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PNCB's 'Cert Now, Pay Later' Pilot Program Wins 2026 I.C.E. Innovator Award

ROCKVILLE, MD (October 17, 2026)—The Pediatric Nursing Certification Board (PNCB) is pleased to announce that the **Cert Now, Pay Later** pilot program has received the 2026 Institute for Credentialing Excellence (I.C.E.) Innovator Award. The pilot program aimed to reduce the barriers to obtaining [Pediatric Primary Care Mental Health Specialist \(PMHS\) certification](#).

The I.C.E. Innovator Award recognizes individuals or organizations that develop innovative products, policies, processes, or systems that transform existing practices or achieve new levels of success. Award-winning innovations must demonstrate transformative impact and the potential for replication across organizations and industries, extending their value beyond a specific profession or industry.

PNCB reimaged the certification process through its PMHS **Cert Now, Pay Later** pilot program, by removing the upfront financial barrier and enabling eligible providers to pursue specialty certification immediately while maintaining the rigor, integrity, and accountability of the credentialing process.

"The innovation focused on accelerating workforce readiness by ensuring that financial considerations did not delay the preparation of highly qualified providers to care for children with developmental, behavioral, and mental health needs," shared Chief Credentialing Officer Adele Foerster, MSN, RN, CPNP-PC/AC, ICE-CCP. "Under this model, the initial financial obligation shifts from the candidate to the credentialing organization. This approach preserves the integrity of the certification process while reducing a barrier to participation."

PNCB Chief Executive Officer Sheri Sesay-Tuffour, PhD, FASAE, CAE, ICE-CCP, IOM, added, "At a time when children's developmental, behavioral, and mental health needs continue to grow, PNCB is demonstrating that credentialing organizations can do more than validate specialized health care competence. We are honored to receive this prestigious recognition from I.C.E., which reinforces the importance of innovation in expanding access to certification and supporting the health care professionals who care for children and their families."

The Pediatric Nursing Certification Board is the largest and most essential organization for the certification, continuing education, and competency development of nursing professionals who provide care for infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. Established in 1975, PNCB currently certifies more than 56,000 nursing professionals holding one of four credentials: Certified Pediatric Nurse (CPN), Acute Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (CPNP-AC), Primary Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (CPNP-PC), and Pediatric Primary Care Mental Health Specialist (PMHS). PNCB serves as the leading voice for credentialing in pediatric nursing and for pediatric health policy discussions throughout the country. PNCB's mission is to be a driving force for quality in pediatric nursing globally, with a vision for a healthier world, one child at a time. For more information about the PNCB, please visit our website at pncb.org.

The Institute for Credentialing Excellence (I.C.E.) is a professional membership association that provides education, networking, and other resources for organizations and individuals who work in and serve the credentialing industry. I.C.E. is a leading developer of standards for both certification and certificate programs and it is both a provider of and a clearing house for information on trends in certification, test development and delivery, assessment-based certificate programs, and other information relevant to the credentialing community.

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