Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) are Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) who have a graduate level education (Master’s or Doctorate degree) in nursing from an university with a clinical nurse specialty programs approved by the Virginia Board of Nursing and who have passed an accredited national CNS certification exam.

What types of clinical practice do you find CNSs?

CNSs are expert clinicians who work in a wide variety of clinical practice areas. Some specialize in caring for patient populations like children. Others specialize in working with patients in settings like intensive care or emergency departments. Some specialize in caring for patients with specific disease conditions, like diabetes or mental illness. Some CNSs work with patients who have wounds or stress or in need of pain management.

How do CNSs contribute to improved patient outcomes?

The CNS improves patient outcomes in a number of ways, such as:
- Providing direct patient care, expert consultation, and care coordination
- Monitoring quality of care provided to patients by the health care team
- Improving communication between the health care team and family
- Ensuring that nursing care is scientifically-based and up-to-date
- Educating nurses and the health care team about new research, practice, innovations, interventions, and procedures

How are CNSs regulated in Virginia?

CNSs are regulated via the Virginia Board of Nursing through registration as registered nurses with specialty certifications as clinical nurse specialists. CNSs are also conferred title protection; only nurses meeting the requirements for a clinical specialty may call themselves CNSs, and in Virginia, CNSs must be registered with the Board of Nursing.