ahcc
The Association of Home Care Coding & Compliance

Candidate Handbook

Home Care Coding Specialist — Diagnosis (HCS-D)
Home Care Coding Specialist — Hospice (HCS-H)
Home Care Clinical Specialist — OASIS (HCS-O)

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Disclaimer: The material in this electronic handbook is current with the most up-to-date information as of October 2026 and is subject to change without notice.

1 About AHCC's certification exams: Purpose, Mission and Core Values

Purpose

The Association of Home Care Coding & Compliance (AHCC) is a credentialing, education and training division of DecisionHealth, LLC.

The purpose AHCC's certification exams is to:

- Advance the homecare community with an objective measurement of required knowledge and skill to ensure accurate coding and compliance.
- Promote the ethical and appropriate use of health information.
- Recognize that quality clinical data is a critical resource and work to assure that assessment data and diagnoses used in patient records, research, and health management are valid, accurate, complete, and timely.
- Enhance the validity, accuracy and completeness of patient records, research, and health management by validating the knowledge and skills of home care professionals.

Mission

AHCC leads coders, OASIS reviewers, and clinicians across the home health and hospice continuum in advancing their professional practice and standards in the delivery of quality diagnostic coding accuracy, OASIS data set collection, and adherence to official rules and guidelines.

Core Values

- **Quality:** Demonstrated by a commitment to the value of professional credential(s), programs, products and services
- **Integrity:** Demonstrated by openness in decision-making, honesty in communication, and ethical practices
- **Leadership:** Demonstrated by visionary thinking, responsive decisions, accountability for actions and outcomes

2 About AHCC Certifications

HCS-D Certification

Home health coders who successfully pass this certification examination will be certified by AHCC and will earn their Home Care Coding Specialist - Diagnosis (HCS-D) credential.

HCS-D credential holders are professionals skilled in classifying medical data from patient records in the home health care setting. These coding practitioners review patients' records and assign alpha numeric codes for each appropriate diagnosis. To perform this task, they must possess expertise in the understanding and application of coding conventions and guidelines as outlined in the ICD-10-CM classification system. In addition, the HCS-D credential holder is knowledgeable in medical terminology, disease processes, and pharmacology. Accuracy in reporting diagnoses and conditions by a coding specialist is imperative to appropriate reimbursement and accurate data collection.

The HCS-D certification examination assesses proficiency in home health coding. Professionals experienced in home health coding should consider obtaining this certification.

Benefits

HCS-D certified coders are considered leaders in the industry because they:

- Utilize their specialty knowledge and experience to better interact with clinicians and providers
- Understand both basic and more advanced coding principles and guidelines
- Ensure their agencies receive appropriate reimbursement
- Provide direction and instruction to less experienced coders in the workplace
- Demonstrate their coding skills daily

The HCS-D credential is a demonstration of your coding proficiency. As you become more experienced in the practical requirements of home care coding, HCS-D certification can provide additional professional and personal recognition and reward.

As the importance of accurate and specific diagnosis coding increases in the home health setting, those with demonstrated proficiency will significantly increase the value they bring to their agencies. Certified coders are generally more highly compensated and receive greater advancement opportunities. For job applicants, certification can provide a competitive advantage, and providers increasingly require coding certification as a condition of employment.

HCS-H Certification

Hospice coders who successfully pass this certification examination will be certified by AHCC and will earn their Home Care Coding Specialist - Hospice (HCS-H) credential.

HCS-H credential holders are professionals skilled in classifying medical data from patient records in the hospice care setting. These coding practitioners review patients' records and assign alpha numeric codes for each diagnosis. To perform this task, they must possess expertise in the understanding and application of coding conventions and guidelines as outlined in the ICD-10-CM classification system. In addition, the HCS-H credential holder is knowledgeable in medical terminology, disease processes, and pharmacology. Accuracy in reporting diagnoses and conditions by a coding specialist is imperative to appropriate reimbursement and accurate data collection.

The HCS-H certification examination assesses proficiency in hospice coding. Professionals experienced in hospice coding should consider obtaining this certification.

Benefits

HCS-H certified coders are considered leaders in the industry because they:

- Utilize their specialty knowledge and experience to better interact with clinicians and providers
- Understand both basic and more advanced coding principles and guidelines
- Ensure their agencies receive appropriate reimbursement
- Provide direction and instruction to less experienced coders in the workplace
- Demonstrate their coding skills daily

The HCS-H credential is a demonstration of your coding proficiency. As you become more experienced in the practical requirements of hospice coding, HCS-H certification can provide additional professional and personal recognition and reward.

As the importance of accurate and specific diagnosis coding increases in the hospice setting, those with demonstrated proficiency will significantly increase the value they bring to their agencies. Certified coders are generally more highly compensated and receive greater advancement opportunities. For job applicants, certification can provide a competitive advantage, and providers increasingly require coding certification as a condition of employment.

HCS-O Certification

Home care professionals who successfully pass this certification examination will be certified by AHCC and will earn their Home Care Clinical Specialist - OASIS (HCS-O) credential.

HCS-O credential holders are professionals with specialized knowledge in applying clinical assessment findings to Medicare specific data collection items. To perform this task, they must possess and demonstrate expertise in the understanding and application of Medicare instruction contained in the OASIS guidance manual and CMS OASIS Q&As. Quality outcomes and payment are derived from data in the OASIS assessment, therefore its accuracy is imperative for patient care and agency viability, in terms of financial health and compliance with regulations.

The HCS-O certification examination assesses proficiency in home health assessment findings and Medicare specific data collection items.

Professionals experienced in OASIS knowledge should consider obtaining this certification.

