

# Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselor™ (CCMHC®) Certification Eligibility Policy

## **A. POLICY INTRODUCTION.**

The National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. (NBCC) administers a rigorous, examination-based, professional certification program titled as the NBCC Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselor (CCMHC) Program. Professional clinical mental health counselors who wish to be granted the CCMHC credential must show that they have completed specific educational and training requirements and demonstrate an ongoing professional commitment to the field of counseling by satisfying the other requirements of this Program.

Effective as of June 15, 2021, this Policy establishes and explains the CCMHC eligibility rules, which must be satisfied in order to obtain certification, including the relevant NBCC certification standards, policies, and procedures (CCMHC Certification Program). Questions concerning this Policy or the certification process should be directed to the Director of Certification and Credentialing Services.

## **B. POLICY PURPOSES.**

The purpose of this Policy is to define the Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselor (CCMHC) certification eligibility requirements. Among other rules, the CCMHC Certification Program establishes valid and appropriate eligibility requirements concerning: professional certification as a counselor; professional education necessary for competent practice as a clinical mental health counselor; professional knowledge demonstrated by the completion of a comprehensive examination; and ethical conduct rules.

Candidates for CCMHC certification understand and agree that their professional qualifications, including their education, clinical knowledge, and ethical standing, will be objectively and appropriately evaluated by NBCC and that such NBCC eligibility determinations are final. NBCC has the exclusive authority to make and issue all certification eligibility decisions.

## **C. PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT.**

In order to be eligible for the CCMHC certification, the candidate must currently be a National Certified Counselor (NCC) in good standing.

## **D. CERTIFICATION EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS.**

In order to qualify for CCMHC certification eligibility, the candidate must satisfy certain education and training rules, which include specific requirements related to: educational degree attainment; credit/semester hour fulfillment; counseling-related course content completion; and supervised counseling field experience. Consistent with the terms of this Policy, the candidate must complete the following educational requirements in order to be eligible for certification.

1. Degree Requirement: A master's, education specialist/educational specialist, certificate of advanced study (CAS), or doctoral degree (graduate degree) in counseling from either a CACREP-accredited degree program or a counseling program administered by a regionally accredited educational institution is required for eligibility for CCMHC certification.

[NOTE: Graduate degrees other than master's, education specialist/educational specialist, certificate of advanced study, and doctoral degrees in counseling may not qualify for CCMHC certification eligibility and will be subject to NBCC review and approval. Such degree reviews will determine whether the degree is properly aligned with approved graduate-level counseling program content. NBCC has the exclusive authority to make all decisions concerning the eligibility of non-counseling degrees for CCMHC certification.]

2. Credit/Semester Hours Requirement: The successful completion of at least sixty (60) semester hours or ninety (90) quarter hours of the required graduate program courses taken from a CACREP-accredited program or a counseling graduate degree program administered by a regionally accredited educational institution. Graduate coursework must include at least nine (9) semester hours or fifteen (15) quarter hours of clinical training in a supervised field experience graduate course.
3. Counseling-Specific Course Content Requirement: The submission of an accurate and verified transcript(s) from a qualified institution showing the successful completion of required graduate degree program courses, including: at least one (1) course of two (2) semester or three (3) quarter hours in clinical diagnosis and treatment; nine (9) semester hours or fifteen (15) quarter hour credits of clinical training in a supervised field experience; and the successful completion of two (2) semester or three (3) quarter hours coursework in at least three (3) of the following content areas.
  - Advanced Clinical Skills
  - Family or Couples Counseling
  - Addictions or Substance Abuse Counseling
  - Human Sexuality Counseling
  - Counseling for Trauma, Violence, or Abuse
  - Clinical Counseling for Special Populations

The candidate may be required to submit to NBCC additional materials, including course syllabi or other course documentation, to demonstrate the successful completion of coursework in all required content areas.

4. Alternative Supervised Clinical Training Field Experience Requirement: In lieu of nine (9) semester hours or fifteen (15) quarter hour credits of supervised field experience, NBCC will accept certain alternative educational, license, and/or counseling practice qualifications. Specifically, and subject to NBCC approval, a candidate will satisfy the clinical supervised field experience requirement with submission of verifiable proof of completion of one (1) of the following alternative requirements.
  - a. Six (6) semester or ten (10) quarter hours of graduate degree-level clinical training in supervised experience and a current state professional counseling license in good standing authorizing independent practice.
  - b. Six (6) semester or ten (10) quarter hours of graduate degree-level clinical training in supervised experience and an additional one hundred twenty (120) hours of direct supervision by a qualified, licensed professional counselor.
  - c. Three (3) semester or five (5) quarter hours of graduate degree-level clinical training in supervised experience and ten (10) continuous years as a licensed counselor in good standing authorized for independent practice.
5. Supervised, Post-Master's Counseling Work Experience Requirement: The successful completion of: at least three thousand (3,000) hours of documented, supervised, postgraduate, clinical client work experience over a period of at least twenty-four (24) months and at least one hundred (100) hours of direct supervision over a period of at least twenty-four (24) months. The candidate's completion of this experience requirement must be verified by the candidate's supervisor(s), site administrator, or human resources officer.

