

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Request for Information #67-204

Nurse Aide Testing & Competency Evaluation Virtual and/or Hybrid Models

Summary.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (“Department”), Office of Procurement issues this Request for Information (“RFI”) to gather input and information concerning the development and implementation of a virtual and/or hybrid skills assessment examination process for Nurse Aides entering the long-term care sector in Pennsylvania. There are two parts to this examination process - a skills examination and a written examination. All nurse aide applicants must pass both examinations before being listed on the Nurse Aide Registry (“Registry”). Additional information about the current nurse aide registration process can be found on the Department website: <https://www.pa.gov/services/health/apply-to-become-a-nurse-aide.html>

Specifically, this RFI seeks information to assist the Department in evaluating options for delivering virtual or facility-based nurse aide skill examinations that meet federal and state requirements, ensure testing accessibility statewide, and address workforce shortages. Through this RFI, the Department intends to become aware of and knowledgeable about existing models, technologies, operational logistics, training and credentialing frameworks, and regulatory considerations that support successful and scalable virtual nurse aide skills examination solutions. This includes understanding industry best practices, cost structures, implementation timelines, and potential options for piloting and expanding such a program in Pennsylvania.

The Department encourages interested parties to provide feedback in response to this RFI by responding to all or any of the specific questions or topics included in this RFI.

Background.

Pennsylvania’s more than 600 long-term care nursing facilities are facing significant workforce shortages among Nurse Aides, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Access to care for existing and potential residents is impacted by this shortage. Facilities must make admission decisions based upon the availability of adequate and competent staff. Without enough Nurse Aides on the Registry, disruptions to care delivery are more likely to occur. Pennsylvania strives to train, test, and register thousands of Nurse Aides annually. When traditional in-person test sites are not available or are at capacity, nurse aide testing candidates may have to travel long distances or wait months to complete their skills evaluation, further delaying their registration. The lack of a sufficient number of skills examination test sites and nurse evaluators to accommodate the volume of nurse aide students seeking skills evaluations creates a barrier to registration.

To address these challenges, the Department is exploring options for a scalable, virtual or hybrid Nurse Aide skills examination model that meets all federal and state requirements. This model would aim to:

- Increase access to testing through virtual and mobile examination options;
- Provide flexible, equitable solutions for facilities and candidates in rural or underserved areas;
- Reduce delays and prevent loss of trained Nurse Aides due to certification bottlenecks;
- Ensure consistency, integrity, and regulatory compliance across all evaluations.

The Department is particularly interested in learning about successful implementations of virtual and hybrid Nurse Aide skills evaluation models in other states. Respondents are encouraged to share how they have developed, implemented, or supported similar programs, including key strategies, partnerships, outcomes and lessons learned.

Issues to Be Addressed.

The Department is requesting feedback from respondents with expertise in Nurse Aide Testing & Competency Evaluation Virtual and/or Hybrid Models, as set forth below. Please prepare responses simply, providing straightforward and concise language and descriptions. All responses should be produced in 12-point font. Please limit your response to no more than 20 pages, not including the cover letter or attachments. Please refrain from sending marketing materials to the Department.

1. Include a cover letter, with the RFI response, on company letterhead, which includes:
 - a. An introduction to the respondent's organization, background, and interest in providing information regarding virtual or hybrid skills training and examination services for Nurse Aides in Pennsylvania.
 - b. General information about the respondent and respondent's organization, to include an address and a point of contact along with a telephone number and an e-mail address.
2. Complete Attachment A, Nurse Aide Testing & Competency Evaluation Virtual and/or Hybrid Models Questionnaire. Please respond to the questions in the questionnaire and limit the responses to these questions only.

Due Date.

The Department is requesting that all responses to this RFI be submitted via email to RA-DHHEALTH_DEPT_DOC@pa.gov by 5pm ET on Thursday August 14, 2025, with the subject line of RFI #67-204 Nurse Aide Testing.

The Department does not intend to respond to questions or requests for clarifications during the RFI response period.

Disclaimer.

The Department is not liable for any costs or expenses incurred by respondents in the preparation of responses related to this RFI.

This RFI is issued for information and planning purposes only and does not constitute a solicitation for future business, an offer for procurement, or any other type of current or future procurement

action and is only intended to gather information and input. The Department will not award an agreement on the basis of this RFI or otherwise pay for any of the information received.

The Department may use the information gathered through this process in the development of future procurement documents; however, the Department does not guarantee that this will occur. The Department will not return responses to this RFI. Respondents will not be notified of the result of the review, nor will they be provided copies of it. If the Department issues a procurement document, no offeror will be selected, pre-qualified, or exempted based on its participation in this RFI process.

Respondents should be aware that the responses to this RFI will be public information and that no claims of confidentiality including any copyright designations will be honored. All responses are subject to a request for public records made under the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know-Law, 65 P.S. § 67.101, et seq., and may be subject to disclosure thereunder. The Department is not requesting, and does not require, confidential, proprietary information, or other competitively sensitive information to be included as part of the RFI submission. Ownership of all data, material and documentation originated, prepared, and provided to the Department during this RFI process will belong exclusively to the Department. Any documents or information that is designated as confidential or proprietary will not be accepted under this RFI and any electronic submissions will be deleted.