Benefits

HCS-O certified professionals are considered leaders in the industry because they:

- Utilize their specialty knowledge and experience to better interact with colleagues, clinicians and providers
- Understand both basic and more advanced OASIS principles and guidelines
- Ensure their agencies receive appropriate reimbursement
- Provide direction and instruction to less experienced OASIS professionals in the workplace
- Demonstrate their documentation skills daily

As the importance of accurate and thorough Medicare documentation increases in the home health setting, those with demonstrated proficiency will significantly increase the value they bring to their agencies. Certified OASIS Specialists are generally more highly compensated and receive greater advancement opportunities. For job applicants, certification can provide a competitive advantage, and providers increasingly require OASIS certification as a condition of employment.

3 Determining if you are ready to take an AHCC Exam

Eligibility and Qualifications for the HCS-D Exam

The HCS-D exam assesses your proficiency in coding specifically for home care.

To be eligible to sit for the Home Care Coding Specialist-Diagnosis (HCS-D) certification examination, candidates must have earned a high school diploma from a United States high school, or have an equivalent background. Although not required, it is strongly recommended that candidates have at least two years of on-the-job experience in:

- Home care coding for multiple case types (for example, circulatory, neoplasms, genitourinary, musculoskeletal, respiratory, endocrine, nutritional, metabolic diseases, and immunity disorders)

  AND

- Completed coursework in anatomy, physiology, medical terminology, pathophysiology, and pharmacology, or demonstrate proficiency in these areas

Our most successful candidates usually have at least two years coding experience in home care. HCS-D credential holders must be able to apply codes and coding concepts in a testing situation. This is a skills-based exam, which is why we recommend several years of coding experience. The test may include scenarios with multiple conditions, aftercare situations, co-morbidities and complications.

If you believe that your combination of education, experience, and expertise qualifies you as a home care coding specialist, then we invite you to sit for the HCS-D certification examination.

AHCC does not discriminate against any applicant. All applicants for examinations will be judged only on published criteria for eligibility.

Examination Philosophy

This AHCC exam is designed to test the day-in, day-out coding skills of the professional coder. As a result, many coding scenarios appear on the exam, as well as the crucial subject areas of coding conventions and guidelines. Our goal isn't to stump you with trick questions on conditions you will likely never see, but rather to ensure – for you and for your employer – that you have, in fact, achieved proficiency in home care coding.

The HCS-D examination focuses on the critical diagnosis coding, documentation, legal and ethical issues specific to home care including:

- Most frequently billed home health conditions and proper assignment of diagnoses
- Accurately assigning codes that represent factors influencing health status
- Conventions and guidelines for home health diagnosis coding (such as manifestation codes)
- Correct usage of combination codes
- Correct assignment of primary, secondary and other diagnoses
- ICD-10-CM code sequencing and knowledge of medical terminology
- Knowledge of anatomy and physiology
- Adherence to legal and ethical standards

Eligibility and Qualifications for the HCS-H Exam

The HCS-H exam assesses your proficiency in coding specifically for hospice.

To be eligible to sit for the Home Care Coding Specialist-Hospice (HCS-H) certification examination, candidates must have earned a high school diploma from a United States high school, or have an equivalent background. Although not required, it is strongly recommended that candidates have at least two years of on-the-job experience in:

- Hospice coding for multiple case types (for example, circulatory, neoplasms, dementia, respiratory, endocrine, nutritional, metabolic diseases, and immunity disorders)

  AND

- Completed coursework in anatomy, physiology, medical terminology, pathophysiology, and pharmacology, or demonstrate proficiency in these areas

Our most successful candidates usually have at least two years coding experience in hospice. HCS-H credential holders must be able to apply codes and coding concepts in a testing situation. This is a skills-based exam, which is why we recommend several years of coding experience. The test may include scenarios with multiple conditions, co-morbidities and complications.

If you believe that your combination of education, experience, and expertise qualifies you as a hospice coding specialist, then we invite you to sit for a HCS-H certification examination.

AHCC does not discriminate against any applicant. All applicants for examinations will be judged only on published criteria for eligibility.

Examination Philosophy

AHCC exams are designed to test the day-in, day-out coding skills of the professional coder. As a result, many coding scenarios appear on the exam, as well as the crucial subject areas of coding conventions and guidelines. Our goal isn't to stump you with trick questions on conditions you will likely never see, but rather to ensure – for you and for your employer – that you have, in fact, achieved proficiency in hospice coding.

The HCS-H examination focuses on the critical diagnosis coding, documentation, legal and ethical issues specific to hospice:

- Most frequently billed hospice conditions and proper sequencing of diagnoses
- Accurately assigning codes that represent factors influencing health status
- Conventions and guidelines for hospice diagnosis coding (such as manifestation codes)
- Correct usage of combination codes
- Correct assignment of primary and secondary diagnoses
- Knowledge of medical terminology
- Knowledge of anatomy and physiology
- Adherence to legal and ethical standards

Eligibility and Qualifications for the HCS-O Exam

To be eligible to sit for the Home Care Clinical Specialist-OASIS (HCS-O) certification examination, candidates must have earned, at a minimum, a high school diploma or have an equivalent background.

AHCC *recommends* that candidates have at least a two-year degree before pursuing the HCS-O Certification.

Candidates should have a working knowledge of medical terminology, pathophysiology, pharmacology, anatomy and physiology in order to comprehend and apply clinical information.

AHCC *recommends* that candidates have at least two years of on-the-job experience in home care assessment and OASIS application or quality assurance related to OASIS comprehensive assessments.

If you believe that your combination of education, experience and expertise qualifies you as a home care OASIS Specialist, then we invite you to sit for a HCS-O certification examination.

AHCC does not discriminate against any applicant. All applicants for examinations will be judged only on published criteria for eligibility.

