MISSION

AACN Certification Corporation drives patient health and safety through comprehensive credentialing of acute and critical care nurses ensuring practice consistent with standards of excellence.

VISION

All nurses caring for acutely and critically ill patients and their families are certified.

VALUES

As the Corporation advances its mission and vision to fulfill its purpose and inherent obligation of ensuring the health and safety of patients experiencing acute and critical illness, the Corporation is guided by a set of deeply rooted values:

- **Providing leadership** to bring all stakeholders together to create and foster cultures of excellence and innovation
- **Acting with integrity** and upholding ethical values and principles in all relationships and the provision of sound, fair and defensible credentialing programs
- **Committing to excellence** in credentialing programs by striving to exceed industry standards and expectations
- **Promoting leading edge, research-based credentialing programs** for all nurses who care for and influence the care of acutely and critically ill patients
- **Demonstrating stewardship** through fair and responsible management of resources and cost-effective business processes

ETHICS

AACN and AACN Certification Corporation consider the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics for Nurses foundational for nursing practice, providing a framework for making ethical decisions and fulfilling responsibilities to the public, colleagues and the profession. AACN Certification Corporation’s mission of public protection supports a standard of excellence where certified nurses have a responsibility to read about, understand and act in a manner congruent with the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses.

The following AACN Certification Corporation programs have been accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the accreditation arm of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Accreditation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCRN® (Adult)</td>
<td>PCCN®</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCRN® (Pediatric)</td>
<td>CMC®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCRN® (Neonatal)</td>
<td>CSC®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCRN-E™ (Adult)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACCNS-AG®</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACCNS-P®</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACCNS-N®</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ACNPC-AG®</td>
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</table>

Our advanced practice certification programs, ACCNS-AG, ACCNS-P, ACCNS-N and ACNPC-AG, meet the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) criteria for APRN certification programs.
As healthcare becomes increasingly complex and challenging, certification has emerged as a mark of excellence showing patients, employers and the public that a nurse possesses a defined body of knowledge and has met the rigorous requirements to achieve specialty and/or subspecialty certification.

AACN Certification Corporation programs were created to protect healthcare consumers by validating the knowledge of nurses who care for and/or influence the care delivered to the acutely and critically ill adults, children and neonates. Today, more than 125,000 practicing nurses hold one or more certifications from AACN Certification Corporation.

This handbook outlines rules and policies for all AACN certification exam programs and includes such information as testing site and scheduling details, day of exam rules, recognition and use of credentials, obtaining a duplicate score report and name or address changes.

A brief description of the various AACN certification programs can be found on pages 3 and 4:

- CCRN
- CCRN-K
- CCRN-E
- PCCN
- PCCN-K
- CMC
- CSC
- ACNPC-AG
- ACCNS-AG
- ACCNS-P
- ACCNS-N
- ACNPC
- CCNS

Details about the individual certification programs, along with application forms, honor statements, test plans and sample questions, can be found in the corresponding handbook, available at www.aacn.org/certhandbooks.

We continually seek to provide quality certification programs that meet the changing needs of nurses and patients. Please visit www.aacn.org/certification, email certification@aacn.org or call 800-899-2226 for more information.

Thank you for your commitment to patients and their families and to becoming certified.
CONTENTS

Certifications Available Through AACN .............................................................................................................. 3-4

AACN Certification Program ............................................................................................................................... 5-6
  • Definition of Certification
  • Code of Ethics
  • Upholding the Value of Certification
  • Non-Discrimination Policy
  • Name and Address Changes
  • Exam Preparation
  • Certification and Exam Administration
  • Cognitive Levels of Questions
  • Confidentiality of Exam Application Status
  • AACN Membership
  • Exam Eligibility Outside the U.S.
  • Certification Exam Discount Programs

Application Process .............................................................................................................................................. 7-8

Exam Application Fees ...................................................................................................................................... 9

Testing Center Information ............................................................................................................................... 10

Scheduling an Exam Appointment .................................................................................................................. 11

Exam Rescheduling and Cancellation ........................................................................................................... 11

On the Day of Your Exam ............................................................................................................................... 12-15

Exam Results ...................................................................................................................................................... 16
  • Passing Scores
  • If You Do Not Pass the Exam
  • Canceled Scores
  • Duplicate Score Reports

Purpose and Limitations of Renewal Options .................................................................................................. 17

Certification Renewal ....................................................................................................................................... 17

Audits - Initial and Renewal .............................................................................................................................. 18

Recognition of Certification and Use of Credentials ....................................................................................... 19

Denial of Certification ...................................................................................................................................... 20

Revocation of Certification ............................................................................................................................... 20

Review and Appeal of Certification Eligibility ............................................................................................... 21

Request for Exam Accommodations ............................................................................................................... 22-23

Please direct inquiries to:

AACN Certification Corporation, 27071 Aliso Creek Road, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656-3399
800-899-2226 • Fax: 949-362-2020 • certification@aacn.org

Please include your AACN customer number with all correspondence to AACN Certification Corporation.
CERTIFICATIONS AVAILABLE THROUGH AACN

Handbooks referred to below are available at www.aacn.org/certhandbooks.

Speciality Certifications

CCRN®
The CCRN certification program, introduced in 1976, is for nurses providing direct care to acutely/critically ill adult, pediatric or neonatal patients in areas such as ICU, CCU, trauma units or critical care transport/flight. Details can be found in the CCRN Exam Handbook.

CCRN-K™
The CCRN-K certification program, launched in 2014, is for nurses who influence the care delivered to acutely/critically ill adult, pediatric or neonatal patients, but do not primarily or exclusively provide direct care. Details can be found in the CCRN-K Exam Handbook.

CCRN-E™
The CCRN-E certification program was introduced in 2007 as a renewal option and in 2011 as an initial exam option for nurses monitoring/caring for acutely/critically ill adult patients from a remote teleICU location. Details can be found in the CCRN-E Exam Handbook.

PCCN®
The PCCN certification program, introduced in 2004, is for progressive care nurses providing direct care to acutely ill adult patients. Clinical settings include areas such as intermediate care units, direct observation units, stepdown units, telemetry units, transitional care units, cardiac catheterization labs and emergency departments. Details can be found in the PCCN Exam Handbook.