Department Reservation of Rights.

The Department reserves the right to consider or reject any and all responses to this RFI, to amend and/or reissue this RFI and to abandon and then recommence at any time, or not recommence, this process. All costs of any response to this RFI and participation in any presentations to the Department are solely the responsibility of the Respondent and the Department shall not be liable for payment of any such costs.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
ATTACHMENT A

Nurse Aide Testing & Competency Evaluation Virtual and/or Hybrid Models Questionnaire

1. What is the industry standard for Nurse Aide Testing & Competency Evaluation Virtual and/or Hybrid Models?
2. Virtual Nurse Aide Skills Evaluation Model
 - a. Describe your organization's experience with virtual or remote clinical examination and recommendations to expand the availability of accurate and reliable testing opportunities.
 - b. Outline the technology platform and tools that the Commonwealth should consider (e.g., Zoom, LMS integration) and the IT equipment and software, or access to IT equipment and software, needed for the nurse aide students.
 - c. What are best practices for engaging and communicating with candidates throughout the process?
 - d. What protocols and best practices are needed to direct and maintain appropriate camera positioning, video clarity, and audio quality to meet examination standards?
 - i. Must be set up to resemble an actual caregiving situation and will look like the work setting.
 - ii. The skills evaluation must be administered by a Nurse Aide Evaluator.
 - iii. Before the skills evaluation begins, the evaluator will show the candidate where equipment is located and answer questions about operating the equipment.
 - e. What best practices and protocols are needed for handling technical interruptions and disconnections?
 - f. What best practices and protocols to execute skill selection randomization, accurately record and securely store results and transmitted to appropriate parties?
 - g. What considerations and protocols need to be in place in the event of a skills examination testing cancellation?
 - h. What considerations, best practices, and protocols need to be considered in the event testing results are challenged by applicants?
 - i. Describe your organization's process to maintain test integrity in a hybrid or virtual environment. What steps are taken by the proctor and/or evaluator to ensure the integrity of the exam?
3. In-Person or Mobile Evaluation Support
 - a. What are best practices and protocols for the deployment of clinical evaluators for on-site or mobile skills examinations?
 - b. What strategies could be utilized to support both in-person, hybrid or virtual models across the Commonwealth with geographic regions that include urban, suburban and rural areas?
 - c. What are recommended best practices for handling equipment and materials at training sites whether for hybrid or virtual examinations models?
 - d. What are best practices for evaluator training and compliance tracking and monitoring?

4. Regulatory and Programmatic Compliance

- a. Describe how your hybrid or virtual skills examination model currently meets or could be modified to meet the existing applicable state and federal regulations.
 - i. Would there be any exceptions or concerns as opposed to changes in federal and state regulations required or recommended to accommodate a hybrid or virtual skills examination model?
- b. How would you confirm that RN evaluators meet regulatory and professional requirements? Currently an evaluator must be a RN with one or more years of experience caring for the elderly or the chronically ill of any age.
- c. What are the best practices and protocols required to ensure retention of system documents and candidate performance, attendance, and testing outcomes in accordance with all federal, state and local regulations?
- d. Please share best practices and real examples for accommodating ADA requests and ensuring equitable access with Hybrid or Virtual skills evaluation models.

5. Operational and Administrative Capacity

- a. What timeline would you propose for a pilot program, pilot evaluation, and subsequent statewide rollout if effectiveness and value is demonstrated?
- b. What is required for a pilot program to develop a rigorous evaluation that addresses the different geographical areas urban/suburban/rural across Pennsylvania?
- c. What outcomes measures are recommended to evaluate a pilot program?
- d. What staffing model would support a high-volume of skills examinations, which may be between 5,000 to 10,000 evaluations annually?
- e. What training and onboarding resources and strategies would be needed or recommended for long-term care facilities, learning institutions, or other organizations and on-site staff who may support a hybrid or virtual examination process?
- f. How would you recommend marketing or promoting the availability of this examination option across the Commonwealth?

6. Data Management and Reporting

- a. Describe best practices for data reporting tools and capabilities.
- b. What best practices and procedures would be necessary to securely and accurately transmit test results to state systems such as the Registry?
- c. What metrics or reports could be available or recommended to support overall program oversight by the Commonwealth?

7. Cost and Resource Requirements

- a. Provide a high-level cost estimate for implementing and operating the proposed solution.
- b. What equipment or technical requirements should be available at facilities and how should that be distributed and managed?
- c. What hardware or technical support would be necessary for facilities with limited resources to be successful and how should that be provided?
- d. Provide a timeline for implementation.

8. Identify your vendor-to-vendor collaboration plan for ensuring seamless implementation.
9. Identify the key performance indicators and service levels in this industry.
10. Are there any value-add services that have not been detailed in this RFI that we should consider when developing a new solicitation? Please describe.
11. Are there any other recommendations or lessons learned that have not already been mentioned but that the Department should consider?