Examination Philosophy

AHCC exams are designed to test the day-in, day-out skills of the professional. As a result, many OASIS scenarios appear on the exam, as well as the crucial subject areas of OASIS and CMS guidance. This is the premier nationwide certification created by OASIS subject matter experts for OASIS practitioners. AHCC's goal isn't to stump you with trick questions on conditions you will likely never see, but rather to ensure – for you and for your employer – that you have achieved proficiency in home care OASIS application.

The HCS-O examination focuses on:

- Documentation reconciliation, validating the accuracy of OASIS responses and correcting OASIS response errors according to OASIS guidance and documentation standards
- Collaboration with colleagues, clinicians and providers
- Adherence to legal and ethical standards

4 Preparing for AHCC certification

Preparing for HCS-D certification

Study Process and Materials

Because the HCS-D exam is skill-based, a coder doing excellent work every day should be prepared for the exam without the need for additional study. We do, however, recognize people's desires for reference materials to brush up on skills and concepts.

AHCC publishes various study resources, including a study guide specific to HCS-D certification with dozens of examples and sample questions. In conjunction with our publishing partner, DecisionHealth®, we offer a larger resource book that follows the coding manual chapters and also offers sample questions. AHCC recommends the following products as optional tools to help with examination preparation:

- Study Guide for HCS-D Certification
- Complete Home Health ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Coding Manual, current version
- DecisionHealth's Ultimate Coding & OASIS Training series
- DecisionHealth's Home Health ICD-10-CM Coding Answers, current version

The candidate is not required to utilize any of the above tools in order to sit for the exam.

Test Format

The HCS-D ICD-10-CM examination is comprised of 90 multiple choice questions.

The HCS-D certification examination is administered via a computer-based testing center or via remote proctor.

The allotted time to complete the HCS-D ICD-10-CM examination is 3.5 hours. It may take some candidates less than the allotted time to complete the examination.

There are no scheduled breaks during the examination, although you are allowed to take a break if needed. If you take a break, your exam clock continues to count down.

Items Allowed with the Examination

You must bring the following resources with you to the HCS-D exam. No other resources will be allowed for the examination.

- One valid, government-issued photo ID with a signature (such as a driver's license or passport). If you are testing outside of your country of citizenship, you must present a valid passport. If you are testing within your country of citizenship, you must present either a valid passport, driver's license, national ID or military ID. The identification document must be in Latin characters and contain your photograph and signature. Your name on the ID must match your exam registration with AHCC. If it is different or has changed, please contact customer service at 1-800-650-6787 to have this updated at least ten (10) business days before your scheduled exam. You will not be allowed to test if the name does not match.
- Current coding manual
- These watermarked FY2027 ICD-10-CM Official Coding Guidelines

You may take only ONE of the following manuals into the testing room:

- *Complete Home Health ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Coding Manual, 2027*. Available for purchase in the DecisionHealth online store.
- *Complete Home Health ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Coding Manual, 2026**
- Any other vendor's ICD-10 coding manual (2026 or 2027 Edition)

In addition to the above referenced coding manual, you may take the FY2027 official guidelines provided here into the testing room. Please note, only the watermarked guidelines provided through this link will be allowed into the testing room as an additional resource.

*Note, AHCC recommends a current code year, 2027, coding manual be used when taking the HCS-D exam.

Note: Electronic code look-up systems are NOT allowed in the testing room whether at a testing center or for an exam taken by remote proctor. A hard copy coding manual and watermarked guidelines are the only allowable resources.

Reference material modifications

The hard copy coding manual may have tabular section dividers (A through Z) that are affixed.

Post-It notes, loose papers or any other papers attached by any means are NOT allowed.

Annotations written on the watermarked guidelines and the coding manual pages including the 'notes' pages at the back of the manual are allowed BUT must be free of any notes containing coding rules and guidelines from other reference materials (for example, AHA *Coding Clinic*, *Home Health ICD-10-CM Coding Answers* and similar materials).

All watermarked guidelines and coding manuals will be inspected prior to testing. The proctor reserves the right to deny watermarked guidelines and code books that contain excessive writing and information that may give the candidate an unfair advantage.

You may not share reference books with other test takers.

Extra copies of the coding manual will not be provided.

All watermarked guidelines and coding manuals will be inspected at the end of the exam period to ensure no test questions or answers have been recorded.

Candidates testing at a CBT testing center will receive a note board prior to beginning the examination. Note boards will be collected from candidates and erased prior to candidates leaving the testing area. Candidates testing by remote proctor will have access to an online notepad.

HCS-D Exam Blueprint

The current HCS-D exam contains content based on CMS regulations, the ICD-10-CM code set, the ICD-10-CM Official Coding Guidelines, and AHA *Coding Clinic* guidance that were effective Oct. 1, 2026.

The following is the examination blueprint for the HCS-D certification examination. The Domains outline the primary areas by which the examination questions are constructed.

Domain I: Assign accurate diagnosis codes (75%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Assign accurate diagnosis codes from the classification system
- Review and sequence the diagnosis codes according to ICD-10 coding guidelines
- Determine if a payment diagnosis will be listed according to CMS guidelines
- For CMS payers, ensure there is a valid PDGM primary diagnosis code and review for active comorbidity codes
- Validate diagnosis codes using coding conventions and guidelines
- Ensure that the assigned codes reflect the clinician and medical documentation
- Review Face-to-Face documentation and confirm the focus of care based on the Face-to-Face encounter

Domain II: Conduct documentation reconciliation (15%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Review available documentation and apply critical thinking skills to determine if a query to the medical provider is necessary
- Determine how to construct a proper query
- Collaborate with clinicians, managers, or administrators about incomplete information or documentation deficiencies
- Obtain clinician agreement with code assignment and sequencing
- Notify appropriate agency personnel regarding annual updates and code set changes
- Ensure complete and accurate documentation of all communication (verbal, written, electronic) used to verify diagnosis accuracy
- Reconcile the focus of care based on discrepancies between the Face-to-Face encounter and comprehensive assessment

Domain III: Ensure that all activities are done in a legal and ethical manner that supports agency policy, regulatory and professional guidelines (10%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Maintain patient confidentiality, privacy, and security
- Conduct activities in a legal, ethical, and professional manner

Preparing for HCS-H certification

Study Process and Materials

Because the HCS-H exam is skill-based, a coder doing excellent work every day should be prepared for the exam without the need for additional study. We do, however, recognize people's desires for reference materials to brush up on skills and concepts.