PCCN-K™
The PCCN-K certification program, launched in 2016, is for nurses who influence the care delivered to acutely ill adult patients, but do not primarily or exclusively provide direct care. Details can be found in the PCCN-K Exam Handbook.

Subspecialty Certifications

CMC®
The CMC (cardiac medicine) certification program, launched in 2005, is for nurses who hold a nationally-accredited clinical nursing specialty certification (such as CCRN, CCRN-E, PCCN, ACNPC, ACNPC-AG, CCNS, ACCNS-AG, CMSRN, CEN, etc.) and specialize in the direct care of adult cardiac patients. Clinical settings may include, but are not limited to, CCUs, medical ICUs, telemetry, progressive care, heart failure clinics/home care, interventional cardiology, cardiac cath labs and/or electrophysiology units. Details can be found in the CMC Exam Handbook.

CSC®
The CSC (cardiac surgery) certification program, launched in 2005, is for nurses who hold a nationally-accredited clinical nursing specialty certification (such as CCRN, CCRN-E, PCCN, ACNPC, ACNPC-AG, CCNS, ACCNS-AG, CNOR, CRNFA, CPAN, etc.) and specialize in the direct care of adult cardiac surgery patients within the first 48 hours postoperatively. Clinical settings may include, but are not limited to, cardiothoracic surgery, cardiovascular surgery and post-anesthesia care units. Details can be found in the CSC Exam Handbook.

Listed on the following page are AACN’s advanced practice certifications.

AACN Certification Corporation is the certifying organization for the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN).
Advanced Practice Consensus Model-Based Certifications

**ACNPC-AG®**
The ACNPC-AG certification program, launched in 2013, is an entry-level advanced practice certification for acute care nurse practitioners (ACNPs) educated at the graduate level to provide continuous and comprehensive advanced nursing care to acutely ill adult-gerontology patients (young adults, older adults and frail elderly) experiencing episodic illness, exacerbation of chronic illness or terminal illness. Details can be found in the *ACNPC-AG Exam Handbook*.

The ACCNS credentials are entry-level advanced practice certifications for clinical nurse specialists educated at the graduate level to provide advanced nursing care across the continuum of healthcare services, from wellness through acute care:

**ACCNS-AG®**
The ACCNS-AG certification program, launched in 2013, meets the specialized needs of the adult-gerontology patient population (young adults, older adults and frail elderly). Details can be found in the *ACCNS-AG Exam Handbook*.

**ACCNS-P®**
The ACCNS-P certification program, launched in 2013, meets the specialized needs of the pediatric patient population. Details can be found in the *ACCNS-P Exam Handbook*.

**ACCNS-N®**
The ACCNS-N certification program, launched in 2014, meets the specialized needs of the neonatal patient population. Details can be found the *ACCNS-N Exam Handbook*.

Advanced Practice Certifications

**ACNPC®**
The ACNPC certification program, launched in 2007, is an advanced practice credential for nurses educated at the graduate level as adult acute care nurse practitioners to provide advanced nursing care across the continuum of healthcare services to meet the specialized physiologic and psychologic needs of patients with complex acute, critical and/or chronic health conditions.

The ACNPC is no longer available for initial exam but remains as a renewal option for current ACNPCs. The Consensus Model-based ACNPC-AG exam is available for those educated as Adult-Gerontology Acute Care NPs.

Adult ACNPs currently certified through another nationally-accredited nursing organization may apply for ACNPC by Endorsement. Details can be found in the *ACNPC Endorsement Handbook*.

**CCNS®**
The CCNS certification program, launched in 1999, is an advanced practice credential for nurses educated at the graduate level as clinical nurse specialists to provide advanced nursing care to acutely and/or critically ill adult, pediatric or neonatal patients.

The CCNS is no longer available for initial exam but remains as a renewal option for current CCNSs. The Consensus Model-based ACCNS-AG, ACCNS-P and ACCNS-N exams are available for those educated as clinical nurse specialists across the spectrum of wellness through acute care.

Handbooks are available at www.aacn.org/certhandbooks.
AACN CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Definition
Certification is a process by which a nongovernmental agency validates, based upon predetermined standards, an individual nurse’s knowledge for safe and effective practice in a defined functional or clinical area of nursing.

Certification validates your knowledge of nursing in your specialty area to hospitals, peers, patients and, most importantly, to yourself. Certification promotes continuing excellence in the nursing profession.

Code of Ethics
AACN and AACN Certification Corporation consider the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics for Nurses foundational for nursing practice, providing a framework for making ethical decisions and fulfilling responsibilities to the public, colleagues and the profession.

AACN Certification Corporation’s mission of public protection supports a standard of excellence that certified nurses have a responsibility to read, understand and act in a manner congruent with the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses.

To access the ANA Code of Ethics visit www.aacn.org/certification > Overview > Learn more about AACN Certification Corporation.

AACN Values Related to Upholding the Value of Certification
Exam security is paramount to protecting patients, families and certified nurses. When we compromise the value of certification, we compromise the credentials that validate our knowledge in our specialty.

AACN’s values of accountability, integrity and stewardship translate directly into upholding the value of certification. Thus, we will:
• Be accountable by upholding and consistently acting in concert with ethical values and principles.
• Act with integrity by communicating openly and honestly, keeping promises, honoring commitments and promoting loyalty in all relationships.
• Demonstrate stewardship through fair and responsible management of resources.

For more information, please refer to www.aacn.org/certification > Overview > Value of Certification.

Non-Discrimination Policy
It is the policy of AACN Certification Corporation, its Board of Directors, committee members and staff to comply with all applicable laws that prohibit discrimination in employment or service provision because of a person’s race, color, religion, gender, age, disability, national origin or any other protected characteristic.

AACN strives to ensure equal opportunity for all exam candidates by reviewing exam content for bias and sensitivity.

Name and Address Changes
You are responsible for notifying AACN Certification Corporation should your name and/or address change at any time before or after you become certified. Failure to do so may result in not receiving information necessary for certification renewal.

