



***Certification  
For  
Substance Abuse  
Program Administrators***

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**INFORMATION GUIDE**

### ***COMMISSION PRACTICE STANDARDS FOR CERTIFIED-SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS (C-SAPAS)***

A C-SAPA shall subscribe and adhere to the following Commission practice standards at all times.

#### **PERSONAL INTEGRITY & PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

- Present accurate information in all communications. Always accurately represent your education, experience, and qualifications in resumes, biographical sketches, and other written material.
- Acknowledge the work of others by citing the source(s) or material and techniques when using other individuals' work in your business or professional presentations.
- Assist employers and/or clients, to the best of your ability, in complying with applicable state or federal regulations related to controlled substance and alcohol testing.
- Remain current with respect to knowledge, practices, and regulations that apply to your business, employers, and the substance abuse profession. Recognize the limitations of your own professional competence. When necessary, consult with other professionals who may have the requisite expertise.
- Strictly adhere to The Sherman, Clayton and Federal Trade Commission Acts.

#### **PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF TESTED INDIVIDUALS**

- Strive to protect the rights of employees as well as employers when administering workplace testing programs.
- Respect the dignity of individuals tested for controlled substances and alcohol, making every effort to avoid and/or minimize intrusions of privacy of these individuals.
- Promote assistance for those individuals whose controlled substance or alcohol test indicates misuse by facilitating referral, evaluation, education, rehabilitation, and/or treatment.
- Maintain strict confidentiality of all information entrusted to you. Information is only to be released when authorized by a tested individual or as permitted under state or federal regulation.

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## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The proper administration of substance abuse programs has become a complex task. It demands knowledge, ability and skills in areas where the need for formal training, education and knowledge has not previously been established.

The individual who provides these services may be referred to as a “SAPA”, an acronym for “Substance Abuse Program Administrator.” The essential functions of a SAPA are to design, organize and administer services to promote drug-safe workplaces. These services are intended to improve health and productivity for all workers, decreasing accidents and the many costs associated with substance abuse.

A SAPA must also assure that programs are operated in compliance with applicable state and federal regulations, as well as company policies. Other concerns of the SAPA, whether he or she is directly employed by the organization or retained to serve in this capacity, include assuring that the program adheres to generally accepted standards for substance abuse administrative services, testing, training, medical review, confidentiality and business ethics.

SAPACC, the Substance Abuse Program Administrators’ Certification Commission, established a national certification program for SAPAs and administers national examinations for SAPAs and Substance Abuse Professionals (SAPs). SAPACC is the national certifying body for SAPAs who have chosen to be recognized as specialists, Certified Substance Abuse Program Administrators (C-SAPAs), with demonstrated proficiency in their field.

SAPACC is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to enhancing the quality and level of professional knowledge and skills of individuals providing drug and alcohol testing and related service to the public.

## **BENEFITS**

A “consumer” seeking the service of a SAPA may have little or no understanding of the requirements, yet must choose a “provider” who is truly knowledgeable. Organizations that employ or contract with an individual for SAPA services now have a means to readily identify an individual who has demonstrated capability in this field by virtue of the C-SAPA credential.

While the certification process is completely voluntary, it is highly recommended for either an in-house (directly employed) or outside program administrator as a means of verifying his or her qualifications.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

SAPACC has developed the national certification examination to identify those who have the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the functions of a SAPA. Before a candidate can take the certifying examination, he or she must meet the following minimum criteria:

- 40 hours of substance abuse related training within the past five years, **and**
- Demonstrated experience working as a SAPA for 6,000 hours (three years) **or** 4,000 hours (two years) with a certified copy of a bachelor’s degree or higher, with time spent in at least four of the following seven areas:
  - 1) Development of policies and procedures
  - 2) Administration of random drug and alcohol testing programs
  - 3) Medical Review Officer (MRO) interaction/supervision
  - 4) Performance or supervision of the specimen collection process
  - 5) Preparation and/or delivery of supervisor and/or employee education training
  - 6) Compliance with applicable federal and state laws
  - 7) Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) interaction/supervision

## **MINIMUM COMPETENCY**

A minimally competent Substance Abuse Program Administrator (SAPA):

