QUESTIONS NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES MIGHT HAVE ABOUT RECENCY OF PRACTICE:

I am planning to take 5 years leave to meet my family responsibilities which my industrial award allows me to do. How can I be required to work while I am caring for my family?

The Public Health System Nurses' and Midwives' (State) Award (the award) provides for various forms of leave including maternity leave, career break and long service leave. In theory, you can take different combinations of leave and be away from nursing or midwifery for five years.

However, the industrial award does not cover standards of professional practice and if you wish to return to nursing following a lengthy period of leave you must meet the following standards:

- Recency of Practice Standard which requires you to demonstrate the equivalent of three months full-time work in a five year period as laid down by the NMBA; and
- Continuing Professional Development Standard which requires you to undertake and maintain a record of 20 hours per year.

I will be away from nursing for several years to care for my children or look after my ageing parents – will this count towards demonstrating recency of practice?

No – the NMBA has been very clear in its decisions that caring for children, ageing parents or sick relatives does not constitute practicing your profession.

What should I do to meet the recency of practice standard if I am planning take a break from nursing?

Remember the definition of practice is broad - some steps you may wish to take could include:

- working sufficient shifts so that you meet the recency of practice requirement - three months full time equivalent in five years is about three to four weeks work per year.
- keep records of where you have worked – the number of hours and dates worked and a copy of the position description;
- undertake CPD and keep records of these.
What happens if I don’t meet the recency of practice standard when I want to return to my profession?

Previously registered nurses and midwives who have not practised for a period of five years or more will be required to undergo an individual assessment of their application. This assessment will be based on the previously registered nurse and/or midwife’s

- qualifications (including both undergraduate and postgraduate nursing and/or midwifery studies)
- professional practice history, and
- length of time away from practice.

The outcome of this assessment will determine whether the person is required to complete:

1. a Board approved supervised practice program;
2. a Board approved re-entry to practice program; or
3. requisite studies in a re-entry to practice program within a Board approved entry to practice program for study leading to initial registration, as identified by a Board approved education provider following recognition of the individual’s prior learning.

This information is set out in more detail in the NMBA’s Re-entry to Practice Policy at www.nursingandmidwiferyboard.gov.au

What Board approved re-entry to practice programs are available in NSW?

At present, the only Board approved re-entry program in NSW is the Assessment of Competence Program run by the College of Nursing, located at Burwood. There is currently no approved program delivered in NSW for midwifery.

The Assessment of Competence Program currently costs $10,000. The major contributing factor to the cost of this program is the professional indemnity insurance the College must hold in order for currently unregistered persons to undertake the clinical component of the program.

The development of any further re-entry programs in NSW is a matter for education providers. Any future programs needs to be accredited by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) before it could be offered to previously registered nurses and midwives.

$10,000 is a significant cost – is there any assistance available?

60 re-entry scholarships up to the value of $10,000 are available from NSW Health to assist previously registered nurses who do not meet the recency of practice standard. Information about these scholarships, which are linked to employment in the public health system, is available at: www.health.nsw.gov.au/nursing/scholarships.asp
Can I do the College of Nursing’s Assessment of Competence Program online?

Not at present.

Previously registered nurses who wish to complete the Program must undertake the 8 week Assessment of Competence Program. The initial four weeks require attendance at The College of Nursing for a theoretical update and are assessment of clinical skills in a simulated environment. The remaining four week clinical component may be undertaken at health facilities across NSW – in rural, regional or metropolitan locations.

Are there any other Board approved re-entry programs available?

Online programs are now available at Central Queensland University and the Institute of Health and Nursing Australia.

Individuals may apply for NSW Health’s re-entry to nursing scholarships to participate in Board approved re-entry to nursing programs available in other states as long as they are prepared to work in a NSW public hospital for 2 years on completion of the program (minimum 16 hours per week) and regaining of their registration.

The following links provide information about the programs offered by Central Queensland University and the Institute of Health and Nursing Australia.


http://www.ihna.edu.au/courses/category/Online-Nursing/Online-Re-entry-or-Return-to-Practice-Program-for-Australian-Registered-Nurses

How can I check if recency of practice and other registration standards change while I am on leave?

You need to regularly check the NMBA website at www.nursingandmidwiferyboard.gov.au

Who can I talk to if I require further information about the recency of practice standard?

You should call the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Authority on 1300 419 495. While recency of practice is a national requirement of an independent registration authority you can also call the NSW Ministry of Health’s Nursing and Midwifery Office on 9391 9528.
It is more than 10 years since I last practiced? What should I do?

You will need to seek advice from the NMBA about your options.

KEY MESSAGE – If you planning to take maternity leave or another form of extended leave and intend to resume your nursing or midwifery career please take the necessary steps to ensure you meet the NMBA’s recency of practice standard. That means keeping your work and CPD records up to date to show that you have worked for at least three months in a five year period.

You worked hard to become a nurse or midwife – DON'T LOSE YOUR REGISTRATION
How long since you registered to practice in Australia?

- More than 10 years: Contact NMBA for advice
- Between 5 and 10 years: Contact NMBA for advice
- Less than 5 years: Do you meet NMBA Recency of practice standard?

  - NO: Do you have confirmation from NMBA that you need to undertake re-entry program?
    - NO: Contact NMBA for advice
    - YES: Contact College of Nursing, CQU or Institute of Health and Nursing
  - YES: You can be employed as an EN, RN or RM (as per your registration)
  - Don’t know: Review NMBA standard

Adapted from Factsheet 4 – Make a choice. Make a difference. Nursing and Midwifery in Victoria Victorian Government 2012