Please notify us of any address or email changes; you may update your profile as follows:
• online at www.aacn.org > Sign In
• email info@aacn.org, or
• call AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226

The following changes must be made by calling AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226:
• name changes
• address changes for exam candidates during the 90-day testing window

You are responsible for renewing your certification even if you do not receive a renewal notice.

Exam Preparation
AACN Certification Corporation does not participate in the development of AACN products and does not approve, endorse or recommend any specific exam preparation products. Test plans are included in each of the individual program handbooks, available at www.aacn.org/certhandbooks. To order AACN exam review products, visit www.aacn.org/store or call 800-899-2226.

For information about locating a local AACN Chapter to inquire about review courses in your area, visit www.aacn.org/chapters.

continued
Certification and Exam Administration

The certification programs are administered by AACN Certification Corporation. The certification exams are conducted in cooperation with PSI Services.

Computer-based exams are administered 6 days per week throughout the year at more than 300 PSI locations across the United States.

Computer experience is not necessary as you will use only a few keystrokes or a mouse and be able to take a tutorial and practice test before the exam begins.

During the exam you will be able to move back and forth between items and mark items for later review. You will receive final results including a breakdown by question type at the end of the computer-based exam.

Cognitive Levels of Questions

The cognitive level of the test items is based on a condensed version of Bloom’s Taxonomy. The majority of the items are written at the application and analysis levels. Testing at higher cognitive levels provides a better indication of the candidate’s critical thinking abilities when caring for acutely and critically ill patients and their families.

AACN Membership Not Required

Membership in the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses is not an eligibility requirement for AACN Certification programs.

Confidentiality of Exam Application Status

Information regarding the status of an exam application submitted to AACN Certification Corporation will not be released to anyone without the exam candidate’s written authorization.

Exam Eligibility Outside the U.S.

Eligible candidates for AACN Certification Corporation exams or certification renewal must hold a current, unencumbered U.S.* RN or APRN license.

Practice hours for exam and renewal must be completed in U.S.-based* facilities or in facilities determined to be comparable to the U.S. standard of acute/critical care nursing practice as evidenced by Magnet® designation or Joint Commission International accreditation. Practice hours completed in Canada-based facilities are acceptable for CCRN, CCRN-K, CCRN-E, PCCN, PCCN-K, CMC, and CSC exam and renewal eligibility.

Eligible practice hours for NP and CNS certification exam and renewal eligibility are those completed within the U.S.* APRNs practicing outside the U.S. should contact AACN at APRNcert@aacn.org regarding eligible practice hours.

*Includes District of Columbia and U.S. territories of Guam, Virgin Islands, American Samoa and Northern Mariana Islands.

Certification Exam Discount Programs

Computer-based testing discounts are available for groups of 10 or more exam candidates who apply together through the Certification Group Discount program.

Employers may pre-purchase exam vouchers at a further discounted rate through the Certification Organization Discount program.

For details about the discount programs, visit www.aacn.org/certdiscounts, email certification@aacn.org or call 800-899-2226.
APPLICATION PROCESS

AACN Certification Corporation recommends that you be ready to take the exam before submitting your application.

Online registration is an option for all AACN exams.
- Candidates may register for their computer-based exam online at www.aacn.org/certification > Get Certified.
- To apply with a group or to test outside the U.S., a paper application is required. Refer to page 10 for details.

Submit Application
- Complete exam application/honor statement and pay application fee
  - Use your full legal name on the application. This name must match photo identification used for exam entry and will be the name printed on your certificate.
  - Advanced Practice exam applications require official, final transcripts for all graduate-level coursework and an Educational Eligibility Form completed and signed by the program director.
  - AACN will send a confirmation email to advise that you have successfully applied.
  - For verification of receipt of your application, mail your application “return receipt requested” via certified mail or include a self-addressed stamped postcard, which will be mailed when your application is received.

Application Review
- Waiting period for application processing
  - Allow 2 to 4 weeks from the date received at AACN for your application to be processed. Applying online shortens this process by several weeks.
  - AACN will notify you in writing if your application is incomplete, requires clarification or if you are ineligible. Once the application is reviewed, AACN will notify the testing service, PSI, of eligible exam candidates.
- Receive Approval-to-Test postcard and email
  - If you do not receive an Approval-to-Test confirmation within 4 weeks of applying for an exam, please contact AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226.
  - Eligible candidates will be sent a postcard (see next page for sample) and email from PSI with a toll-free number and online instructions to schedule your testing appointment. The postcard and email also include the 90-day period during which you must schedule and take the exam.
  - The address label and email will contain the letter “C” plus your unique AACN customer number (e.g., C00123456). Use this number for identification in place of your social security number.

The Exam
- Schedule and take your exam
  - Upon receipt of postcard, promptly schedule an appointment at a date and time of your choice that falls within your 90-day eligibility period. To locate one of more than 300 PSI testing centers within the U.S., visit www.goAMP.com.
  - Exam results with a score breakdown will be presented on-site upon completion of computer-based exams. Results of paper and pencil exams are received by mail 6 to 8 weeks following paper testing.
  - Successful candidates will be mailed their wall certificate approximately 1 to 2 weeks after exam results are received.
  - Unsuccessful candidates are eligible for a discounted retest fee. Please refer to page 16 for details.

Please ensure that AACN has your current contact information.
Updates may be made online at www.aacn.org/myaccount or emailed to info@aacn.org.
For name changes, please call AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226.
When you receive your postcard, confirm that you have registered for the **correct exam and the name on the postcard matches the name on your legal photo identification**. If a correction is required, please call AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226.
**EXAM APPLICATION FEES**

**Computer-Based Exams**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CCRN/CCRN-K/CCRN-E</th>
<th>PCCN/PCCN-K</th>
<th>CMC/CSC</th>
<th>ACNPC-AG/ACCNS-AG/ACCNS-P/ACCNS-N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AACN Member</td>
<td>$239</td>
<td>$189</td>
<td>$130</td>
<td>$255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmember</td>
<td>$344</td>
<td>$289</td>
<td>$215</td>
<td>$360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Payable in U.S. funds. Fees are subject to change without notice. A $15 fee will be charged for a returned check.

