

# The Corrections Certification Program Handbook



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# **Corrections Certification Program**

## **Overview**

The Corrections Certification Program provides individuals with a national method to become Certified Corrections Professionals and recognizes the high-level capabilities and accomplishments they have demonstrated in the field of corrections. The Certification Program creates a lifetime of progressive professional achievement through its various certification categories.

## **Mission**

The Corrections Certification Program (CCP) is designed to advance the overall knowledge level of practitioners in the corrections field, promote the capabilities of corrections professionals to the public, and enhance society's image of corrections personnel, thereby aiding in the recruitment of new, talented staff members.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the CCP is to provide a national, voluntary method by which individuals can gain recognition as qualified corrections practitioners.

## **Objectives**

- Advance the overall knowledge level of practitioners in the corrections field.
- Ensure the awareness of the most current, innovative, and effective approaches.
- Promote the capabilities of corrections professionals to the public by demonstrating their adherence to the *ACA Code of Ethics*.
- Enhance the public image of correctional personnel and aid in the recruitment of new and talented staff.

## Types of Certification

### Adult Corrections

There are four basic certification categories for Adult Corrections.

**1) Certified Corrections Officer (CCO)**

This category includes individuals who work directly with offenders.

**2) Certified Corrections Supervisor (CCS)**

This category includes individuals at the “mid-management” level who work with both staff and offenders in a correctional setting. It includes those responsible for implementing agency procedures and supervising/evaluating personnel.

**3) Certified Corrections Manager (CCM)**

This category includes individuals who manage major units or programs within a corrections setting. They are management staff who may contribute to the development of policy and procedures, are responsible for their implementation, and have authority over supervisory personnel.

**4) Certified Corrections Executive (CCE)**

This category includes individuals at the highest executive level who oversee the development of policy and procedures in agencies dealing with adult offenders.

### Juvenile Justice

There are four basic certification categories for Juvenile Justice.

**1) Certified Corrections Officer/Juvenile (CCO/JUV)**

This category includes individuals who work directly with juvenile offenders.

**2) Certified Corrections Supervisor/Juvenile (CCS/JUV)**

This category includes individuals at the “mid-management” level who work with both staff and offenders in a juvenile justice setting. It includes those responsible for implementing agency procedures and supervising/evaluating personnel.

**3) Certified Corrections Manager/Juvenile (CCM/JUV)**

This category includes individuals who manage major units or programs within a juvenile justice setting. They are management staff who may contribute to the development of policy and procedures, are responsible for their implementation, and have authority over supervisory personnel.

**4) Certified Corrections Executive/Juvenile (CCE/JUV)**

This category includes individuals at the highest executive level who oversee the development of policy and procedures in agencies dealing with juvenile offenders.

## Healthcare

There are three categories for Healthcare.

**1) Certified Corrections Nurse (CCN)**

This category includes staff nurses, who work in a correctional environment and who work with both staff and offenders. It includes those responsible for implementing agency policies and procedures.

**2) Certified Corrections Nurse/Manager (CCN/M)**

This category includes individuals who work as nurse managers in a correctional environment. They are management staff who may contribute to the development of policy and procedures, are responsible for their implementation, and have authority over staff nurses.

**3) Health Services Administrator (HSA)**

This category includes individuals who manage major health related units or programs within a correctional setting. They are management staff who may contribute to the development of policy and procedures, are responsible for their implementation, and have authority over staff members. They plan, direct, coordinate, and supervise the health care system.

**4) Correctional Behavioral Health Certification- Adult/ Juvenile Correctional Officer (CBHC-CO)**

This category includes individuals responsible for the custody, safety, security, and supervision of inmates in a correctional facility.

**5) Correctional Behavioral Health Certification- Community Corrections Officer (CBHC-CC)**

Community Corrections Officers: Individuals, including probation or parole officers, that supervise offenders who have been sentenced to non-custodial sanctions or those released from incarceration.

**6) Correctional Behavioral Health Certification- Behavioral Specialty (CBHC-BS)**

Allied Behavioral Health Staff: Nursing, medical support staff, and individuals under the supervision of a qualified mental health professional that provide rehabilitative, recreational, case management, re-entry planning, psycho-educational and other supportive services to mentally ill inmates/offenders.

## **Provisional Certification**

### **1) Certified Corrections Officer/Provisional (CCO/P)**

This category includes graduating students who have studied for a career in a correctional setting and/or Department of Corrections Training Academy graduating cadets. Individuals in this category will work directly with offenders. For certification to become permanent, those who pass the CCO/P exam must secure a full-time position in a corrections-related agency (within two years from their exam date) and receive a satisfactory performance rating from their immediate supervisor after one year on the job.