AHCC publishes various study resources, including a study guide specific to HCS-H certification with examples and sample questions. AHCC recommends the following products as optional tools to help with examination preparation:

- Study Guide for HCS-H Certification
- Complete Home Health ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Coding Manual, current version

The candidate is not required to utilize any of the above tools in order to sit for the exam.

Test Format

The HCS-H examination is comprised of 90 multiple choice questions.

The HCS-H certification examination is administered via a computer based testing center or via remote proctor.

The allotted time to complete the HCS-H examination is 3.0 hours. It may take some candidates less than the allotted time to complete the examination.

There are no scheduled breaks during the examination, although you are allowed to take a break if needed. If you take a break, your exam clock continues to count down.

Items Allowed with the Examination

You must bring the following resources with you to the HCS-H exam. No other resources will be allowed for the examination.

- One valid, government-issued photo ID with a signature (such as a driver's license or passport). If you are testing outside of your country of citizenship, you must present a valid passport. If you are testing within your country of citizenship, you must present either a valid passport, driver's license, national ID or military ID. The identification document must be in Latin characters and contain your photograph and signature. Your name on the ID must match your exam registration with AHCC. If it is different or has changed, please contact customer service at 1-800-650-6787 to have this updated at least ten (10) business days before your scheduled exam. You will not be allowed to test if the name does not match.
- Current coding manual
- These watermarked FY2027 ICD-10-CM Official Coding Guidelines

You may take only ONE of the following manuals into the testing room:

- *Complete Home Health ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Coding Manual, 2027*. Available for purchase in the DecisionHealth online store.
- *Complete Home Health ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Coding Manual, 2026**
- Any other vendor's ICD-10 coding manual (2027 or 2026 Edition)

In addition to the above referenced coding manual, you may take the FY2027 official guidelines provided here into the testing room. Please note, only the watermarked guidelines provided through this link will be allowed into the testing room as an additional resource.

Note, AHCC recommends a current code year, 2027, coding manual be used when taking the HCS-H exam.

Note: Electronic code look-up systems are NOT allowed in the testing room whether at a testing center or for an exam taken by remote proctor. A hard copy coding manual and watermarked guidelines are the only allowable resources.

Reference material modifications

The hard copy coding manual may have tabular section dividers (A through Z) that are affixed.

Post-It notes, loose papers or any other papers attached by any means are NOT allowed.

Annotations written on the watermarked guidelines and the coding manual pages including the 'notes' pages at the back of the manual are allowed BUT must be free of any notes containing coding rules and guidelines from other reference materials (for example, AHA *Coding Clinic, Home Health ICD-10-CM Coding Answers* and similar materials).

All watermarked guidelines and coding manuals will be inspected prior to testing. The proctor reserves the right to deny watermarked guidelines and code books that contain excessive writing and information that may give the candidate an unfair advantage.

You may not share reference books with other test takers.

Extra copies of the coding manual will not be provided.

All watermarked guidelines and the coding manuals will be inspected at the end of the exam period to ensure no test questions or answers have been recorded.

Candidates testing at a CBT testing center will receive a note board prior to beginning the examination. Note boards will be collected from candidates and erased prior to candidates leaving the testing area. Candidates testing by remote proctor will have access to an online notepad.

HCS-H Exam Blueprint

The current HCS-H exam contains content based on CMS regulations, the ICD-10-CM code set, the ICD-10-CM Official Coding Guidelines, and AHA *Coding Clinic* guidance that were effective Oct. 1, 2026.

The following is the examination blueprint for the HCS-H certification examination. The Domains outline the primary areas by which the examination questions are constructed.

Domain I: Assign accurate diagnosis codes (75%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Ensure that the terminal diagnosis and assigned codes reflect the clinician and medical documentation
- Assign accurate diagnosis codes from the classification system
- Review and sequence the diagnosis codes according to ICD-10 coding guidelines.
- Validate diagnosis codes using coding conventions and guidelines

Domain II: Conduct documentation reconciliation (15%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Review available documentation and apply critical thinking skills to determine if a query to the medical provider is necessary
- Determine how to construct a proper query
- Collaborate with clinicians, managers, or administrators about incomplete information or documentation deficiencies
- Obtain clinician agreement with code assignment and sequencing
- Notify appropriate agency personnel regarding annual updates and code set changes
- Ensure complete and accurate documentation of all communication (verbal, written, electronic) used to verify diagnosis accuracy

Domain III: Ensure that all activities are done in a legal and ethical manner that supports agency policy, regulatory and professional guidelines (10%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Maintain patient confidentiality, privacy, and security
- Conduct activities in a legal, ethical, and professional manner

Preparing for HCS-O certification

Study Process and Materials

Note: The HCS-O exam is updated each year to cover the version of the OASIS instrument in use as of January 1. The exam is not updated mid-year. Any OASIS guidance, including CMS OASIS Q&As and OASIS-E2 changes, issued after Jan. 1 will not be tested on the 2026 HCS-O Certification Exam.

Because the HCS-O exams are skill-based, a professional doing excellent work every day should be prepared for the exam without the need for additional study. We do, however, recognize people's desires for reference materials to brush up on skills and concepts.