Computer-based testing discounts are available for groups submitting **10 or more** certification exam applications together. Employers may pre-purchase exam vouchers at a further discounted rate.

For details about the Group Discount and Organization Discount programs, visit [www.aacn.org/certdiscounts](http://www.aacn.org/certdiscounts) or call 800-899-2226.

For details on paper and pencil exams or for testing outside the U.S., refer to page 10 or email certification@aacn.org.
**TESTING CENTER INFORMATION**

**Computer-Based Testing (CBT)**
To locate the testing center nearest you, please visit www.goAMP.com or call 833-256-1418.

Discounted pricing for CBT is available to groups of 10 or more who submit their applications together; for information, visit www.aacn.org/certdiscounts.

**Paper and Pencil Testing**
Paper and pencil exams are available to groups testing together. The same eligibility requirements and exam fees apply as for computer-based testing. Additional site fees may apply.

For information about paper and pencil exams, please email certification@aacn.org,

- Requests for paper testing must be submitted in writing **at least 4 months** before the exam date.
- All completed applications and appropriate fees must be submitted 8 weeks prior to the confirmed exam date.
- Group discount pricing does **not** apply to paper and pencil sessions.
- An email address for the group point of contact must be provided.

Results of paper and pencil exams are mailed to candidates 6 to 8 weeks following paper testing.

AACN Certification Corporation may deny paper and pencil applications or cancel a paper and pencil exam session at its sole discretion. The use of a PSI test center and/or PSI proctor for a paper and pencil exam session may also be required.

**Testing Outside the U.S.**
Individuals residing outside the U.S. may apply to take an exam at a military testing site or at select non-military sites. An additional exam fee may apply.

For international testing inquiries or to request a special application, please email certification@aacn.org.

**Exam Accommodations**
AACN Certification Corporation is committed to ensuring that no individual is deprived of the opportunity to take an exam solely by reason of a disability or impairment. Every testing site is fully accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Exam accommodations will be considered for those with a disability or impairment who submit a request in advance. Documentation and verification of the disability or impairment from a suitably licensed professional qualified to diagnose the condition must be submitted to AACN Certification Corporation with the exam application and indicated by checking the appropriate box on the exam application.

Accommodations, such as additional testing time, reader, signer or amanuenses, require advance approval. Only candidates approved by AACN Certification Corporation will receive accommodations during testing.

A Request for Exam Accommodations form is located on pages 22 and 23.

Scheduling for the hearing impaired is available at www.goAMP.com.

**Candidate Evaluation or Complaints**
You may provide comments for any test item during a computerized exam by clicking on the COMMENT button to the left of the TIME button. This opens a dialog box to enter comments.

For paper and pencil testing, comments may be written in the designated area of the scantron form.

Only comments submitted at the test center will be considered during the final scoring process.

Because of test security considerations, you will not receive individual replies about the content of test items or be permitted to review test items after completing the exam.

At the conclusion of the exam, you may also complete a brief survey about test administration conditions.

Please email complaints or comments about test center facilities, test supervision or any other matter related to the testing program to:

- certification@aacn.org

Or mail to:

- AACN Certification Corporation
  27071 Aliso Creek Road
  Aliso Viejo, CA 92656-3399

Provide your name and address in all correspondence.

When questions or comments concern an exam already taken, the date and time of the exam along with the location of the testing center must also be noted. Each complaint will be investigated and replied to.
**SCHEDULING AN EXAM APPOINTMENT**

Within 2 weeks of online registration and 4 weeks of submitting a paper application, you can expect to receive an email and postcard with exam scheduling information from PSI (AACN's testing service). If you have not received your postcard or email within these timeframes, please contact AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226 or email certcorp@aacn.org.

Testing is offered at over 300 PSI sites across the United States. Exams are administered by appointment only, Monday through Friday. Saturday appointments are available at most locations. Individuals are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. You must make your appointment at least 2 business days before the preferred testing date.

Once you have received your email and/or postcard from PSI, confirm that you have registered for the correct exam and the name on the postcard/email matches the name on your legal I.D. You can only take the exam for which you have been approved; the exam type cannot be changed at the testing site. If the information you receive from PSI is incorrect, please contact AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226 or email certcorp@aacn.org.

To schedule your exam appointment or to locate the testing center nearest you, visit www.goAMP.com > Candidates. You may also schedule your exam by telephone at 833-256-1418.

Whether scheduling online or via phone you will need to provide your test ID number which is located on the label of your confirmation postcard and also included in your confirmation email. Your test ID number is your AACN Customer number preceded by the letter “C.”

When the appointment is made, you will receive a confirmation email with the exam date and start time. Unscheduled walk-in candidates will not be admitted to the testing center.

All PSI test centers are **closed** on the following days:
- New Year’s Holiday
- Martin Luther King Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day Holiday
- Thanksgiving Holiday
- Christmas Holiday

The above is not necessarily a complete list of days PSI testing centers may be closed.

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**EXAM RESCHEDULING AND CANCELLATION**

Once you have scheduled your exam with PSI, you may reschedule once within your 90-day eligibility period by calling PSI at 833-256-1418. This request must be made at least three (3) business days before your scheduled exam date according to the schedule below.

There are no refunds or extensions for missed appointments.

If you are unable to sit for the exam within your 90-day eligibility period, you may call AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226 to request a 90-day extension. A $100 change fee is required.

If you contact AACN Customer Care to cancel your exam application after it has been processed, you will receive a refund minus a $100 processing fee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When the exam is scheduled on:</th>
<th>PSI must be called by 3 p.m. Central Time to reschedule the exam by the:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>previous Wednesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>previous Thursday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>previous Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>previous Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday/Saturday</td>
<td>previous Tuesday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Report to the designated testing center no later than your scheduled time. The address is available when you schedule your exam. Some PSI sites are located in H&R Block offices. Look for signs indicating PSI Testing Center Check-In.

You will not be permitted to start the exam prior to your scheduled time and will not be admitted if you arrive more than 15 minutes late.

