

Navigating the Process of Becoming a Certified Prevention Specialist (CPS): *Frequently Asked Questions*



This document was created to assist individuals who are interested in becoming a CPS. For more complete information, visit the Addiction Professionals Certification Board of New Jersey's website at www.certbd.com or e-mail rich@certbd.com.

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SECTION 1 – GENERAL

1. What are the requirements to become a CPS?

The Certified Prevention Specialist (CPS) is an individual who has demonstrated competency related to alcohol, tobacco and drug prevention and who provides services that build capacities of individuals and systems to promote healthy environments, lifestyles and communities.

The following are required for certification:

- Completion of 120 hours of pre-approved coursework;
- A minimum of a Bachelor's degree in a Human Services related field (e.g., Social Work, Education, Human Services) from an accredited institution (Copy of degree and transcript must be attached when submitting your application. Subject to approval by the Addiction Professionals Certification Board of New Jersey (APCBNJ))
- Documentation of two years of full-time experience (4,000 hours) in at least one of the five domains of prevention, including a 120-hour practicum completed within two years of the date of the application;
- Successful completion of the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) Prevention Written Exam; and a \$225 non-refundable review fee (check or money order made payable to the Addiction Professionals Certification Board of New Jersey (APCBNJ)).

The CPS application can be obtained at <http://www.certbd.com/pdfs/initial-applications/cps.pdf>.

2. How long is the process to become certified?

The process to become a CPS depends on how long it takes to complete the required 120 hours of coursework and the 4,000 experience hours. For example, if an individual is interning 20 hours per week, it would take approximately four years to complete the experience hours. If a candidate is working full-time, it is possible to complete the internship hours in two years.

SECTION II: COURSE WORK

1. How many courses are there?

To obtain a CPS, one must complete 120 hours of required coursework. The courses are categorized into 20 classes which cover 5 domains:

- Education and Skill Development
- Community Organization
- Public Policy and Environmental
- Professional Growth and Responsibility
- Planning and Evaluation

The 20 courses are as follows:

- P101: Prevention Program Planning and Assessment
- P102: Prevention Activities and Methods
- P103: Program Design
- P104: Evidence Based Prevention Models
- P105: Prevention Program Evaluation
- P201: Dynamics and Process of ATOD Dependency and Abuse
- P202: Impact of Substance Use Disorders on Families and Larger Systems
- P203: Prevention Issues with Special Populations
- P204: Prevention of Violent and Compulsive Behaviors
- P205: Presentation Skills
- P301: Community Assessment
- P302: Coalition Building and Maintenance
- P303: Coordinating Community Prevention Activities
- P401: Introduction to Methods and the Impact of Environmental Change
- P402: Assessment and Planning of Environmental Strategies
- P403: Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Change
- P501: Professional Growth
- P502: Ethics and Legal Issues for Prevention Specialist
- P503: Cultural Competency
- P504: Self Care for the Prevention Specialist

2. How many hours does each course take?

Each of the 20 courses listed above is six hours.

3. What if I have taken courses or am certified in another state? Do I have to take all the courses? Who do I contact for assistance?

If you are a CPS in another state, uniform standards allow reciprocity between IC&RC Member Boards. Contact the Addiction Professionals Certification Board of New Jersey (APCBNJ), New Jersey's IC&RC Member Board, about this process. Visit www.certbd.com for more information.

If you have taken courses in another state or if you have had college course work specifically related to substance abuse prevention, the APCBNJ will review your course work to determine if you can receive credit for those classes. You can reach the APCBNJ at rich@certbd.com for more information.

4. How far back can my educational coursework go and still be counted toward certification?

Course work remains valid for ten years.

5. How can I tell if my courses are approved by the Certification Board?

You should confirm this with the provider before you take the course. Additionally, every participant should receive a certificate of completion at the end of the course with the approval number, name of the course, and date of course.

6. Where can I go to take CPS classes?

There are a variety of community-based prevention organizations that offer CPS classes, including several NJPN member agencies. For a complete list of these agencies, visit www.njpn.org. Other Approved Providers who may offer CPS classes can also be found at www.certbd.com. Additionally, questions 7 and 8 below provide information about university CPS coursework and distance learning opportunities.

7. What colleges and/or universities offer pre-approved addiction coursework?

Other course work or college courses may qualify for some or all of this course work. If taking college or university courses, the course work must be part of a pre-approved degree program. Course work from both college or university and educational providers must be pre-approved by the APCBNJ. See a list of approved providers at <http://www.certbd.com/courses/approvedproviders.htm>.

Currently, there are two colleges offering college-level courses that are pre-approved for CPS coursework. There is a CPS certificate program offered by Rutgers University through the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. The courses are undergraduate courses and can be taken on a matriculated and non-matriculated basis. For more information, contact Steve Liga, Adjunct Professor, at 732-254-3344. The College of New Jersey offers graduate-level courses that can be taken on a matriculated and non-matriculated basis. For more information, contact Dr. Mark Woodford at 609-771-3018.

