



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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January 29, 2026

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

Dear Governor Ferguson:

[RCW 18.88A.087](#) requires the Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) and the Department of Health (department) 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 also 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. [Chapter 5, laws of 2025](#) removed this requirement going forward, so this is the final report. Data in this report represents the full calendar year for 2024.

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 246-841A-530 through 585.

WABON approved the first two programs for bridge training in October 2012. As of September 2025, there are 30 approved bridge programs as described in Table 1.

Table 1 – Number and Region of Approved Training Programs

Program Type	Total # of Programs	# in Western* WA	# in Eastern* WA
HCA Bridge	22	18	4
MA Bridge	8	5	3
Combined Bridge	30	23	7

*East or west of the Cascade Mountains.

Since July 1, 2012, the department has issued 2,402 NA-C credentials for applicants who have completed bridge training programs.

Exam Volumes and Pass Rates

In October 2023, WABON fully assumed responsibility for the NA-C skills exam, allowing training programs to use their own Registered Nurse (RN) directors or instructors to evaluate students in place of third-party examiners. The intent of this pilot program¹ was to increase testing availability, raise test volumes, and streamline the process to support more rapid workforce entry. This shift contributed to a 42.6% increase in the number of test takers between 2022 and 2023.

Among HCA bridge program candidates, the pass rate rose from 69% in 2022 to 76% in 2023, before leveling off slightly at 74% in 2024. For MA bridge program candidates, pass rates increased from 78% in 2022 to 83% in 2023 and 93% in 2024. However, the percentages for MA candidates may be less reliable due to the small sample size.

Overall, the increase in pass rates is likely linked to students testing in more familiar environments and completing the exam shortly after finishing training, both of which may enhance confidence and performance.

Pilot Program 2024

In 2024, WABON launched a new skills-testing pilot that allowed programs to incorporate the skills exam into their training. Pilot programs are responsible for evaluating and grading their own students. The pilot officially began in November 2024, and while a small handful of programs started participating before 2025, no bridge programs launched during 2024. An asterisk appears next to the total number of NA-C skills exam program participants for 2024, as WABON may be missing a small number of test candidate records due to relying on quarterly data submissions from the pilot programs.

Testing Data

Table 2 and Figure 1 illustrate the number of first-time test takers for each type of bridge program and the percentage of test takers passing the skills exam and written exam on their first attempt from 2022 to 2024. WABON does not have separate data for the written and skills tests from prior years due to a change in the testing vendor in January 2022.

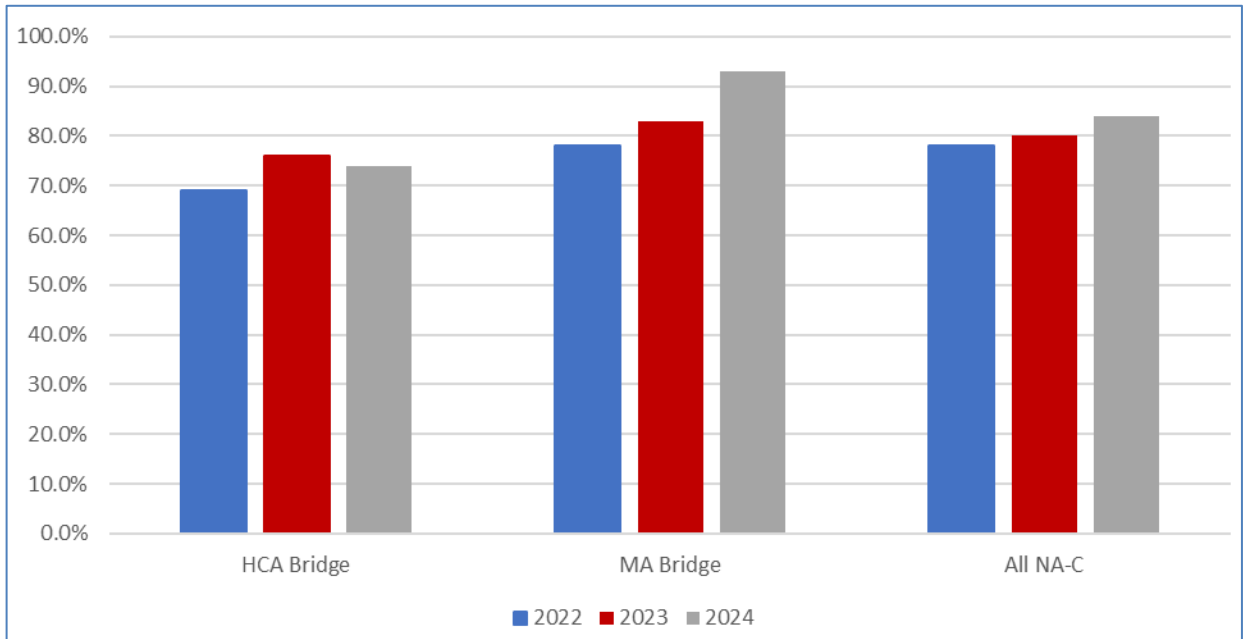
Table 2 - Number of First-Time Test Takers: Skills Exam 2022-2024

Program Type	<u>2022</u> # passed/# tested	<u>2023</u> # passed/# tested	<u>2024 *</u> # passed/# tested
HCA Bridge	393/572	686/902	553/748
MA Bridge	18/23	15/18	14/15
All NA-C	4,890/6250	7,118/8,913	7,840/9,366

* WABON may be missing a small number of test candidate records for 2024 due to relying on quarterly data submissions from the pilot programs.