- Possesses a working knowledge of laws and regulations, at the federal, state, and local level, relating to the testing for the use of illegal and unauthorized substances and for the misuse of alcohol
- Has an in-depth knowledge of DOT regulations
- Knows the names and general characteristics of all of the federal modes
- Has the ability to identify the regulations associated with each mode
- Knows and follows the standards of practice relating to the testing of alcohol and controlled substances
- Knows and understands the urine specimen collection process, including regulations, standard of practice, what constitutes fatal flaws, and documentation (forms)
- Knows and understands the DOT training requirements for each service agent involved in the processes associated with alcohol and controlled substances testing programs
- Has a working knowledge of laboratory procedure, processes, and protocol
- Knows and understands the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of the Medical Review Officer (MRO)
- Knows and understands the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of the Substance Abuse Professional (SAP)
- Has a general knowledge of non-DOT regulations
- Knows how to locate and determine regulations for non-DOT programs
- Understands the processes and the regulations related to recordkeeping
- Knows, understands, and follows ethical standards of practice

## **EXAMINATION STUDY GUIDE**

Upon receipt of your completed application and requisite certifying examination fee, you will be provided an **Examination Study Guide**. Prepared by SAPACC, the guide was developed to cover each subject area and will assist you in developing a study plan and strategy as you prepare for the certifying examination.

## **CERTIFYING EXAMINATION**

After meeting the eligibility requirements, you must pass the SAPACC certification examination. This rigorous, diverse examination is derived from a number of disciplines. The examination is designed to identify those who have the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the functions of a SAPA.

## **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

If you have a disability and require a special accommodation to take the certifying examination, your application must indicate that you are requesting an accommodation. Additionally, the application must be accompanied by a letter from a licensed health care professional familiar with your disability (e.g., physician, psychologist or other health care professional), which provides the:

- diagnosis of your disability
- basis for the diagnosis (e.g., examination, test, results, etc.)
- appropriate accommodation for you

If additional testing time is the recommended accommodation, the licensed health care professional must specifically identify the length of time needed (unlimited time or untimed is not acceptable).

If an accommodation is not requested by the application deadline, SAPACC cannot guarantee the availability of the accommodation on site. If you are requesting the same accommodation(s) for a subsequent certifying examination, a copy of your approval letter for the accommodation must be submitted with your application. If you are requesting a different accommodation, you must submit new documentation as described above.

**NOTE:** A language barrier is not considered a disability.

## **CANDIDATE APPLICATION**

To apply for admission to a SAPACC certifying examination, you must meet the eligibility criteria described in this information guide. In addition, you must fully complete the **Candidate Application** and the **Documentation of Experience** form(s). It is extremely important to submit all the required documentation and requisite fees together. Failure to do so will delay the credential review. The completed application must be received no later than 45 days (6 weeks) prior to the projected exam date.

Candidates are permitted up to four weeks after the examination date to provide any documentation to substantiate the 40 hours of training. Failure to do so may render the candidate ineligible to receive examination results and/or certification.

In order for the Commission to verify your experience in each of the required areas, it is necessary for you to submit a **Documentation of Experience** form from each person who supervised you in any one or more of these areas. For example, if you work(ed) for a large third party administrator, the owner or president of the company might be the appropriate person. If you are the owner/president, the MRO and SAP you work with could provide the verification. An in-house administrator may seek to have the department supervisor, director of human resources, etc., verify experience.

Please be advised these individuals may be contacted to verify authenticity of the information submitted.

In the event a candidate does not complete the documentation of training as described, he or she is eligible take the certifying examination again within 12 months of the original examination date. In such instances, a re-examination fee is required as indicated on the fee schedule.

## **Summary of Application Process**

1. Submit completed **Candidate Application** and **Documentation of Experience** form(s) indicating you meet the eligibility requirements. This includes any certified copies of diplomas or transcripts indicating a degree; **and**
2. Submit a copy of legal documents explaining different names on the **Candidate Application** and supporting documents, if applicable; **and**
3. Submit a copy of certified translation of the legal document, if the legal document is not in English; **and**
4. Submit payment. Checks or money orders are to be made payable to "SAPACC" in U.S. funds only. SAPACC accepts most major credit cards. Please see the C-SAPA Application Form for details.

## **TIMELINE FOR EXAM APPLICATION AND PREPARATION**

The following is a recommended timeline for C-SAPA exam application and preparation:

### **6 Months Before Projected Exam Date:**

- Read Information Guide
- Begin application process by gathering training documentation and verification of hours of experience
- Begin studying regulations

### **4 Months Before Projected Exam Date:**

- Submit application and payment
- Receive Study Guide
- Devise study plan of areas on which to concentrate

### **6 Weeks Before Projected Exam Date:**

- Receive notice that application is approved
- Schedule exam

## **EVENT CONFIRMATION**

You will receive written confirmation by email, facsimile or first class mail confirming your eligibility to take the certifying examination once the application and credential review process is completed.