No books, papers, dictionaries, other reference materials or personal items, including purses, briefcases, headwear, hooded apparel, coats, etc., may be taken into the testing center and must be left in a vehicle or at home. If you require an exemption from this policy, please contact AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226 to request advance approval for accommodation.

Neither PSI, AACN, nor H&R Block will be responsible for loss or damage to personal items. We also recommend layering your clothing so that you can adjust to the room’s temperature during the exam.

**Inclement Weather or Emergency**

**24-Hour PSI Weather Hotline 800-380-5416**

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen emergencies on the day of an exam, PSI will determine whether circumstances warrant the cancellation and subsequent rescheduling of an exam.

PSI will make every attempt to contact each scheduled candidate as soon as a closure has been issued. For the latest closure information, visit www.goAMP.com > Candidates. You may also contact the PSI Candidate Services at 833-256-1418.

An exam will usually not be rescheduled if testing center personnel can reach and operate the site. Every attempt is made to administer exams as scheduled. Should an exam be canceled at a testing site, all scheduled candidates will receive follow-up notification regarding a rescheduled exam date or reapplication procedures.

**Security Standards**

AACN Certification Corporation and PSI maintain test administration and test security standards designed to ensure that all candidates are provided the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The testing center is continuously monitored by audio and video surveillance equipment for security purposes.

**Verifying Your Identity**

Two forms of identification (ID) are required to gain admission to the exam. No forms of temporary identification will be accepted.

The **primary ID** must be current, issued by a government agency, and include your **signature and photograph**. Acceptable forms of primary ID include:

- driver’s license
- state ID card
- passport
- military ID card

The **secondary ID** must include your **signature and printed name**. Acceptable forms of secondary ID include:

- credit card
- membership card/check cashing card
- social security card
- employment/student ID card
- notarized photograph

*continued*
Taking the Exam - CBT

Logging In: After your identity has been confirmed, you will be directed to a testing carrel where the computer screen will instruct you to enter your social security number. Instead, use your AACN Customer ID number preceded by the letter “C,” as printed on your confirmation postcard label. If you do not remember this number, you may ask the proctor. Your photograph, taken before beginning the exam, will remain on-screen throughout your testing session. The photograph will also appear on your score report.

Each exam consists of multiple choice questions. The number of questions answered correctly determines your score.

Practice Exam: The time used for a practice exam is not counted as part of the timed exam. Once you are comfortable with the computer-based testing process, you may end the practice session and start the timed exam.

Timed Exam: After your practice session, you will begin the actual exam. Instructions for taking the exam are available on-screen once you begin the exam.

The time limit is intended to allow you to complete the entire exam by working quickly and efficiently. The computer monitors the time you spend on the exam, and the exam ends automatically if you exceed the time limit.

You can display a digital clock showing the time remaining by clicking the TIME button in the lower right-hand corner of the screen. If you find it distracting, you may turn off the digital clock anytime during the exam.

Answering Test Items: Only one question is presented at a time. The item number appears in the lower right-hand corner of the screen. The entire test item will appear on the screen (i.e., a stem and 4 answer options labeled A, B, C and D).

Use the mouse to click on your answer, or use the keyboard to enter the letter for your answer. Your answer will appear in the lower left section of the screen.

Changing Your Answer: Click on a different answer or use the keyboard to change your answer as many times as you wish during the exam.

Moving to the Next Item: Click on the forward arrow (>) in the lower right corner of the screen. This action will move you forward through the exam item by item. Click the backward arrow (<) or use the left arrow on the keyboard to return to previous items.

Unanswered Items: You may leave an item unanswered and return to it later. You should not spend too much time on difficult questions. Instead, proceed to other questions and return to the difficult ones if time permits. You may bookmark an item for later review by clicking the blank square to the right of the TIME button. Clicking on the double arrows (>>) advances to the next unanswered or bookmarked item on the exam. To identify all unanswered and bookmarked items, repeatedly click on the double arrows (>>).

Answer Every Item: When you have completed the exam, the number of items you answered is reported. If you have not answered every item and have time remaining, return to the exam and answer them. There is no penalty for guessing.

During the Exam

Questions About Content: You may not ask questions about the content of the exam at any time.

Making Notes: You will be provided with scratch paper to use during the exam. You may not remove any documents or notes from the exam room, and their return to the proctor is required in order to receive your score.

All computer screens, questions, paper and written materials are the property of AACN Certification Corporation and PSI and may not be reproduced in any form.

Commenting on Items: You may comment about any item by clicking on the COMMENT button to the left of the TIME button. This opens a dialog box where you may enter your comments.

Breaks, Food, Drink, Smoking: Breaks are considered part of your exam time. You may request a break whenever you wish but will not be allowed additional make-up time. Leaving the testing site without authorization automatically voids the exam. You may not eat, drink or smoke in the testing site.

Ending the Exam: If you finish the exam early, you may end the exam by clicking the EXIT button on the screen.
Taking the Exam - Paper and Pencil

Check In: Your identity and AACN Customer ID number will be confirmed at check in. Your AACN Customer ID number is preceded by the letter “C,” as printed on your confirmation postcard label. You will then be directed to a testing seat and given an exam booklet and scantron form.

Each exam consists of multiple choice questions. The number of questions answered correctly determines your score.

Answering Test Items: Using the scantron form, notate your answers to the questions presented in the exam booklet. Because your answer sheet will be optically scanned by computer, it is important that you use the pencil provided to mark your answers. Do not make any stray marks on your answer sheet. If you erase, be sure to the previous mark is completely erased.

Unanswered Items: You may leave an item unanswered and return to it later. You should not spend too much time on difficult questions. Instead, proceed to other questions and return to the difficult ones if time permits.

Answer Every Item: If you have not answered every item and have time remaining, return and answer them. There is no penalty for guessing.

Timed Exam: The time limit is intended to allow you to complete the entire exam by working quickly and efficiently.

During the Exam

Questions About Content: You may not ask questions about the content of the exam at any time.

Making Notes: You may make any notes or calculations you wish in the exam booklet. However, you will not receive credit for any answers unless they are marked on your answer sheet. You may not remove any documents or notes from the exam room, and their return to the proctor is required.