¹ WABON intends to make this pilot permanent next year.

Figure 1 - First-Time Test Taker Skills Exam Pass Rate Comparison*



* WABON may be missing a small number of test candidate records for 2024 due to relying on quarterly data submissions from the pilot programs.

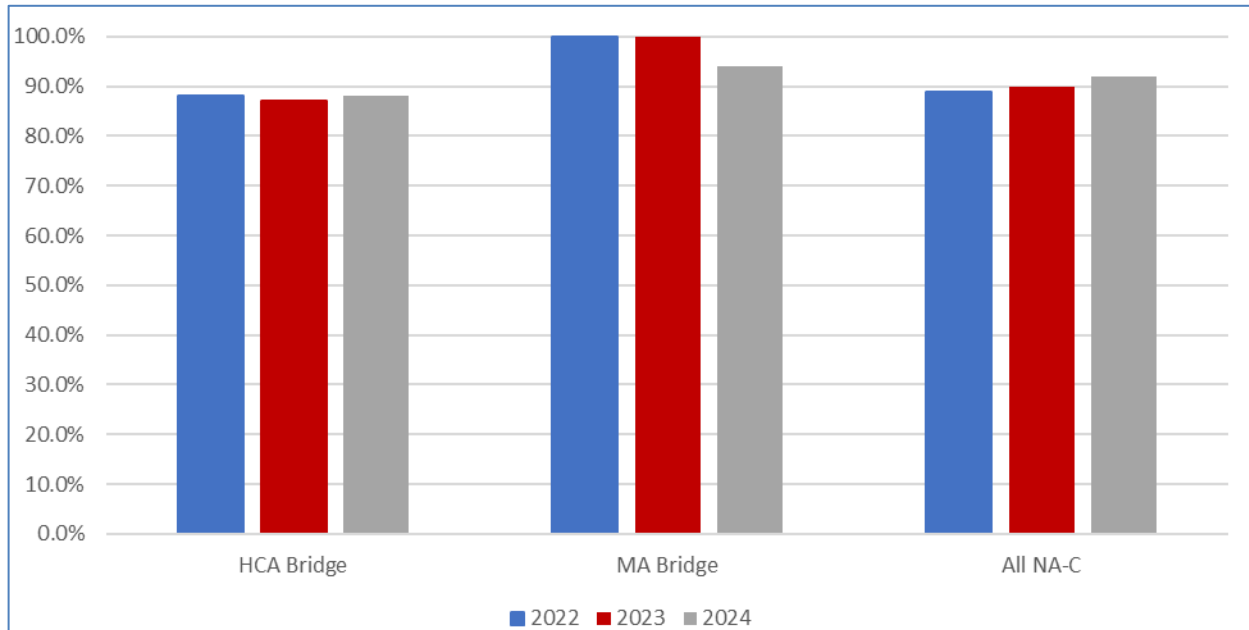
Written Exam

Table 3 and Figure 2 show first-time written exam pass rates for HCA Bridge, MA Bridge, and all NA-C programs across 2022, 2023, and 2024. Written exam pass rates show only minor changes, attributed to normal variation, as the availability and delivery of the written exam remained consistent through 2024.

Table 3 - Number of First-Time Test Takers: Written Exam 2022-2024

Program Type	<u>2022</u> # passed/# tested	<u>2023</u> # passed/# tested	<u>2024</u> # passed/# tested
HCA Bridge	561/637	735/841	693/784
MA Bridge	23/23	26/26	31/33
All NA-C	5,470/6,160	6,920/7,660	6,868/7,452

Figure 2 - First-Time Test Taker Written Exam Pass Rate Comparison



Continued Process Improvement

[Chapter 246-841A WAC](#) was published in October 2023, mandating that all nursing assistant training programs adhere to a new common curriculum starting in September 2024. This revised curriculum includes updated content and training hours designed to support improved pass rates and preparation for the work environment. Prospective evaluation of the new curriculum is planned following implementation.

WABON has continued to refine processes and has gathered valuable feedback from interested parties to further improve efficiencies with the skills exam. WABON has developed draft rule language for the NA-C Skills exam based on the 2024 pilot where nursing programs incorporate the skills exam into their training, aiming to further reduce barriers for students seeking certification after completing their training programs. Additional work continues to address federal regulations that present barriers to entry into the nursing assistant workforce, and to decrease costs and delays that impact students directly.

For questions about this report, please contact Reuben Argel, RN, Director of Nursing Assistant Education Programs, at reuben.argel@doh.wa.gov or 360-819-0967.

Sincerely,

Shawna Fox
Acting Assistant Secretary
Health Systems Quality Assurance

cc: The Honorable Annette Cleveland, Senate Health Care Committee
The Honorable Dan Bronoske, House Health Care and Wellness Committee
Caitlin Safford, Governor's Policy Office
Megan Veith, Department of Health
Alison Bradywood, Washington State Board of Nursing
Reuben Argel, Washington State Board of Nursing
Anthony Partridge, Washington State Board of Nursing