## **Retirees Continuing in Corrections-Related Positions**

Full-time corrections professionals who retired more than three years ago but continued to be employed in a position related to corrections may apply to become a Certified Corrections Professional. Examples include full-/part-time trainers and academicians.

# The Certification Process

The Certification Process has three steps:

## **1) Application**

- Complete your Application and return it along with your application fee. You may download the application on ACA's website.
  - Applicants are evaluated on three factors: the duties of their current position, their full-time corrections experience, and their educational background.
  - Check the exam dates and sites listed on the website. If you need to arrange an exam for another day or site, contact Professional Development via e-mail at [acaprodev@aca.org](mailto:acaprodev@aca.org).
- Your application will be processed within 2-3 weeks. You will receive via e-mail your confirmation of exam date, day, time, and location of the exam site. You will also receive a generic study guide and the Certification Handbook.
- Reasonable accommodations can be made for those with disabilities. Requests are made by contacting Professional Development at [acaprodev@aca.org](mailto:acaprodev@aca.org).

An incomplete application will result in a delay in processing your application.

## **2) Certification Status**

Candidates who pass the exam become a Certified Corrections Professional or CCP. They receive a letter confirming their status as a CCP, certificate, pin, sample press release, and a supervisor notification form. They are also recognized in *Corrections Today*, ACA's magazine. In addition, CCPs receive a special ribbon for their badge at each ACA national conference.

## **3) Re-Certification**

After three years, Certified Corrections Professionals are required to become re-certified. Re-certification begins when candidates successfully complete their final exam. During the three-year period, CCPs continue their education and training to achieve the minimum number of re-certification credits required for their certification level.



## Candidate Qualifications

### Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice

- Correctional Officer (CCO) and Correctional Officer/Juvenile (CCO/JUV)
  - High School Diploma/General Educational Diploma (HS/GED) +
  - One (1) year work experience in present position at the officer level
- Correctional Supervisor (CCS) and Correctional Supervisor/Juvenile (CCS/Juv)
  - Associate Degree + one (1) year work experience in present position at the supervisory level
  - or HS/GED, + (1) year work experience in present position at the supervisory level, + two (2) years of full-time corrections experience
- Certified Corrections Manager (CCM) and Certified Corrections Manager/Juvenile (CCM/JUV)
  - Associate Degree + one (1) year work experience in present position at the managerial level
  - or HS/GED, + one (1) year work experience in present position at the managerial level, + five (5) years of full-time corrections experience
- Certified Corrections Executive (CCE) and Certified Corrections Executive/Juvenile (CCE/JUV)
  - Bachelor's Degree + one (1) year work experience in present position at the executive level
  - or HS/GED, + one (1) year work experience in present position at the executive level, + seven (7) years of full-time corrections experience

### Healthcare

- Certified Corrections Nurse (CCN)
  - Licensed RN, LPN, LVN, + one (1) year work experience in correctional nursing in present position
- Certified Corrections Nurse/Manager (CCN/M)
  - Associate, Bachelor of Science, Master of Science in Nursing, or a three-year Nursing Diploma, + Licensed RN, + one (1) year work experience in correctional nursing in present position as a correctional nurse manager
- Certified Health Services Administrator
  - Licensed RN with three years' experience; or,
  - Degree requirements:
    - Bachelor of Science Degree in a health related field or a Bachelor degree in Business or Health Management; or,
    - Master of Science in Administration, or
    - Master of Public Health, or
    - Master of Health Services Administration
  - Minimum of three years' experience as a HSA.

- Correctional Behavioral Health Certification - Adult/ Juvenile Correctional Officer (CBHC-CO)
  - Current county, state, or federal adult correctional officer or juvenile justice professional.
  - Equivalent of one (1) year accumulated experience in a prison, jail/detention facility or community/work release center providing custodial supervision and working with behavioral/mental health staff in providing care for inmates/offenders in an inpatient mental health unit, residential treatment unit, secure therapeutic unit, intensive management unit, behavioral adjustment unit, other specialized unit or program for inmates with mental illness, or general population for inmates with behavioral health issues.
  - Minimum of forty (40) hours of behavioral/mental health related training.
  
- Correctional Behavioral Health Certification - Community Corrections Officer (CBHC-CC)
  - Current county, state, or federal community corrections officer.
  - Equivalent of one (1) year accumulated experience coordinating with community-based behavioral/mental health providers and/or court systems in the supervision of mentally ill offenders.
  - Minimum of forty (40) hours of behavioral/mental health related training.
  
