



CSHA

*Certified Specialist in
Healthcare Accreditation*

CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

**A SERVICE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR
HEALTHCARE ACCREDITATION PROFESSIONALS**

The new
standard for
accreditation
professionals
by accreditation
professionals



About the Association for Healthcare Accreditation Professionals

Brought to you by HCPro, Inc., AHAP is a vibrant community of accreditation professionals who share challenges, knowledge, and experiences with each other.

AHAP offers its members staff training ideas, tips on professional development, and educational information for Joint Commission, CMS, and other surveys. Members can take advantage of the much-needed (and until now, neglected) opportunity to network with accreditation peers through member publications, working groups, and the option of attending AHAP's annual conference.

HCPro

About HCPro, Inc.

With more than 20 years of experience, HCPro (www.hcpro.com), is a leading provider of integrated information, education, training, and consulting products and services in the vital areas of healthcare regulation and compliance. The company's mission is to meet the specialized informational, advisory, and educational needs of the healthcare industry. To accomplish this mission, HCPro provides this specialized information in a variety of products, including magazines, newsletters, books, videos, audio conferences, training handbooks, e-mail newsletters, and online courses.

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Note to candidates

It is your responsibility to read and understand the contents of this handbook before applying for certification.

This handbook contains current information about the criteria and process for applying to be a Certified Specialist in Healthcare Accreditation (CSHA). Please refer to the contents of this handbook for any questions you may have regarding the certification program. Additional information is available at the certification program Web site at www.certifiedaccreditationprofessional.com. If you cannot find the information you require or have further questions, you may also contact the program at:

HPro, Inc.

Attention: Certified Specialist in Healthcare Accreditation Program

P.O. Box 1168

Marblehead, MA 01945

Tel: 800/650-6787

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Mission statement

The mission of the CSHA program is to identify, recognize, and support a high level of quality, experience, and training in the accreditation professional role. The program draws from experienced accreditation professionals in the field to establish criteria for competency in leading, guiding, and implementing organizations' initiatives to achieve and maintain accreditation and to meet and exceed accreditation standards and regulations.

Affiliation

The CSHA program was formed in 2008 as a service of The Association for Healthcare Accreditation Professionals (AHAP) to define and promote a minimum level of competency for those people whose jobs involve healthcare accreditation in order to support the continuous improvement of healthcare for all in the face of the serious challenges that characterize healthcare today.

Statement of nondiscrimination

The opportunity to become a CSHA is available to all eligible candidates who meet the minimum criteria. HPro, Inc., does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual preference, or disability.

If special accommodations are required for the examination, notify the program at 800/650-6787.

Certified Specialist in Healthcare Accreditation program overview

The purpose of becoming a CSHA is to recognize that those who deal with helping a hospital maintain accreditation with one or one accrediting bodies is a skill and requires knowledge of the accreditation process.

Because these skills are not taught in most collegiate and/or training programs, candidates for the CSHA designation should have worked in the accreditation field for several years to show that they have the required minimum experience spanning the essentials of healthcare accreditation. Successful candidates must achieve a passing score on the certification examination, which tests the candidate's ability to apply his/her experience to typical challenges faced by accreditation specialists today.

The certification program is not designed to determine who shall serve in the accreditation setting. That is the responsibility of the leadership team for each hospital. Instead, the goal is to promote competence and effectiveness in professionals who serve as an accreditation liaison—a role which encompasses many different titles.

The CSHA program is a service provided in conjunction with the Association for Healthcare Accreditation Professionals specifically to help those professionals with a background in preparing a healthcare facility for accreditation gain the knowledge and skills to fulfill their responsibilities competently. The required experience for certification does not include any contact hours on behalf of the applicant, as the exam has been designed so that only those accreditation professionals who have the experience and skill to pass the exam will do so.