AHCC publishes various study resources, including a study guide specific to HCS-O certification with dozens of examples and sample questions. AHCC recommends the following products as *optional* tools to help with examination preparation:

- Study Guide for HCS-O Certification
- OASIS Form Companion Guide
- DecisionHealth's Ultimate Coding & OASIS Training Virtual Series: OASIS Training

The candidate is not required to utilize any of the above tools in order to sit for the exam.

Test Format

The HCS-O examination is comprised of 90 multiple choice questions.

The HCS-O examination is administered via a computer based testing center or via remote proctor.

The allotted time to complete the HCS-O examination is 3.0 hours. It may take some candidates less than the allotted time to complete the examination.

There are no scheduled breaks during the examination, although you are allowed to take a break if needed. If you take a break, your exam clock continues to count down.

Items Allowed with the Examination

You must bring the following with you to the HCS-O exam.

- One valid, government-issued photo ID with a signature (such as a driver's license or passport). If you are testing outside of your country of citizenship, you must present a valid passport. If you are testing within your country of citizenship, you must present either a valid passport, driver's license, national ID or military ID. The identification document must be in Latin characters and contain your photograph and signature. Your name on the ID must match your exam registration with AHCC. If it is different or has changed, please contact customer service at 1-800-650-6787 to have this updated at least ten (10) business days before your scheduled exam. You will not be allowed to test if the name does not match.

You may bring the following resources with you to the HCS-O exam. No other resources will be allowed for the examination.

- OASIS Assessment form
- Chapter 3 of OASIS Guidance Manual
- NPIAP Pressure Injury Stages
- CMS Static Q&As in hard copy
- CMS Quarterly Q&As

The above resource materials are available for purchase as a complete binder entitled: The OASIS Form Companion The candidate may supplement this guide with the published quarterly Q&As. **Version year 2025 or 2026 is acceptable.** See the DecisionHealth online store for details.

In lieu of purchasing the OASIS Form Companion Guide, the candidate may download the materials from various regulatory sites; however, the materials ***MUST*** be clearly labeled and bound in ***ONE*** binder.

Or the candidate may bring the *INSTANT OASIS Answers Book PDQ* or *OASIS: Access at your Fingertips.* Version year 2025 or 2026 is acceptable.

If the proctor, whether remote or at a computer based testing center cannot clearly identify the allowable resources, the candidate will not be allowed to take the resources into the testing room.

Electronic devices are *NOT* allowed in the testing room. A hard copy resource is the *only* allowable resource.

Post-It notes, loose papers or any other papers attached by any means are NOT allowed.

The proctor reserves the right to deny reference materials that contain excessive writing and information that may give the candidate an unfair advantage.

You may not share reference books with other test takers.

Extra copies of the allowable resources will not be provided.

All reference material will be inspected prior to testing.

All reference material will be inspected at the end of the exam period to ensure no test questions or answers have been recorded.

Candidates testing at a CBT testing center will receive a note board prior to beginning the examination. Note boards will be collected from candidates and erased prior to candidates leaving the testing area Candidates testing by remote proctor will have access to an online notepad.

HCS-O Exam Blueprint

The current HCS-O exam contains content based on the OASIS, CMS guidance, and Quarterly Q&As that were effective Jan. 1, 2026.

The following is the examination blueprint for the HCS-O certification examination. The Domains outline the primary areas by which the examination questions are constructed.

Domain I: Conduct documentation reconciliation (15%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Review appropriate medical records including, but not limited to: Face-to-Face encounters, History and Physicals, discharge summaries, clinic notes, comprehensive assessment including drug regimen review, and other pertinent documentation and apply critical thinking skills to determine if a query of the medical provider is necessary
- Determine how to construct a proper query, if necessary for OASIS purposes
- Collaborate with clinicians, managers, or administrators about incomplete information or documentation deficiencies
- Obtain any prior agency documentation from previous encounters per regulatory guidance
- Ensure the completeness of the patient documentation
- Review all documentation available within the appropriate timeframe to complete the OASIS

Domain II: Validate the accuracy of OASIS responses (60%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Apply the basic rationale behind OASIS guidance
- Identify the correct OASIS responses based on relevant documentation within the appropriate timeframe.
- Ensure that the OASIS responses are consistent with the POC
- Ensure the comprehensive assessment is based on the OASIS guidelines and resources

Domain III: Correct OASIS response errors according to OASIS guidance and documentation standards (25%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Identify errors and inconsistencies in OASIS responses
- Obtain clinician agreement on modifications to the OASIS responses
- Correct OASIS response errors in the absence of the assessing clinician
- Maintain the documentation of corrections

5 How to Register for an AHCC Certification Examination

Please see the AHCC website for details about how to register for an exam. You'll find registration details and more under Certification and Training / AHCC Credentials / Exam Information or at https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/ahcc-exam-information/ and Certification and Training / AHCC Credentials / About AHCC Credentials or at https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/about-ahcc-credentials/.

Exam Refund, Fees, & Cancellation Policy

Please see the AHCC website for details about our Refund, Extension, and Cancellation Policy and Fees. You'll find these details and more under Certification and Training / AHCC Credentials / Fees or at https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/fees.

6 Test Day

Candidates taking the test at a computer based testing center or via remote proctor should report to the testing site 30 minutes before the exam start time to be signed in and have your reference materials checked. A government-issued photo ID is required for sign-in. Once you enter the testing environment, you should not leave until the exam has finished.

Before the exam is administered, the proctor will review the exam rules to follow while the test is in progress.

There are no scheduled bathroom breaks during the exam. If a candidate leaves, the break is allowed, but time does not stop.

Behavior Not Allowed

Candidates who bring prohibited items into the testing environment or display prohibited candidate behavior will be dismissed from the test-taking venue and the scores will not be validated. Visit the Prometric website for more details regarding prohibited items and behavior:

- Test Center Regulations:
  - https://www.prometric.com/test-center-experience
- Live Online Proctoring:
  - https://www.prometric.com/remote-exam-experience

Testing Issues

Occasionally, testing irregularities, including but not limited to administrative errors, unauthorized availability of test content or disruptions in test administration, occur and must be dealt with.

