

CRNA School Application Checklist and Timeline

everythingcrna.com · October 2026

18 to 24 months before you apply

- ☐ Get a job in a high-acuity adult ICU (surgical, medical, cardiac, cardiothoracic, neuro or trauma).
- ☐ Check your cumulative, science and last-60-credit GPA. Plan retakes or graduate science courses if any is under 3.0.
- ☐ List 8 to 12 programs and note each one's minimum GPA, ICU years, prerequisites and time limits.
- ☐ Start a running log of the drips, devices and procedures you manage.

12 to 18 months before

- ☐ Take missing prerequisites (often statistics, chemistry, anatomy and physiology).
- ☐ Sit the CCRN once you meet the hours (1,750 in two years or 2,000 in five).
- ☐ Shadow a CRNA for at least one full day; note what surprised you.
- ☐ Decide whether you'll take the GRE; most programs no longer require it.
- ☐ Take on a unit role: charge, preceptor, committee or rapid response.

6 to 12 months before

- ☐ Confirm each program's application opening date and deadline. Earlier is usually better.
- ☐ Ask three references early: a nurse manager, a physician or CRNA, and a professor or charge nurse. Send each a one-page brief.
- ☐ Order transcripts from every college you've attended.
- ☐ Draft your personal statement; get two honest readers.
- ☐ Create your NursingCAS or program portal accounts.
- ☐ Budget for application fees (median \$85), the CCRN and travel to interviews.

Submitting

- ☐ Tailor your statement to each program's mission and format.
- ☐ Check references have been submitted; NursingCAS won't let you replace a completed one.
- ☐ Verify your RN license and certifications (BLS, ACLS, PALS) are current.
- ☐ Keep a tracker of every program, status and date.

Interview season

- ☐ Review physiology, pharmacology and your own patients: vasoactive drips, ventilation, acid-base, hemodynamics.
- ☐ Practice clinical scenarios out loud and a two-minute "tell me about yourself".
- ☐ Prepare three questions for each program about clinical sites, attrition and support.
- ☐ Plan travel, attire and documents.

After an offer

- ☐ Compare offers on total cost, clinical sites, NCE pass rate and attrition.
- ☐ Pay the seat deposit by the deadline (median \$1,500, usually non-refundable).
- ☐ Plan your finances for 36 months without full-time work. Note new federal loan limits since July 2026.
- ☐ Give notice at work in line with your contract.

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