Objectives of certification

The objectives of the CSHA program are to:

1. Support the effectiveness of healthcare in our communities by promoting standards of competency for accreditation professionals working in a range of different positions
2. Promote professional and hospital success by helping accreditation specialists who serve in leadership positions define and obtain the requisite knowledge and skills to fulfill their responsibilities effectively
3. Provide special recognition to those accreditation specialists who demonstrate mastery of an acquired body of knowledge and skills in healthcare accreditation through successful completion of the certification process
4. Identify individuals with substantive knowledge and skills in healthcare accreditation leadership for the benefit of all hospital staff members

Certification eligibility requirements

Developed in conjunction with the Association for Healthcare Accreditation Professionals, the requirements for certification have been created with an in-depth understanding of the responsibilities and challenges of accreditation specialists today. The certification examination is designed to test an applicant's ability to apply that knowledge to real-life challenges accreditation specialists face every day.

Achieving accreditation certification requires that: candidates pass a certifying examination that tests their understanding and ability to apply their knowledge and skills.

Mandatory accreditation training

The certification examination focuses on three specific categories of competencies:

1. Assessment
2. Education
3. Implementation

The CSHA exam will cover the following educational areas:

Assessment	Maintain expertise on accreditation and regulatory issues
	Interpret standards and regulations for organization
	Assess organizational readiness and vulnerabilities for external evaluation by regulatory bodies
	Measure organizational compliance with standards
	Interpret future trends likely to affect organizational compliance
Education	Disseminate information on standards and regulations to organization
	Educate organizational staff members on standards and regulations (e.g., orientation, inservice)
	Simplify the link between the standard and the organization's practice
	Collaborate with leadership in establishing accountability for organizational compliance with standards/regulations
	Direct organizational staff performance to achieve compliance with standards/regulations
Implementation	Act as a change agent:
	Build collaborative relationships within the organization
	Establish multidisciplinary team
	Apply meeting management skills
	Facilitate multidisciplinary team to achieve standards compliance
	Employ change management skills to achieve compliance with standards
	Resolve conflict by employing negotiation and mediation skills
	General tasks:
	Establish position as expert resource
	Synthesize the roles and responsibilities of the structural components of the organization
	Translate standards into actions
	Integrate standards with organizational policies and procedures
	Implement practical applicability of standards
	Execute evidence-based approaches to patient safety and performance improvement
	Act as liaison to regulatory agencies
	Prepare for survey
	Implement plan for continuous survey readiness (e.g., mock surveys, tracer methodology)
	Ensure documentation is in compliance with regulations/standards (e.g. PPR, eBBI, PFI)
	Resolve non compliance issues with plan of correction (e.g., pre and post)
	Coordinate site visits
Implement follow-up to site visits (e.g., reports and clarifications)	
Coordinate disease-specific certification and other related surveys	

About the certification examination

To become certified, a candidate must pass the examination. This examination is offered online and may be taken by the candidate at any time after the application has been submitted and the application fee has been paid.

Candidates who apply to take the examination will be contacted by the program via e-mail when they have been approved to take the examination.

The examination is an objective, multiple-choice test consisting of 100 questions. The exam questions have been designed to test the candidate's ability to address the range of real-life problems faced by accreditation professionals today. The questions are updated on a continuous basis to keep them relevant to current realities in healthcare. There are three different types of questions: recall, application, and analysis. Recall questions test the candidate's knowledge of specific facts and concepts relevant to the day-to-day work of accreditation professionals. Because the examination is an open book test, candidates may use reference resources in answering recall questions, as this is the manner in which accreditation professionals frequently carry out their responsibilities. Application questions require the candidate to interpret or apply information, guidelines, or rules to a particular situation. Analysis questions test the candidate's ability to evaluate and integrate a range of information in problem-solving to address a particular challenge. The test is designed to contain approximately 20% recall questions, 40% application questions, and 40% analysis questions.

Sample certification examination questions

The following are examples of examination questions.