All questions, paper and written materials are the property of AACN Certification Corporation and PSI and may not be reproduced in any form.

Commenting on Items: You may comment about any item using the designated area of the scantron sheet. Write the item number in the blank box and your comments about the item.

Breaks, Food, Drink, Smoking: Breaks are considered part of your exam time. You may request a break whenever you wish but will not be allowed additional make-up time. Leaving the testing site without authorization automatically voids the exam. You may not eat, drink or smoke in the testing site.

After the Exam

After you finish the exam, you will be asked to complete a short evaluation of your testing experience.

For computer-based testing, your official score report will be provided by the proctor upon completion of the exam. For paper and pencil testing, your score report will be received 6 to 8 weeks following completion of the exam.

Your official score report will provide the number of correct answers for each major content category. Approximately 1 to 2 weeks after exam results are received, successful candidates will be mailed their congratulations letter and wall certificate.

Dismissal From the Testing Center

The proctor may dismiss you from the exam for any of these reasons:

• Unauthorized admission to the exam
• Creating a disturbance or being abusive or otherwise uncooperative
• Bringing unauthorized electronic devices including cellular/smart phones, other handheld computers, calculators, pagers, alarms and other signaling devices
• Bringing notes or other resources into the testing center
• Attempting to record test questions or make notes
• Attempting to take the exam for someone else
• Giving or receiving help or being suspected of doing so
• Leaving the test center during the exam administration

If you are dismissed for any of these violations, your exam score will be voided and your fees will not be refunded. Evidence of misconduct will be reviewed by AACN Certification Corporation to determine whether you will be allowed to reapply for the exam. If a re-exam is granted, a complete application and fee are required to reapply.

continued
ON THE DAY OF YOUR EXAM (CONTINUED)

Failure to Report for an Exam
You may reapply to take the exam in the future if you did not appear for your scheduled testing session. If your original application is less than one year old, it may be reactivated by paying a fee equivalent to the retest fee. If the application is more than one year old, you must submit a new application and a fee equivalent to the retest fee.

Misuse/Disclosure of Exam Content
Any individual who removes or attempts to remove materials from the testing center, or who receives, discusses, discloses, reproduces, distributes, displays or otherwise misuses a test question or any part of a test question from a certification exam by written, electronic, oral or other form of communication, including but not limited to emailing, copying or printing of electronic files and reconstruction through memorization and/or dictation, will be subject to legal action and monetary damages.

Any nurse who engages in such improper behavior may also face denial or revocation of eligibility for certification or denial or revocation of certification.

Confidentiality of Exam Scores
The exam application that you submit to AACN Certification Corporation constitutes written authorization for PSI to release your exam scores to AACN Certification Corporation.

Scores for exams taken within the U.S. are reported upon completion of the exam or by U.S. mail. Scores for exams completed outside the U.S. are reported via email or by U.S. mail. Exam scores are not reported by telephone or facsimile.

Neither PSI nor AACN Certification Corporation will release scores to any institution or employer without your written consent.
EXAM RESULTS

Passing Point/Cut Score

A criterion-referenced standard setting process, known as the modified Angoff, is used to establish the passing point/cut score for the exam. Each candidate’s performance on the exam is measured against a predetermined standard.

The passing point/cut score for the exam is established using a panel of subject matter experts, an exam development committee (EDC), who carefully reviews each exam question to determine the basic level of knowledge or skill that is expected. The passing point/cut score is based on the panel’s established difficulty ratings for each exam question.

Under the guidance of a psychometrician, the panel develops and recommends the passing point/cut score, which is reviewed and approved by AACN Certification Corporation. The passing point/cut score for the exam is established to identify individuals with an acceptable level of knowledge and skill. All individuals with a score equal to or above the passing point/cut score have demonstrated an acceptable level of knowledge.

The passing point/cut score is not a percentage but a raw number that may change over time as an exam is updated based on results of the most recent study of practice, also known as a job analysis, or when the exam forms are periodically changed and equated for difficulty.

For each content area, the number of questions answered correctly is also reported to give candidates an idea of how well they performed in each area and to identify areas of weakness.

The questions are designed to test both your ability to remember specific facts or points of knowledge and your ability to apply that knowledge in performing specific skills and abilities required of acute or critical care nurses. Since an exam measures your knowledge in all areas, you could achieve a high number of correct responses in some areas but not pass the exam.

The passing point/cut score should not be confused with the pass rate, which is the percentage of candidates testing who are successful at passing an exam.

Canceled Scores

AACN Certification Corporation and PSI are responsible for the integrity of the scores they report. On occasion, occurrences such as a computer malfunction or misconduct by a candidate may cause a score to be suspect. AACN Certification Corporation and PSI are committed to resolving such issues as quickly as possible.

AACN Certification Corporation may void exam results if investigation shows that regulations have been violated.

If You Do Not Pass the Exam

If you do not pass the exam, you may reapply to AACN Certification Corporation for a retest. A discounted retest fee is available to candidates who took the exam within their most recent 90-day window but did not pass. Candidates may apply for and take the same certification exam up to 4 times in a 12-month period. After 12 months, signing a new honor statement is required.

Candidates may apply for a retest via one of the following methods:

- Online at www.aacn.org/certification > Get Certified
  - Option will be in place 2 weeks after an exam is completed
- By mailing or faxing a paper application
  - Application can be found in the applicable handbook online at www.aacn.org/certhandbooks
  - Select the “retest” option
- By calling AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226

Duplicate Score Reports

You may request an additional copy of your score report for $25 per copy. Submit requests and payment by check or money order within 12 months of sitting for the exam to:

PSI Certification Headquarters
18000 W. 105th St.
Olathe, KS 66061-7543

The request must include:
- Your name
- AACN Customer ID# preceded by the letter “C” (e.g., C00123456)
- Address
- Telephone number
- Date and type of exam taken

Sign and date your request. Duplicate score reports are mailed within approximately 2 weeks after receipt of your request.
The purpose of certification renewal is to promote continued competence. The renewal process helps to maintain an up-to-date knowledge base through continuing education and practice hours, or practice hours and passing the certification exam.