- Correctional Behavioral Health Certification - Behavioral Specialty (CBHC-BS)
  - Equivalent of two (2) years accumulated experience providing structured activities, psycho-educational programs, nursing/medical support, recreational, and other supportive behavioral services in a mental health setting. **At least** one (1) of the two (2) years must be in a correctional or juvenile justice facility for inmates/offenders in an inpatient mental health unit, residential treatment unit, secure therapeutic unit, intensive management unit, behavioral adjustment unit, other specialized unit or program for inmates with mental illness, or general population for inmates with behavioral health issues.
  - Minimum of forty (40) hours of behavioral/mental health related training.

# **The Certification Exam**

## **Understanding the Exam**

Each exam consists of 200 multiple-choice questions and concentrates on two areas:

- 1) Knowledge about the general field of corrections (or Juvenile Justice, for those in the field)
  
- 2) The Candidate's capabilities within his/her discipline

## **Exam Grading Policy**

Candidates must complete the exam with a grade of 70% or better to become a Certified Corrections Professional. A grade of 90% or above earns an Honors credential.

Those who do not pass their exam will need to take it again. There is no charge for the first exam retake. For subsequent retakes, candidates are required to pay a re-examination fee. Candidates have two years from the date of their application to complete the exam (unless they are provided with a deadline by their facility/agency). If this time expires, they will need to complete a new application.

## **Preparing for the Exam**

All exams were developed based on the suggested study materials for each exam. ACA provides study materials at a reasonable cost, which is in addition to the Application/Exam fee. The study materials are sold in certification packets for each exam. The materials are recommended but not required. A list of the study materials can be found and ordered online or via customer service at 1-800-222-5646 ext. 0129.

The American Correctional Association neither recommends nor endorses any type of commercially available study materials for examinations.

## **Taking the Exam**

The exam is proctored, and candidates are given four hours to complete it. If a Candidate commits any dishonest act(s) during the examination process, s/he will be disqualified and his/her status as a Candidate will be revoked. If Candidates are unable to reach the examination site due to an emergency, they should notify ACA staff or the on-site proctor, when possible. They may reschedule their exam at no additional charge.

## Certification Fees

### Application/Exam

	<i>ACA members</i>	<i>Non-members</i>
Officer	\$150	\$190
Supervisor	\$180	\$225
Nurse	\$180	\$225
Behavioral Health	\$195	\$240
Manager	\$235	\$295
Nurse/Manager	\$235	\$295
Executive	\$260	\$325
HSA	\$235	\$295

### Re-Certification

	<i>ACA members</i>	<i>Non-members</i>
Officer	\$80	\$100
Behavioral Health	\$80	\$100
Supervisor	\$112	\$140
Nurse	\$112	\$157
Manager	\$160	\$200
Nurse/Manager	\$160	\$205
Executive	\$176	\$220
HSA	\$160	\$205

### Cancellation Policy:

- 1) Examinations that are canceled by ACA due to severe weather and/or a natural disaster and/or necessity as defined by ACA will be rescheduled as soon as possible. There will be no additional charges. In the event of such a cancellation, ACA shall not be held responsible for any airfare, charges, or any other expenses incurred by the individual/individuals, and shall not be required to return any fees paid by the individual/individuals.
  
- 2) If an exam is scheduled for an individual but not administered to that individual, due to the fault of that individual, on the date scheduled, ACA will charge a cancellation fee equal to 25% of the certification examination fee.
  - a. An individual may retract his/her application for examination if Certification Staff receives a written request no less than 10 days prior to the examination date. The request should detail the special circumstances that occurred; e.g., no longer employed in corrections, promoted or demoted, etc. A refund of the examination fee, minus a \$75 dollar processing charge, will be assessed.

## Study Materials

Please review the materials at ACA's website: [www.aca.org](http://www.aca.org).

### Questions?

Contact Professional Development  
[acaprodev@aca.org](mailto:acaprodev@aca.org)

## The Re-Certification Process

Certified Corrections Professionals (CCPs) are required to continue their education and training and renew their certification after three years. At the end of this period, CCPs submit:

- 1) A Re-Certification Application
- 2) A Summary Sheet identifying their Re-Certification Credits
- 3) Documentation for their Re-Certification Credits
- 4) The appropriate Re-Certification fee
- 5) Applicant and supervisor recertification declarations

The Re-Certification Application may be downloaded at [www.aca.org](http://www.aca.org). The instructions are simple and easy to follow.

Re-Certification Applications will be processed within 4 to 6 weeks. Once staff have evaluated and approved the application and supporting documents, they will mail CCPs a letter confirming their re-certification, a sample press release, a new certificate and a supervisor notification form. An incomplete application will result in a delay in being re-certified. ACA staff will contact the CCP if there is a problem with the application or supporting documents.