1. In assessing The Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goal 2C, regarding critical tests and critical values, all elements of performance are scored at the A category. How vulnerable is the organization for receiving a requirement for improvement during survey if the organization failed to meet the requirement of the element of performance that mandates data collection on the timeliness of reporting critical tests?
 - a. Highly vulnerable
 - b. No vulnerability
 - c. Moderately vulnerable
 - d. Low vulnerability
2. An organization wants to establish a readiness plan that continuously allows noncompliance issues to be identified by following the care a patient receives. Which of the following should the organization implement?
 - a. Oversight
 - b. Mock survey
 - c. Routine review
 - d. Tracer methodology

3. During a discussion with nursing managers, the accreditation specialist identifies that critical tests and the time frames for performing critical tests have not been defined by the organization. Which of the following is the best method to resolve the non compliance issue?
 - a. Draft a list of critical tests and turnaround times
 - b. Assign the task to the laboratory director
 - c. Organize a multi-disciplinary team to define critical tests
 - d. Refer the issues to the vice president of support services

Correct answers:

1. a
2. b
3. c

Management and examination services

The Certified Specialist in Healthcare Accreditation program contracts with Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc., (AMP) to provide management and examination services.

AMP provides administrative support for the certification process, including examination development, validation, and administration. AMP carefully adheres to industry standards for development of practice-related, criterion-referenced examinations to assess competency. AMP offers a full range of services, including practice analyses and development of examination specifications, psychometric guidance to committees of content experts during examination question writing, development of content, valid examination instruments, publishing, examination administration, scoring, and reporting examination results.

Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc.

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The Certified Specialist in Healthcare Accreditation Program maintains records, handles finances, and processes examination applications, certification materials, and requests for continuing education approvals.

Note: The Certified Specialist in Healthcare Accreditation program and AMP maintain examination administration and security standards that are designed to ensure that all candidates are provided the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

Examination honors policy

The certification examination is an open-book examination because accreditation professionals customarily carry out their responsibilities with access to numerous informational resources.

Candidates may complete the examination online in one sitting or in sections, following the instructions outlined below.

However, candidates are requested not to seek assistance from other individuals while completing the examination. The examination is offered on an honors system that assumes all candidates will act in good faith to ensure that their performance on the certification examination reflects their own personal knowledge and skills. If the program becomes aware of candidates not complying with this requirement, the program reserves the right to move the examination into a proctored format, which will create additional costs to candidates for certification.

In addition, anyone found compromising the security of the examination by attempting to copy, record, or distribute questions in any manner will be permanently excluded from the certification process.

Confidentiality

Information about candidates and their examination results is considered confidential. Studies and reports concerning candidates will contain no information that is identifiable to any candidate, unless authorized by the candidate.

Application and examination fee

The fee for the certification application process and examination is \$300. If a candidate is a member of the Association for Healthcare Accreditation Professionals, the application fee is reduced to \$240. The fee may be paid by credit card, personal check, or money order for the total amount, payable to HCPro, Inc.

Certification application process

Candidates may complete the application process for the CSHA program online or by e-mail, fax, mail, or phone (see below for specific instructions).

To apply online

1. Go to www.certifiedaccreditationprofessional.com, complete all required fields on the online application form, and click the “Submit” button.
2. Pay the application fee on the marketplace page to which you’ll be redirected (members of the Association for Healthcare Accreditation Professionals will be able to enter their discount source code during the marketplace payment process to receive the discounted application fee of \$240).

Don’t want to apply online?

Candidates who do not want to apply online may complete the application process by fax or mail by following these steps (candidates may also call 800/650-6787 for assistance with the application):

1. Download and complete the application (PDF document), which is available online at www.certifiedaccreditationprofessional.com. Print the application and handwrite your responses. Please be sure to complete all required fields.
2. Pay the application fee, by providing complete credit card information, selecting “Bill me,” or enclosing a personal check or money order (see “Application and examination fee” section above for specific guidelines).
3. Submit the application by fax or mail, using the contact information provided below.