8. What about Distance Learning?

Some distance learning is acceptable if both the course and provider is approved by the APCBNJ. Currently, the only approved provider offering online courses is NCADD of Middlesex County. Information about their courses can be found at <http://www.ncadd-middlesex.org/>. Contact the APCBNJ for more complete information.

9. Are Scholarships available for CPS classes?

The New Jersey Prevention Network (NJPN) offers a limited number of scholarships for individuals who want to become a CPS. Visit <http://www.njpn.org> for more information.

10. I am a Student Assistance Counselor (SAC). Do my SAC courses count towards CPS education?

No, the CPS coursework does not include SAC equivalent coursework. The CPS requires 120 hours of specific coursework that focuses on prevention knowledge and skills. All 120 hours must be taken to obtain a CPS.

11. Am I certified after taking all the courses?

No. Someone is certified after meeting ALL the requirements for certification. When someone completes the course work, they have only completed the educational requirement for certification.

SECTION III: Written Exam

1. How do I apply to take the written exam?

You may download the written exam application from the APCBNJ website at www.certbd.com/applications/testingforms.htm. The fee to sit for the exam is \$145.

2. When and where are the tests given?

The tests are given quarterly. The schedule and testing location can be found on the APCBNJ website: <http://www.certbd.com/information/testinginformation.htm>

3. Is the test offered in any other language other than English?

At this time, the test is only offered in English.

4. How do I prepare for the test?

The International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) sets the international minimum standards for competency-based certification programs in addiction counseling, prevention, criminal justice, co-occurring disorders and clinical supervision through testing and credentialing of addiction professionals. A study guide is available on their website: <http://www.icrcaoda.org/PDFs/2007%20Prevention%20Candidate%20Guide.pdf>.

Additionally, the Distance Learning Center (DLC) has prepared a “Getting Ready to Test” manual that may be helpful as you study for the exam. The manual may be purchased through the DLC website at <http://www.readytotest.com/>.

5. When do I receive my test scores?

You will receive your test scores in the mail within about four weeks.

6. Can I take the test when I’ve completed all my course work if I’m not finished with my experience hours?

Yes, you may take the test prior to completing all of your experience hours.

7. Is the written test pass/fail or do I receive a grade? What grade do I need to pass?

The exam is scored. A passing score is at least 500 out of a possible 800.

8. Are there provisions for those with learning disabilities (ADHD, etc) to take untimed tests?

Yes, there are provisions for those with learning disabilities to take an untimed written exam. When registering for the written test, the applicant must send a written request and recent professional documentation of their disability along with the application form.

SECTION IV: EXPERIENCE & SUPERVISED HOURS

1. How do I contact prevention agencies to look for work?

A variety of organizations offer employment opportunities as well as internships for individuals interested in becoming a CPS. For more information, visit www.njpn.org or call Diane Liga at 732-367-0611.

2. What is involved in an internship? How does this differ from a regular paid position at an agency?

Will both count towards experience hours?

Internship experiences may vary across organizations and are often unpaid positions. However, both internships and paid positions should allow the individual the opportunity to become fully immersed in the day-to-day operation of a substance abuse prevention agency and provide experience hours in at least one of the five prevention domains:

- Education and Skill Development
- Community Organization
- Public Policy and Environmental
- Professional Growth and Responsibility
- Planning and Evaluation

3. Are my experience hours from 10 years ago acceptable? I left the field for a while and want to know if I can use those hours.

No. Applicants must document two years (4,000 hours) of prevention experience immediately prior to date of application.

4. What are supervised hours or the practicum mentioned in the CPS application?

Supervised training or a practicum involves experience you have on the job during which you were supervised and monitored. Your 120 hours supervised practicum must include 10 hours of supervision in each of the five domains listed above in question 2. Additionally, you must verify that you have had supervision for another 60 hours in one or more of the domains. See page five of the CPS application for more details. <http://www.certbd.com/pdfs/initial-applications/cps.pdf>.

5. Who is qualified to supervise my experience hours?

A qualified supervisor must be an active Certified Prevention Specialist in a position to perform at least one hour of direct supervision for every 10 hours of work performed.

6. How do I submit my experience hours if I have worked for more than one agency?

You may have more than one individual verify your hours on your application. Make multiple copies of the appropriate pages for signature for each supervisor.

SECTION V – THE APPLICATION PROCESS

1. How do I find the CPS application?

The application for the CPS can be found on the APCBNJ website: <http://www.certbd.com/pdfs/initial-applications/cps.pdf>.

2. What are the recertification requirements for a CPS?

Recertification is required every two years from the date of your initial certification. Fifty hours of approved prevention-related continuing education is required for recertification, along with a \$225 recertification fee. NJPN and other providers around the state offer renewal credits. Contact NJPN at 732-367-0611 for more information.