If a testing issue occurs, AHCC will perform an investigation. AHCC may opt to score the test or invalidate the test score. When appropriate, AHCC will give (eligible) affected test-takers the opportunity to retake the exam as soon as possible. Affected candidates will be told the reason for the cancellation of their test and options for retest.

Notification of Examination Results

Candidates who take their examination at a computer based testing center or by remote proctor will receive a pass/fail result and score report immediately following the examination.

Each question on an AHCC certification examination is mapped to a domain item on the examination test blueprint. Every candidate should receive a copy of their score report from their examination. The score report provides the candidate's (raw score) number of questions answered correctly on the examination, as well as the percentage of questions answered correctly within each content area. This score report will assist candidates in evaluating their performance and identifying areas of competency and deficiency.

AHCC is responsible for the validity and integrity of the scores reported. Occasionally, computer malfunctions or candidate misconduct may cause a score report to be suspect. AHCC reserves the right to void or withhold examination results if, upon investigation, violation of AHCC's regulations is discovered. Candidates are expected to fully cooperate with any investigation. Please see the appeals section of this handbook for more detailed information.

In order to protect the integrity of the examination, AHCC will not release a candidate's specific answers to items on the certification examination, nor will AHCC discuss rationale for correct answers to examination items on the certification examination.

7 After the examination

Successful candidates:

- Become AHCC certified.
- Receive a certificate of recognition of their status.*
- Receive a credential lapel pin.
- Receive a score report identifying how you performed in each competency area via email after the exam.
- Will be listed in the Directory of Certified Credential Holders on the AHCC website.

Unsuccessful candidates:

- Receive a score report identifying how you performed in each competency area via email.
  - Candidates taking the exam at a testing center or by remote proctor will receive the score report immediately upon exam completion.
- Receive instructions on how to register to retake the exam.

*Certificate and pin mailed to US addresses only. Printable certificate available in the CEU Tracker.

Feedback on Your Experience

At the end of your exam, you will be asked to complete a Post-Exam survey. We encourage you to complete the survey.

Confidentiality Policy

All test results are released directly to you and will not be released to anyone else. If you are taking the test at a computer based testing center, your results are provided at the completion of the exam.

All candidates who become certified coders may have their names published in a newsletter, website or other public forum.

AHCC has adopted policies and procedures to protect the confidentiality of examination candidates. AHCC staff members will not discuss pending examination applications with anyone but the candidate and will not discuss a candidate's scores by telephone or fax due to identification security issues. AHCC will discuss pending examination applications and score results by

- US mail upon a signed request by the candidate and addressed to the AHCC Director

  OR

- Electronic transmission received from the candidate when the email address is shown in the records of AHCC as being provided by the candidate as their official electronic transmission address

AHCC will not release exam results to educational institutions or employers unless authorized by the candidate in writing or email.

8 Maintaining your Certification

Purpose

The AHCC recertification (maintenance of certification) program ensures that AHCC certified professionals demonstrate ongoing competence in the domain areas in which they are certified, through either maintenance or enhancement activities. For the purposes of recertification (maintenance of certification), AHCC further defines maintenance and enhancement activities as follows:

Maintenance: Completion of educational programs that provide updated training and skills to allow continued competence in home health coding by earning the required number of continuing education units (CEUs) in any of the exam domains.

Enhancement: Completion of educational programs that result in expanded knowledge and skills to enhance professional growth in home health coding by earning additional CEUs in a specific Domain. This is beyond the requirement to maintain certification.

AHCC does not allow the grandfathering of credentials in order to earn and/or maintain a credential. All AHCC credential holders must pass their initial certification with a passing score, and maintain their credential through annual recertification requirements. AHCC credential holders who do not perform the respective action by the anniversary of their certification date will have their credential placed in an inactive status. If the recertification requirements have not been met within 90 days of being placed on inactive status, the credential will be revoked.

Receiving an AHCC Credential Means

- Demonstrating commitment and expertise to the professional area of home health coding, hospice coding, or OASIS accuracy; a dedication to quality healthcare; and a need to establish high standards in managing confidential health information.
- Offering ongoing value to your profession and employer through continuation of your personal education, allowing you to maintain your expertise and contribute at the highest levels.

An AHCC credential signifies experience and knowledge, and validates professional competence for employers, consumers, and yourself.

What Are the Biggest Benefits of Recertification (Maintenance of Certification)?

- Return on investment from the high value of being AHCC certified
- Professional prestige helps you remain competitive in a tough job market
- Demonstration of your ongoing commitment and competence in home health coding
- Networking opportunities with similarly credentialed peers who share your level of expertise

To Recertify You Must:

1. Obtain the required number of CEUs during your current recertification cycle.
2. Complete your two mandatory annual self-assessments specific to your certification.
3. Participate in accepted and qualified CEU activities.
4. Report your CEUs on time.
5. Document your CEU activity in your CEU tracker for auditing.
6. Ensure your recertification fee is paid.

Recertification CEU Requirements

Twenty (20) CEUs, including two (2) mandatory annual coding, OASIS, or compliance self-assessments are required annually. Each mandatory annual coding, OASIS, or compliance self-review is worth five (5) CEUs toward the total CEU requirement.

Multiple credential holders: Individuals who hold multiple AHCC credentials will be required to submit evidence of 10 unique CEUs for educational activities and to take the required self-assessments for each individual credential.

For example, if you hold both the HCS-D and the HCS-O, you must earn a total of 40 CEUs each year. You must earn 20 CEUs for educational activities and 20 for the four self-assessments you must take.

