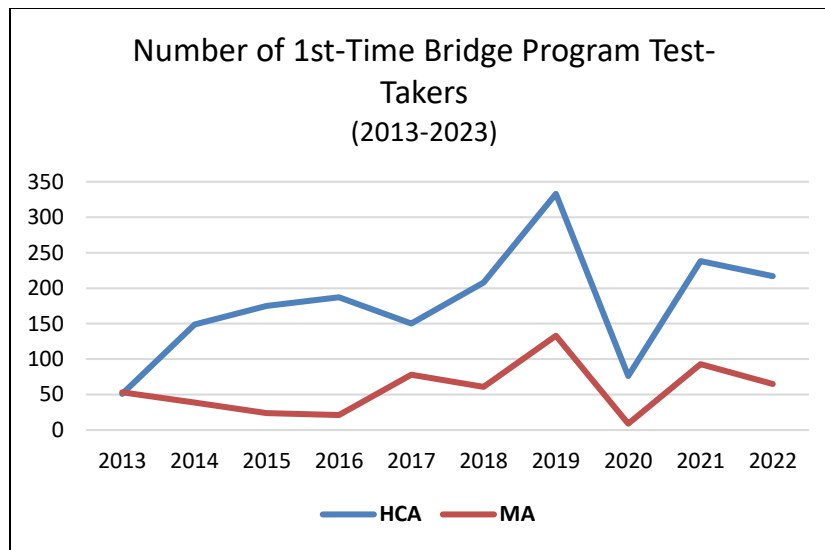
WABON adopted curriculum and minimum education and training requirements for bridge training programs for HCAs and MAs in 2011. WABON also created processes to approve and deny bridge training programs and to allow bridge training program graduates to take the competency evaluation (test) and apply for an NA-C credential. These requirements are currently found in WAC 246-841-530 through 585.

WABON approved the first two programs for bridge training in October 2012. As of August 2023, there are 32 approved bridge programs distributed as follows:

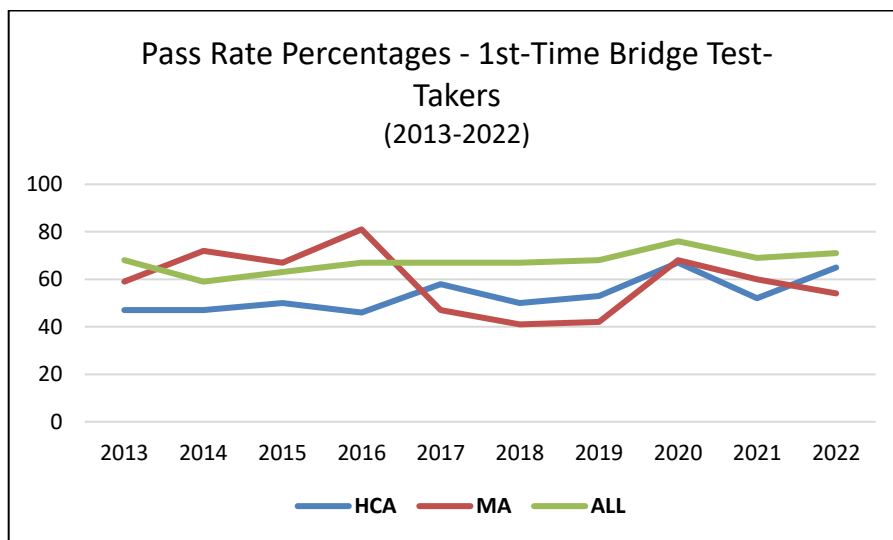
Program Type	Total # of Programs	# in Western WA	# in Eastern WA
HCA Bridge	22	16	6
MA Bridge	10	7	3
Combined Bridge	32	23	9

Since July 1, 2012, the department has issued 2,115 NA-C credentials for applicants who have completed bridge training programs, with 414 issued since last year's report. As of July 2023, 4 additional applications from individuals who have completed a bridge training program are awaiting approval.

The following charts show: the number of first-time test-takers for each type of bridge program and the percentage passing both parts of the test (written and skills) on first attempt.



The number of HCA and MA test-takers dropped in 2020, due to testing closures during the pandemic, but 2021 showed growth toward recovery. The 2022 numbers appear to be down; however, this trend is more a reflection of the need for greater access to skills testing (the graph includes only those who have taken both the written and the skills exams and does not reflect those who have taken the written exam and are waiting for their skills exam). WABON recently adopted a new skill testing model: RN directors and instructors in approved training programs are going through specialized training to act as skills test evaluators, which will infuse hundreds of skills testing slots into our system statewide. This new model of evaluating will be implemented as of October 1, which will enable students to take the skills test immediately following graduation.



*Percentages reflect average annualized pass rates across statewide training programs.

HCA bridge pass rates rose in 2022. The updated curriculum discussed below removed the previous cap of 24 hours and increased the hours to 36 because insufficient time in the training program was identified as a key factor impacting pass rates. The statutory change to remove the cap of 24 hours for training has had a positive impact. Fluctuations in MA bridge pass rates likely reflect skew due to small numbers of test-takers (small sample size). Pass rates peaked in 2020 for all test-taker types, also likely reflecting skew due to the small number of test-takers during the pandemic.

The 2023-2025 biennium brings to fruition a multi-year WABON initiative focused on transforming nursing assistant training and testing. This work, completed with active engagement from interested parties, includes:

- A new common curriculum for bridge program students
- Major revisions to the testing approach for nursing assistant certification
- A re-write of the nursing assistant rules chapter to incorporate these transformative changes (WAC Chapter 246-841A—CR 103 filing in September 2023 with publication expected in October 2023).

The bridge program curriculum provides for revised, updated content and training hours targeted to support improved pass rates. The new rules require training programs to submit an implementation plan for the common curricula by May 2024 and begin full implementation by September 2024. Evaluation of the impact of the curriculum on pass rates will be ongoing.

Our re-structured plan for testing, launching October 1, 2023, will allow approved training program directors and instructors to conduct skills testing for students immediately upon graduation. This plan is designed to eliminate lengthy delays between graduation and testing--historically averaging 35-40 days—and is expected to improve pass rates.

WABON also plans to pilot a new evaluation approach for skills testing in 2024 to focus on three key principles for performing skills to the standard of care: (1) safety, (2) infection control, and (3) patient rights. These three key principles are emphasized throughout each unit of the common curriculum to facilitate deep internalization. Emphasizing the same key principles for skills competency evaluation provides seamless continuity and is expected to support student success and improved pass rates.

For questions about this report, please contact Kathy Moisio, Director of Nursing Assistant Programs, at kathy.moisio@doh.wa.gov or 360-490-5783.

Sincerely,



Sasha De Leon, MA, MSPH, MS
Assistant Secretary
Health Systems Quality Assurance

cc: The Honorable Annette Cleveland, Senate Health Care Committee
The Honorable Marcus Riccelli, House Health Care and Wellness Committee
Amber Leaders, Governor's Policy Office
Christie Spice, Department of Health
Alison Bradywood, Washington State Board of Nursing
Kathy Moisio, Washington State Board of Nursing