Please come prepared. Environmental distracters cannot be fully anticipated such as noise and room temperature. You may want to dress in layers to ensure comfort. Additionally, you may wish to bring earplugs to the certifying examination to be fully prepared if noise causes you to be distracted.

## **RULES OF CONDUCT**

The following rules of conduct apply to Candidates attending the Certifying Examination:

- Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.
- Use of cellular phones, paging devices or any device that disturbs the class is prohibited.
- Smoking is prohibited, except in designated areas.

Candidates who do not comply with the rules of conduct may be subject to expulsion from the event. In such cases, no refund of fees paid will be due.

## **CERTIFYING EXAMINATION PROTOCOL**

**Failure to comply with the any of the rules of conduct or examination protocol may result in cancellation of your test scores and SAPACC Commission action.**

Report on the certifying examination date indicated on your admission notice. Be on time. Late arrivals will not be admitted to the examination. Bring your own pencils and erasers.

To be admitted to the examination, you must bring one current form of photo identification with your signature. Examples include: State issued photo ID, photo driver's license, passport or a legible photograph of you clearly depicting your facial features. Such photographs must include your signature and be attested to by a notary public, including the notary seal and signature. **YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO TAKE THE EXAMINATION WITHOUT THE REQUIRED PHOTO IDENTIFICATION.**

The following items are strictly prohibited in the examination room: electronic devices including but not limited to, cameras, walkman devices, radios, tape players, portable fax machines, cellular telephones, pagers, calculator watches, calculators, computers, reproduction equipment, etc. SAPACC will not be responsible for any items brought to the examination site.

Communication between examinees during the certifying examination is not permitted. Do not try to assist another examinee or try to obtain aid from another examinee or other sources during the examination. **THIS EXAMINATION IS A CLOSED BOOK EXAMINATION.** No one is permitted to use written notes, to make written notes, or to record in any way the contents of a test book. The only writing or recording of marks is on the answer sheets or test books during the allowed time for each book. Making notes on the test book before the examination is also prohibited.

Use of a telephone is prohibited during the certifying examination.

Use of the restroom during the certifying examination is permitted, however, only one individual at a time is permitted to be out of the examination room. Ordinarily, a proctor of the same gender will escort you to and from the restroom.

To ensure security of test materials, SAPACC requires that candidates remain in their seats during the last 30 minutes of the certifying examination. Additionally, after time is called, SAPACC requires that all test booklets and materials be accounted for before the remaining candidates can be dismissed from the examination room. Plan your breaks accordingly.

### **CANDIDATE FEEDBACK**

SAPACC welcomes and encourages any constructive feedback – positive or negative – regarding your experience with the certifying examination. Please direct all comments, in writing, to SAPACC at the address in the back of this information guide.

### **EXAMINATION RESULTS**

Examination results will be mailed to you approximately 4-6 weeks after the examination.

In the event a candidate does not achieve a passing score on the examination, he/she will receive written instructions on how to apply for re-examination.

If an examinee has failed the exam three times, he/she may reapply as a new candidate no sooner than three years from the date of the last failed exam.

**Please note SAPACC does not permit challenges to the certifying examination that could involve re-scoring after results of a particular examination have been released.**

### **C-SAPA CREDENTIAL RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

C-SAPA Certification may be renewed without examination every three years with proof of 24 hours of Continuing Education, while continuing to meet the practice standards of the Commission. C-SAPAs who do not achieve the required hours of Continuing Education must reapply and successfully meet the requirements of the C-SAPA credential process, including passing the current Certification Examination, in order to be recertified.