Recertification Cycle

The recertification cycle for an AHCC credential holder begins the day the AHCC credential is awarded and is active for one calendar year. There are 3 important dates to remember as an AHCC credential holder. 1.) Your original certification date, the date you passed your initial exam. 2.) Your anniversary date, which denotes the beginning of your current 12 month cycle, and 3.) Your expiration date, which denotes the end of your current 12 month cycle. It is important that all annual CEUs occur between the anniversary date and the expiration date.

See example below:

Your Certification Date (as listed on your AHCC Certificate)	**Recertification Cycle – Year 1**	**Recertification cycle – Year 2**
3-15-19	3-15-19 through 3-15-20	3-15-20 through 3-15-21

In the example above: your original certification date is 3-15-19. your anniversary date is 3-15-20. your expiration date is 3-15-21.

In Year 1, your CEUs must be earned for that 12 month cycle between 3-15-19 (anniversary date) through 3-15-20 (expiration date). The next year, your anniversary date is 3-15-20. Your expiration date is 3-15-21, so all your CEUs for that 12 month reporting cycle must be earned between 3-15-20 (anniversary date) and 3-15-21 (expiration date).

Qualifying Continuing Education Activities and Calculation of CEUs

Continuing Education (CE) Content

CEUs must be earned within your current 12 month recertification cycle and must be relevant to the exam domains to be eligible for CE credit. Eighty (80) percent of all CEUs must be earned within the exam domains (see Appendix A). The remaining twenty (20) percent can include participation in CE activities on home health topics not directly relevant to the exam domains.

Calculation of CEUs

Calculation of CEUs is based upon clock hours. One (1) CEU is given for each 60 minutes of attendance or participation that is fixed in length. Fractional parts of an hour less than 45 minutes in duration will not be considered a full hour credit. Examples are; a program that is 2 ½ hours in length is equivalent to two CEUs. A program that is 2 ¾ hours in length is equivalent to three CEUs.

CE Activities

1. Participation in educational programs on topics relevant to the exam domains.

    a. Educational portions of home health meetings (national convention, state, local, or regional meetings) — *one (1) CEU for each 60 minutes of participation*

    b. Educational portions of programs of other relevant professional associations—*one (1) CEU for each 60 minutes of participation*

    c. Educational portions of programs sponsored by organizations or vendors on topics that maintain, update, or enlarge knowledge and skills relevant to the pertinent home health or hospice profession—*one (1) CEU for each 60 minutes of participation*

    d. Telecommunications and webinars relevant to the pertinent home health or hospice profession—*one (1) CEU for each 60 minutes of participation*

2. Publication and presentation of material relevant to the pertinet home health or hospice profession.

    a. Publication is the development of an original work relevant to the pertinent home health or hospice profession, reproduced by written or electronic means for general dissemination to the public (unless required as part of work responsibilities; see non-qualifying section).

        - Author of a textbook, workbook, or manual—twenty (20) CEUs
        - Editor of a textbook, workbook, or manual—ten (10) CEUs
        - Author of an article in a home health or hospice professional journal—five (5) CEUs
        - Author of a chapter in a textbook, workbook, or manual—ten (10) CEUs
        - Editor of a home health or hospice professional journal—five (5) CEUs
        - AHCC course writing (for example, coding on-line library course)—ten (10) CEUs
        - Author of an educational article in a local or state newsletter—two (2) CEUs
        - Reviewer of book manuscripts prior to publications—one (1) CEU per chapter
        - Author of an original tool for the AHCC Tools library— one (1) CEU
        - Author of a post for the AHCC blog—one (1) CEU

    b. Presentation is the development of an original work delivered to an audience.

        - Speaker at an educational program—one (1) CEU for each 60 minutes of podium time, with a maximum of five (5) CEUs allowed per educational program
        - Panel participant at an educational program—one (1) CEU for each 60 minutes of podium time, with a maximum of five (5) CEUs allowed per educational program

3. Independent study activities relevant to the home health coding profession.

    a. Enrollment in one or more AHCC study program modules *(CEUs pre-determined by AHCC)*

    b. Enrollment in home study programs relevant to the exam domains' core education content areas from organizations other than AHCC *(AHCC prior approval required)*

    c. AHCC post-test offerings accompanying an Association of Home Care Coding and Compliance (AHCC) *Insider Ezine* or book published by DecisionHealth *(CEUs pre-determined by AHCC)*

    d. Advanced research (for example, reading and analyzing material above and beyond one's knowledge of the subject matter) in a home health coding topic area to support activities associated with an expert panel, workgroup, or task force of AHCC or its affiliate—*one (1) CEU per each year*

4. Item writing
    - Item writing for AHCC's certification exams (CEUs pre-determined by AHCC)
5. Other activities
    - Substantive oversight and involvement —five (5) CEUs with a maximum of ten (10) CEUs allowed in each recertification cycle
    - Substantive oversight and involvement includes, but is not limited to:
        - Creating an ICD-10-CM training plan and schedule of activities
        - Visiting AHCC exhibits at a national or state meeting—one (1) CEU per meeting
        - Participation in an AHCC volunteer leader conference or work group (CEUs pre-determined by AHCC)
        - Internet educational offerings relevant to AHCC core education content areas (AHCC prior-approval required)
        - Activities defined by the guidelines for approval of CE programs for national, state, local, and regional home health associations
        - Exceptional events recognized by AHCC

Non-Qualifying Continuing Education Activities

Examples of activities that do not qualify for CEUs are as follows. The list is illustrative and not intended to be all-inclusive.

- Responsibilities that fall within the normal parameters of an individual's job description, including, but not limited to, the following: (1) staff meetings; (2) in-services; (3) preparation for and/or participation in accreditation and licensure surveys; (4) preparation of procedure, policy, or administrative manuals; (5) training home health coders; (6) participation in career day activities; (7) development of employee and staff training materials
- Published materials and/or presentations developed as a direct part of an individual's employment
- Instructing or teaching a class within the normal parameters of an individual's job description

Reporting your CEUs

You will report your CEUs in your CEU tracker online at the AHCC website.