6. Professional Endorsement Requirement: The submission of a positive endorsement from a professional colleague who holds a graduate degree in a mental health field recommending the candidate for certification. The professional providing the endorsement cannot be related to the candidate by blood or marriage.
7. Verification of Educational Requirements: Educational requirements must be verified by NBCC through the review of an official graduate program transcript(s), sealed by the college or university (educational institution), which shows the conferral of a master's, education specialist/educational specialist, or doctoral degree from a qualifying counseling program. Digital transcripts submitted by the educational institution, bearing the educational institution's digital seal, are preferred. Non-degree educational credits related to qualifying counseling program courses must be verified by the submission of an official transcript sealed by the educational institution showing the successful completion of such qualifying graduate program credits in counseling. NBCC also may require the submission of qualifying course syllabi and other documentation to verify course alignment with the required counseling-specific content requirements of this Policy.
8. Certification Educational Eligibility Appeals: Under certain limited circumstances, a candidate who is denied eligibility for the CCMHC certification concerning the educational requirements may submit an appeal and request for reconsideration of their eligibility. All such appeals must be submitted consistent with the requirements of the NBCC Application and Certification Appeals Procedures, which is published at: [https://www.nbcc.org/assets/Policies/certification\\_eligibility\\_appeals\\_policy.pdf](https://www.nbcc.org/assets/Policies/certification_eligibility_appeals_policy.pdf).

## **E. CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS.**

In order to be eligible for the CCMHC certification, a passing score on the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE or Examination) is required. Information explaining the Examination is published in the NCMHCE Examination Handbook, which should be carefully reviewed by the candidate and is published at: <https://www.nbcc.org/exams>.

1. NCMHCE Examination Requirement: CCMHC certification candidates must successfully complete the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE) to fulfill the examination requirement for certification. The NCMHCE measures an individual's ability to apply and evaluate knowledge necessary to perform as a minimally competent professional counselor. The Examination assesses a clinical mental health counselor's ability to apply knowledge of theoretical and skill-based tenets through response to clinical case simulations. The case simulations are designed to capture an examinee's ability to identify, analyze, diagnose, and develop plans for treatment of clinical concerns.  
  
[NOTE: Candidates for state licensure taking the NCMHCE must satisfy the educational, examination, and other requirements of the relevant state licensure agency, which may be different than the certification requirements in this Policy.]
2. Special Examination Accommodations: NBCC complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and related legal requirements. NBCC ensures that no candidate with a qualified disability is deprived of the opportunity to take an Examination solely by reason of that disability and will provide reasonable accommodations to candidates with disabilities. A complete explanation of the NBCC rules and procedure related to disability and other special test accommodations is provided in the NCMHCE Examination Handbook, which is published at: <https://www.nbcc.org/exams/accommodations>.
3. Examination Retest Requirements: A candidate who fails to pass the NCMHCE on the first attempt, may schedule a retest during the next available administration by re-registering for the Examination, including the payment of the required fee. Thereafter, the candidate is permitted to retest during two (2) additional test administrations within two (2) years of their original application date. If the candidate fails the Examination three (3) times, or if two (2) years have passed since submission of the certification application, the application will be closed, and a new CCMHC application must be submitted if the candidate continues to seek CCMHC certification.

4. Examination Appeals: Under certain limited circumstances, candidates who fail to pass the NCMHCE may submit an appeal and request another test administration without a re-registration fee. The permitted reasons or grounds for appeal are explained in the NBCC Examination Appeal Policy, published at: [https://www.nbcc.org/Assets/Policies/NBCC\\_CCE\\_Examination\\_Appeals\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.nbcc.org/Assets/Policies/NBCC_CCE_Examination_Appeals_Policy.pdf), and are summarized as follows.
  - a. Examination Administration Appeals. The candidate claims that a test administration condition negatively affected their ability to complete or pass the Examination, including certain appeals related to: physical test site problems; test computer equipment problems; test administration issues; or conduct issues concerning test center personnel or others present during the test administration.
  - b. Special Examination Accommodation Appeals. The candidate claims that they were not provided with an approved special examination accommodation during the test administration or alleges that another problem existed with respect to a disability or other accommodation during an Examination administration. A candidate cannot submit an appeal concerning a special test accommodation that was not previously approved by NBCC.
  - c. Examination Content Appeals. The candidate claims that one (1) or more specific Examination items and/or answers are inaccurate or incorrect and that their failure to receive credit for such items and/or answers caused the candidate to fail the Examination.
  - d. Unacceptable Grounds for Examination Appeals. As explained in the NBCC Examination Appeal Policy, candidate claims and issues concerning a variety of test-related circumstances cannot be the subject of an Examination appeal, including but not limited to: lack of understanding of test administration policies, instructions, and requirements; test anxiety or nervousness; a personal situation that may have negatively affected the candidate, such as illness, injury, or family problem; errors related to understanding or recording test questions; computer-related problems that are not promptly reported to a proctor or do not significantly affect the test administration; reasonable and commonly occurring sounds in the testing location; late test arrival; the general validity of the Examination; the Examination passing score; and a belief that the candidate should have received a passing score on the Examination.

## F. CERTIFICATION ETHICS REQUIREMENT.

1. Ethics Requirement: CCMHC candidates and certificants must ensure that their professional and public behaviors are consistent with the conduct standards set forth in the NBCC *Code of Ethics*, the Certification Eligibility Ethics Policy, and the Ethics Case Procedures. These important policies should be carefully reviewed by the candidate and are published at: <https://www.nbcc.org/ethics/certification>.
2. Ethics Disclosure Requirement: As a condition of certification eligibility, a candidate must accurately and fully complete the required CCMHC Application Sections titled Ethics Attestation and Candidate Agreement and Release Authorization, which require the disclosure of all prior legal, criminal, and disciplinary matters related to the candidate. All such Application ethics-related disclosures are reviewed by NBCC in accordance with the NBCC Certification Eligibility Ethics Policy, which is published at: <https://www.nbcc.org/ethics/certification>.