Following are the limitations to the components of the renewal options:

- **CE/CERP limitations** include content quality and relevance to practice as well as an individual’s ability to self-select CE/CERPs most pertinent to the individual’s practice and educational needs.

- **Practice hours limitations** include the quality of the practice environment and limitations on learning opportunities.

- One limitation of the exam is not assessing new competencies, as exam competencies were validated through initial certification.

Requiring two components for renewal, rather than one, decreases the limitations and furthers the goal of continued competence.

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**CERTIFICATION RENEWAL**

Your certification period begins the first day of the month in which the certification exam is passed.

- **CCRN, CCRN-K, CCRN-E, PCCN, PCCN-K, CMC, and CSC certifications** are granted for a 3-year period. For example, February 1, 2020 through January 31, 2023.

- **ACNPC-AG, ACCNS-AG, ACCNS-P, ACCNS-N, ACNPC and CCNS certifications** are granted for a 5-year period. For example, February 1, 2020 through January 31, 2025.

Renewal notifications will be mailed and emailed to you starting 4 months before your scheduled renewal date. You are responsible for renewing your certification even if you do not receive renewal notification.

Renewal by exam candidates must successfully apply for and schedule their exam in enough time to complete the exam before their scheduled renewal date. You may not take the exam early, then attempt to renew by CE or CERPs if you do not pass.

To renew, you must hold a current, unencumbered U.S.* RN or APRN license that was not subjected to formal discipline by the board of nursing in the state(s) in which you practiced and had no provisions or conditions that limited your nursing practice during the most recent certification period.

Refer to the individual certification renewal handbooks for specific requirements and for alternate designations, such as Inactive status.

*Includes District of Columbia and U.S. territories of Guam, Virgin Islands, American Samoa and Northern Mariana Islands.
Random audits of initial exam and renewal candidates is a routine part of AACN Certification Corporation’s commitment to our mission of ensuring public safety and complying with standard regulatory practices.

Nurses are not notified in advance of being audited. Audits are conducted randomly after candidates successfully pass the initial exam or renew certification. Those selected for audit are notified via email, and have a period of 60 days to submit the required documentation.

For initial exam audit, the following documentation is required:
- copy of U.S. RN or APRN license
- form to verify clinical/practice hours

For renewal audit, the following documentation is required:
- copy of U.S. RN or APRN license
- form to verify clinical/practice hours
- CERP Log or CE Renewal Point Log
- copies of CE/CERP documentation

AACN Certification Corporation will review audit documentation and respond to audit candidates within 30 days of receiving their documentation. Those who pass the audit will be informed via email. Those who do not pass the audit will be sent a letter notifying them of the revocation of their certification.

Failure to respond to an audit, pass an audit or provide the required information in a timely manner will result in revocation. Notification of certification revocation may be sent to the nurse’s employer and state board of nursing, as appropriate.

No refunds will be issued in the case of failure or non-response to an audit. Revocation of certification may be appealed. Refer to page 21.

Complete details about the audit process can be found in the renewal handbook for your certification, available at www.aacn.org/certhandbooks.

Military nurses who receive an audit notification while under overseas deployment orders are asked to contact AACN at 800-899-2226 immediately upon their return to the U.S. for instructions on submitting audit materials without penalty.
RECOGNITION OF CERTIFICATION AND USE OF CREDENTIALS

A listing of certified nurses is maintained by AACN Certification Corporation and may be reported in its publications and/or listed on its website. Certification status is available to the public via the Certification Verification system, at www.aacn.org/certification > Verify Certification.

AACN certifications are not punctuated with periods. The specific program of certification (e.g., CCRN) and specific patient population (i.e., neonatal, pediatric, adult or adult-gerontology) where applicable, will be noted on the certificant’s wall certificate.

Specialty Certifications
Candidates who meet all eligibility requirements and pass the specialty certification exam may use the corresponding credential, “CCRN”, “CCRN-K”, “CCRN-E”, “PCCN” or “PCCN-K” after their licensing title.

CCRN and PCCN are registered service marks. CCRN-K, CCRN-E and PCCN-K are trademarks.

The proper use of each credential is as follows:
- **CCRN**: Chris Smith, RN, CCRN
- **CCRN-K**: Chris Smith, RN, CCRN-K
- **CCRN-E**: Chris Smith, RN, CCRN-E
- **PCCN**: Chris Smith, RN, PCCN
- **PCCN-K**: Chris Smith, RN, PCCN-K

Subspecialty Certifications
Candidates who meet all eligibility requirements and pass the CMC or CSC sub-specialty certification exams may use the corresponding credentials after their licensing title, linked to a nationally-accredited (NCCA or ABSNC) clinical nursing specialty certification. Candidates must specify to which certification they wish to attach their subspecialty certification.

CMC and CSC are registered service marks.

CMC and CSC may only be displayed attached to a clinical nursing specialty credential.

The proper use of each credential is as follows:
- **CMC**: Chris Smith, RN, PCCN-CMC
- **CSC**: Chris Smith, RN, CCRN-CSC

If both subspecialty credentials are obtained, they may be attached to the same clinical nursing specialty credential, e.g., CCRN-CMC-CSC.

Advanced Practice Certifications
Candidates who meet all eligibility requirements and pass the advanced practice certification exam may use the corresponding credential, “ACNPC-AG”, “ACCNS-AG”, “ACCNS-P”, “ACCNS-N”, “ACNPC” or “CCNS” after their licensing title.

ACNPC-AG, ACCNS-AG, ACCNS-P, ACCNS-N, ACNPC and CCNS are registered service marks.