After the application has been submitted

Online certification examination: Upon receiving the application and payment of the application fee, the CSHA program will have its contracted partner, Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc. (AMP), e-mail to the candidate instructions for completing the online certification examination. As noted on page 8, candidates will not be able to take the examination for certification until payment of the application fee has been received.

Awarding of certification: The CSHA program will send each candidate who passes the exam a certificate testifying that the candidate has successfully completed all of the program requirements and is designated as a Certified Specialist in Healthcare Accreditation. The CSHA program will also provide each candidate with a unique identification number, which the candidate should record and use in all further correspondence with the program.

Contact information

Mail: HCPro, Inc.
Certified Specialist in Healthcare Accreditation Program
P.O. Box 1168
Marblehead, MA 01945
Phone: 800/650-6787 Fax: 800/639-8511
E-mail: application@certifiedaccreditationprofessional.com

Following the examination

After finishing the examination, the candidate will be sent electronically the results of his or her performance. The score report will reflect either “pass” or “fail,” followed by specific performance feedback provided in the form of a raw score indicating the number of questions the candidate answered correctly, plus a breakdown of raw scores for each of the three major content categories. If the candidate exceeds the minimum passing score, the program will send the candidate a hard copy certificate testifying that the candidate has successfully completed all of the requirements of certification and is henceforth designated as a Certified Specialist in Healthcare Accreditation. This can be signified by “CSHA” after the candidate’s name. The successful candidate will be authorized to use this designation.

If the candidate does not exceed the minimum passing score, the candidate will receive electronic notification of this result, including the raw score performance feedback. Candidates are encouraged to use this feedback to strengthen their preparation for another attempt to pass the examination. The candidate will be eligible for reexamination once an additional fee of \$300 has been processed. Refer to “Application and examination fee” on page 10 for complete information. Candidates may take the examination a maximum of three times.

Appeals

Please note that, due to the standardized nature of question development and validation and the flexibility of scheduling and completing the examination, no appeals will be allowed regarding the examination process or results.

Release of test scores

The program will not release a copy of an individual’s score report to any other individual or organization without the candidate’s written authorization. If the candidate would like his or her test scores released to a third party, the candidate must submit a written request for such release and \$30 per copy, specifying the party and address to which the scores should be sent. Scores may be released to either an e-mail or postal address.

Recertification

The goal of recertification is to ensure continuing competence of each CSHA and maintain the standard of professionalism in healthcare accreditation management. Those applicants who become a CSHA will be eligible for recertification every two years. There is a \$250 recertification fee (\$200 for members of the Association for Healthcare Accreditation Professionals). Additionally, 25 hours of continuing education are required. Recertification does not require a CSHA to retake the certification examination.

Continuing education hours will consist of activities in the following areas:

- Accreditation
- Patient safety
- Quality improvement

Organizations that offer educational activities applicable to CSHA continuing education requirements include, but are not limited to:

- Joint Commission Resources
- National Association for Healthcare Quality
- HCPro
- Institute for Healthcare Improvement

For additional details, please e-mail customerservice@certifiedaccreditationprofessional.com. Recertification fees are nonrefundable.

Consequences of professional misconduct

Applications may be refused, candidates may be barred from future examinations, or candidates or individuals already certified may be sanctioned, including revocation of the CSHA designation, for the following reasons:

1. Attesting to false information on the application or during any random audits conducted by the Certified Specialist in Healthcare Accreditation program
2. Giving information to, or receiving information from, another candidate during the examination
3. Copying or attempting to copy any part of the examination
4. Unauthorized possession and/or distribution of any official testing or examination materials
5. Representing oneself falsely as a designated CSHA

Please note that no appeal will be allowed for decisions related to professional misconduct.

Contact information

All correspondence or inquiries should be submitted to:

HPro, Inc.

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