The baccalaureate degree in nursing (BSN) is required for entry into most Nurse Leader Master’s Programs. There are innovative programs available that may include the BSN with the MSN in accelerated educational programs preparing graduates to be successful on the certification exam.

This career is adaptable to many roles since the educational program is focused on improvement of healthcare systems. This role can fit within many employment opportunities. The skills of the CNL are needed in most healthcare settings.

Clinical nurse leaders need to maintain their registered nurse license in the state in which they hold licensure. They need to obtain certification to practice as a CNL.

The clinical nurse leader may complete each of these in a typical day:

- Providing direct patient care to complex patients and/or provide direct care information to nurses providing care to the complex patients.
- Collaborating with administration and physicians regarding patient outcomes and best practices.
- Care Coordination
- Outcomes Measurement
- Transitions of Care
- Interprofessional Communication & Team Leadership
- Risk Assessment
- Implementation of Best Practices Based on Evidence
- Quality Improvement
- Designing and implementing health education campaigns such as health fairs.
- Writing grants for education and prevention programs.
- Participating in disaster preparedness or disaster relief efforts.
- Advocating with local, state, and federal authorities to improve health policy.

The CNL was developed by AACN in collaboration with leaders from healthcare practice and education to address the critical need to improve the quality of patient care outcomes (AACN, 2021).

Reference
AACN/CNL (2021) https://www.aacnnursing.org/CNL