The proper use of each credential is as follows:
- **ACNPC-AG**: Chris Smith, RN, ACNPC-AG
- **ACCNS-AG**: Chris Smith, RN, ACCNS-AG
- **ACCNS-P**: Chris Smith, RN, ACCNS-P
- **ACCNS-N**: Chris Smith, RN, ACCNS-N
- **ACNPC**: Chris Smith, RN, ACNPC
- **CCNS**: Chris Smith, RN, CCNS
DENIAL OF CERTIFICATION

AACN Certification Corporation will deny certification to initial exam candidates for any reason deemed appropriate including, but not limited to, the following:

- Violating any rules of the exam
- Falsification of a certification exam application
- Falsification of any information provided to AACN Certification Corporation
- Failure to meet eligibility requirements
- Failure to pay fees
- Failure to meet deadlines
- Failure to respond to or pass an audit
- Misrepresentation of certification status or misuse of credential
- Cheating (or reasonable evidence of intent to cheat) on the exam
- Sharing exam contents
- Provisions or conditions placed on RN or APRN licensure

A current, unencumbered license is required. An unencumbered license is not currently being subjected to formal discipline by the board of nursing in the state(s) in which a nurse is practicing and has no provisions or conditions that limit the nurse’s practice in any way.

In the event of denial, you may be notified that you are prohibited from reapplying for the certification exam for a period of up to 3 years.

AACN Certification Corporation may take additional actions pending further investigation, including sending notification to your employer and/or state board of nursing, as appropriate.

REVOCATION OF CERTIFICATION

AACN Certification Corporation may revoke certification for any reason deemed appropriate including, but not limited to, the following:

- Falsification of a certification exam application or renewal application
- Falsification of any information provided to AACN Certification Corporation
- Failure to meet/maintain eligibility requirements
- Failure to pay fees
- Failure to meet deadlines
- Failure to respond to or pass an audit
- Misrepresentation of certification status or misuse of credential
- Conviction of a felony
- Cheating (or reasonable evidence of intent to cheat) on the exam
- Sharing exam contents
- Provisions or conditions placed on RN or APRN licensure during the certification renewal period

Certificants must notify AACN Certification Corporation within 30 days of any provisions or conditions placed against their RN or APRN license(s).

In the event of revocation, notification may be sent to your employer and state board of nursing, where appropriate.

You will be notified that you may be prohibited from reapplying for any AACN certification exam for a period of up to 3 years.

Fees paid for certification renewal are not refunded.

Refer to the Upholding the Value of Certification section at www.aacn.org/certification > Overview > Value of Certification.
REVIEW AND APPEAL OF CERTIFICATION ELIGIBILITY

The review and appeal process is available to individuals whose certification status has been denied, expired or revoked.

**Internal Review Panel (IRP)**

The review process is conducted by the staff of AACN Certification Corporation.

Initial applicants and prospective applicants may request a review of eligibility within 45 days of notification of denial. The written request should describe their eligibility and how it conforms to the certification program.

Requests for review of expired or revoked certification status should include information and documents to support the request for reinstatement. Requests for review should be received within 30 days of notification of certification expiration or revocation.

Please email your request for review to: certification@aacn.org

Or mail to: Certification Specialist
AACN Certification Corporation
27071 Aliso Creek Road
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656-3399

The IRP will review the documentation provided and render a decision within 30 days. Additional information may be requested by the IRP. The IRP decision will be communicated via phone or email to the individual requesting review.

**Appeal of Eligibility, Exam and Renewal Determination**

A candidate who believes he/she was unjustly denied eligibility for an exam, who challenges results of an exam or who believes he/she was unjustly denied renewal of certification may request reconsideration of the decision by emailing a written appeal to certification@aacn.org.

The candidate for certification or renewal of certification must provide convincing evidence that a severe disadvantage was afforded the candidate during processing of an application for exam or renewal of certification or prior to or during administration of an exam.

The appeal must be made within 45 days of receipt of the adverse decision (for example, a score report or any other official correspondence related to certification or renewal of certification from AACN Certification Corporation or its agents). The written appeal must also indicate the specific relief requested.

The appeal process is conducted by the AACN Certification Corporation Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel is comprised of certified peer volunteers who have an understanding of the credential being appealed and are not members of the internal review process. Panel members sign confidentiality agreements as well as conflict of interest forms prior to participation.

The Appeals Panel will review the documentation provided and render a decision within 30 days of date of appeal. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final and will be communicated via email to the requesting individual.

For questions about the review and appeal process, please call AACN Certification Corporation at 800-899-2226.
REQUEST FOR EXAM ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have a disability covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), please complete this form and the Documentation of Disability-Related Needs form on the next page so your accommodations for testing can be processed efficiently. The information you provide and any documentation regarding your disability and need for accommodation in testing will be treated with strict confidentiality. Please submit completed form 2 to 3 weeks prior to your anticipated exam date.

Candidate Information

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<th>Requested Assessment Center:</th>
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Exam Accommodations

I request accommodations for the ______________________ certification exam.

Please provide (check all that apply):

- [ ] Seating or other physical accommodations
- [ ] Reader
- [ ] Extended testing time (time and a half)
- [ ] Reduced distraction environment
- [ ] Other special accommodations (please specify)

________________________________________

Comments:

________________________________________

________________________________________

Signed: ________________________________ Date: ________________

Submit this form with your exam application to:

AACN Certification Corporation
27071 Aliso Creek Road
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656-3399

For questions, call AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226.
**DOCUMENTATION OF DISABILITY-RELATED NEEDS**

Please have this section completed by an appropriate professional (education professional, physician, psychologist or psychiatrist qualified to diagnose the condition) to ensure that our testing vendor, PSI Services, is able to provide the required accommodations.

<table>
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<th>Professional Documentation</th>
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<td>I have known __________________________ since _____ / _____ / _____ in my capacity as a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam Candidate Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Title</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The candidate discussed with me the nature of the test to be administered. It is my opinion that, because of this candidate’s disability described below, he/she should be accommodated by providing the arrangements listed below and/or on the attached.

**Description of Disability:**

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Signed: ____________________________________________ Date: ______________

Printed Name: ________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________

Telephone Number: ________________________ Email Address: ________________________

Date: ________________________ License # (if applicable): ________________________

*Submit this form with your exam application to:*

AACN Certification Corporation  
27071 Aliso Creek Road  
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656-3399

For questions, call AACN Customer Care at 800-899-2226.
AACN Certification Corporation updates the information, fees and requirements listed in this handbook on a regular basis. Certificants are responsible for utilizing the most current handbook available. Please refer to www.aacn.org for the most current information.