## Recertification Credits

All Certified Corrections Professionals are required to obtain the minimum number of re-certification credits based on their certification level.

<b>Certification Level</b>	<b>Number of Re-Certification Credits Required</b>
Correctional Behavioral Health Certifications*†	12
Correctional Officer, Juvenile Justice Youth Worker	40
Correctional Supervisor, Juvenile Justice Supervisor, Corrections Nurse*, Security Threat Group Supervisor	60
Correctional Manager, Juvenile Justice Manager, Corrections Nurse Manager*, Security Threat Group Manager, HSA*	80
Correctional Executive, Juvenile Justice Executive	100

*\* For individuals with a state licensure, documentation of state licensure renewal can be substituted for re-certification credits*

*† Recertification for non-licensed individuals requires twelve (12) hours of ACA-approved behavioral health-related trainings*

### **Earning Re-Certification Credits**

All Re-Certification Credits you earn are to be activities beyond your regular duties and the requirements of your position. If you are unsure about whether an activity qualifies for Re-Certification or need to clarify how many credits you will receive for an activity, contact Professional Development at 703-224-0175 or [acaprodev@aca.org](mailto:acaprodev@aca.org).

CCPs may earn up to 50% of their required credits in one category. They are encouraged to ask questions about earning credits for activities that may not be specified. They will be reviewed in the Certification Newsletter.

Certified Corrections Professions may earn Re-Certification Credits through at least the following categories:

- 1) Training/Education Courses
- 2) Publishing
- 3) Conference
- 4) Discussion Group
- 5) Committee/Task Force
- 6) Critique or Assessment
- 7) Additional Experience/Miscellaneous

## **Revocation of Certification**

Certified Corrections Professionals (CCPs) are expected to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and present themselves as role models for their positions. CCPs who are involved in any of the following situations will have his/her certification revoked.

- Violation of the ACA Code of Ethics
- Conviction of any crime
- Demotion for disciplinary reasons
- Involuntary separation from employment

CCPs will be notified of the revocation of their certification, along with their supervisor or former employer. They will have the opportunity to appeal their revocation to the Certification Commission.

Certified Corrections Professionals who have knowledge of any violations committed by another Certified Corrections Professional should contact the Director of Standards, Accreditation, and Professional Development. Integrity is a hallmark of being certified.

Professional Development  
206 North Washington St.  
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Alexandria, VA 22314

## Code of Ethics

Certified Corrections Professionals (CCPs) are expected to display unfailing honesty, respect for the dignity and individuality of human beings, and a commitment to professional and compassionate service. To this end, CCPs must adhere to the American Correctional Association's Code of Ethics.

**RESPECT** and protect the civil and legal rights of all individuals.

**TREAT** every professional situation with concern for the welfare of the individuals involved and with no intent to personal gain.

**MAINTAIN** relationships with colleagues to promote mutual respect within the profession and improve the quality of service.

**MAKE** public criticism of their colleagues or their agencies only when warranted, verifiable, and constructive.

**RESPECT** the importance of all disciplines within the criminal justice system and work to improve cooperation with each segment.

**HONOR** the public's right to information and share information with the public to the extent permitted by law subject to individuals' right to privacy.

**RESPECT** and protect the right of the public to be safeguarded from criminal activity.

**REFRAIN** from using their positions to secure personal privileges or advantages.

**REFRAIN** from allowing personal interest to impair objectivity in the performance of duty while acting in an official capacity.

**REFRAIN** from entering into any formal or informal activity or agreement which presents a conflict of interest or is inconsistent with the conscientious performance of duties.

**REFRAIN** from accepting any gifts, service, or favor that is, or appears to be, improper or implies an obligation inconsistent with the free and objective exercise of professional duties.

**DIFFERENTIATE**, clearly, between personal views/statements and views/statements/ positions made on behalf of their agency.

**REPORT** to appropriate authorities any corrupt or unethical behavior in which there is sufficient evidence to justify review.

**REFRAIN** from discriminating against any individual because of race, gender, creed, national origin, religious affiliation, or any other type of prohibited discrimination.

**PRESERVE** the integrity of private information; refrain from seeking information on individuals beyond that which is necessary to implement responsibilities and perform their duties; refrain from revealing non-public information unless expressly authorized to do so.

**MAKE** all appointments, promotions, and dismissals following established civil service rules, applicable contract agreements, and individual merit, rather than personal interest.

**RESPECT**, promote, and contribute to a work place that is safe, healthy, and free of harassment in any form.