A candidate who is interested in renewing his or her certification is strongly encouraged to work on those elements for Continuing Education throughout the three-year certification period and not try to obtain all of the hours of Continuing Education in a short period of time. It is recommended that a C-SAPA obtain approximately 8 hours of Continuing Education per year in order to continually enhance knowledge and skills in the 7 Continuing Education Areas listed below.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION AREAS:**

1. Compliance with applicable federal and state laws
2. Development of drug-free workplace policies and procedures
3. Administration of drug and alcohol testing programs
4. Performance or supervision of specimen collection and/or alcohol testing procedures
5. Medical Review Officer (MRO) interaction/supervision
6. Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) interaction/supervision
7. Preparation and/or delivery of drug-free workplace training

## **ACCEPTABLE SOURCES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION**

Attendance at seminars, training, review, or instructional courses, including computerized or home study courses in the Continuing Education Areas identified will be considered acceptable means of obtaining Continuing Education, contingent upon review and approval by SAPACC of a course syllabus/description and appropriate documentation of attendance.

During the three-year certification period, Continuing Education must be earned in at least four of the seven Continuing Education Areas.

## **MAXIMUM CONTINUING EDUCATION HOURS PER COURSE**

Up to **eight (8)** hours of Continuing Education will be awarded for attendance at any one conference, seminar or course.

Up to **four (4)** hours of Continuing Education will be awarded for computerized or home study courses.

## **OTHER WAYS TO EARN CONTINUING EDUCATION HOURS**

Up to **four (4)** hours per year may be awarded for teaching courses related to the Continuing Education Areas that are identified in this information guide.

Up to **four (4)** hours per year may be awarded for participation as an Officer or Commissioner in SAPACC, or an Officer or Commissioner in an organization whose service is approved by SAPACC.

## **RENEWING THE C-SAPA CREDENTIAL**

A C-SAPA certification is valid for three years. Notice will be sent to candidate approximately least three months prior to expiration of their certification. Candidates who desire to renew their certification must:

1. Obtain the necessary hours of Continuing Education prior to the expiration of the certification; **and**
2. Complete the ***Candidate Application***; **and**
3. Submit the required documents, including any supporting documentation to substantiate the hours of Continuing Education, along with the requisite fee.

Candidates who successfully renew their certification will be issued a new certificate.

## **CANCELLATION/REFUND POLICY**

### **Examination Cancellation/Refunds**

Candidates who wish to cancel their reservation for a certifying examination must notify SAPACC in writing. Candidates who cancel, notifying SAPACC 30 days or more before their scheduled exam date, will receive a refund of monies paid less a 25% administrative fee. All requests after that date will receive refund of monies paid less a 50% administrative fee.

Please note that postmarks are not accepted as meeting the deadline. The request must have been received by SAPACC by the deadline.

### **Incomplete Applications**

Candidates who submit incomplete applications and desire to cancel their application may submit a request in writing to do so. Such candidates are eligible for a refund of monies paid to SAPACC less a 25% administrative fee.

All refunds are issued within 30 days following the examination date for which the candidate was registered.

## **EVENT CANCELLATION**

In cases of severe weather, a Certifying Examination will be held as scheduled, provided the examination center can be opened on a scheduled date. If an examination center's status is questionable due to severe weather or a natural disaster, the certifying examination may be cancelled. In such cases, for up to date information you may contact SAPACC at the telephone number provided in the back of this information guide.

SAPACC may elect to cancel or postpone a Certifying Examination. Events may be cancelled at the sole discretion of SAPACC and in such cases SAPACC's liability will be limited to the fees paid to SAPACC by the candidate.

Should an event be cancelled by SAPACC, fees paid to SAPACC are fully refundable or may be applied to the next scheduled SAPACC event within the next 12 months.

## **CERTIFICATION EXAM FEE SCHEDULE**

All C-SAPA applicants are required to submit the appropriate fees when applying for certification.

<b>Item/Event</b>	<b>Fee</b>
C-SAPA Certification Exam (including credentials review, study guide, and exam)	\$400
C-SAPA Certification Exam Re-take Fee (within one year of failed exam)	\$100
C-SAPA Exam Rescheduling Fee (for no show or cancellation after exam is ordered)	\$25

## **REVOCATION OF THE C-SAPA CREDENTIAL**

C-SAPAs who violate the Commission's published practice standards may have their certification withdrawn. Candidates who are the subject of such action will be notified in writing by the SAPACC Commission. Such individuals are not entitled to a refund of any fees paid to obtain their certification.

## **INQUIRIES**

Please direct all inquiries and correspondence to the address below:

**SAPACC**  
7220 SW SYLVAN CT  
PORTLAND OR 97225-3742  
Telephone 866.538.4788  
Facsimile 503.297.4748  
Email: sapaccassistant@aol.com

Visit our website at [www.sapacc.org](http://www.sapacc.org)