When to Report

You should report your CEUs in your CEU tracker and complete the online recertification process no later than your current expiration date which is located above your tracker.

You must report your CEUs and complete the recertification process no later than three (3) months into the following recertification period. Your certification will be placed on inactive status during the 90 day grace period and you will not be able to promote yourself as a credential holder in good standing during the 90 day late period.

Your certification will be revoked after the 90 day grace period if you have not recertified.

Fees (plus any applicable late fees):

- Initial Registration Fee for Certifying Exam taken at a computer-based testing center – $339.00
- Initial Registration Fee for Certifying Exam taken by Remote Proctor – $339.00
- Annual recertification CEU requirements and maintenance fee - $229.00

***A 15% late fee will be assessed, in addition to the recertification fee, if renewal is not received by expiration date, but is within the 90 day grace period.**

Note: The initial certifying exam fee and the recertification annual maintenance fee includes a one-year complimentary membership enrollment in the Association of Home Care Coding and Compliance.

Certification Status

Status Types

a. Active: Credential holder meets all recertification requirements, including recertification fee, within current certification cycle

b. Inactive: Failure to complete all recertification requirements, including the recertification fee, within the current certification cycle but is within the 90 day (late) grace period

AHCC provides a three (3) month window for credential holders who have been placed on inactive status to meet recertification requirements and report CEUs. Therefore, any credential holder who has not met recertification requirements by 90 days past the expiration of their certification date will have their credential revoked. The credential may not be used during the period of inactive status. The recertification fee plus a 15% late fee must be paid to re-activate a credential to active status.

c. Revoked:

I. Failure to complete and report all recertification requirements, including the recertification fee, within the current certification cycle and is 91 days or greater past expiration date.

II. AHCC Appeals or AHCC Professional Ethics decision regarding misconduct.

Credential holders who do not report their CEUs will have their credential revoked. Individuals may not use the applicable credential once it has been revoked.

Reinstatement of Credentials

AHCC provides one way to reinstate a revoked credential:

Reactivate by Exam

a. Retake the applicable certification exam

After an inactive certification has lapsed beyond the 90 day grace period and has been revoked, the only way to be reinstated and returned to active status is to retake the applicable certification exam.

9 Additional Recertification Processes

Audits

Each year a percentage of recertified credential holders are randomly selected for audit. Individuals selected for audits will be notified by email and required to submit verifiable documentation (for example, certificates of attendance or similar materials) for each activity listed on their CEU tracker by the due date specified on the audit notification email.

Verifiable documentation can include certificates of attendance, program materials, or other information provided by the program sponsor that verify program date, length, and subject matter (that is, CEU certificate, agenda, program outline, handout, meeting summary, or meeting transcript).

It is therefore recommended that CEU participants retain all records in their files for at least one year following the cycle end date. Individuals who fail to respond to the audit request by the specified due date or are found to have submitted false information on their recertification form may be denied recertification.

Extensions

You may be granted an extension to complete continuing education requirements for recertifications, but only under the following special circumstances:

- Natural disaster: In the event of bad weather, a natural disaster, or another emergency (for example, a power outage)
- Medical or Personal Emergency: A medical or personal emergency is an unplanned event that prevents you from completing the recertification requirements for maintaining your credential(s). A medical or personal emergency may apply to you or one of your immediate family members; spouse, child, or parent as defined by the Family Medical Leave Act. Documentation (such as a doctor's note, emergency room forms, obituary) showing why you could not complete the recertification requirements will be required.

If the certification holder has met one of the above special circumstances, requests an extension for a certification eligibility period, and is approved the extension, the fees that apply are:

1. First Approved Request for an Extension: $75 (valid for 45 days)
2. Second and Final Approved Request for an Extension: $150 (valid for an additional 30 days). No additional extension will be authorized.

Appeals

Individuals whose credential has been revoked or whose application for reinstatement has been denied may appeal to AHCC by completing the Consideration Form located on the AHCC website.

Recertification Policy Rationale

AHCC credentials require annual recertification because the ICD-10-CM code set, official coding guidelines, OASIS guidance, and regulations are updated annually. Because the major reference tools for home health professionals are subject to change every year, competency should be evaluated every year in accordance with the dynamic nature of the official guidance.

10 Code of Conduct

Introduction

The Association of Home Care Coding & Compliance's (AHCC) Ethical Standards and Code of Conduct (Ethics Code) consists of a statement of underlying principles and specific Ethical Standards.

The General Principles are goals that we aspire to and are guides to Home Health and Hospice Professionals striving for the highest ideals in their profession. The General Principles are not themselves rules, they should be considered in arriving at an ethical course of action. They are also statements of your obligation to maintain the very highest standards of competence, morality and dignity.

The Ethical Standards establish more detailed guidelines for conduct. Most of the Ethical Standards are written broadly, in order to apply to varied roles. The Ethical Standards are not exhaustive. The fact that an Ethical Standard does not specifically address a given conduct does not mean that the conduct is necessarily either ethical or unethical.

Members of the profession are responsible for maintaining and promoting ethical standards and practices within their profession and in their interactions with other healthcare professionals. AHCC-certified professionals are expected to uphold these standards, the objectives of AHCC. Actions that violate the standards of the Ethics Code may lead to revocation of the certification. In addition, when notified of a violation, AHCC reserves the right to notify an employer or appropriate governmental agency.

This Ethics Code applies only to home health or hospice professionals' activities that are part of their educational or professional roles. Areas covered include, but are not limited to, the practice of coding; teaching; supervision of trainees; public service; policy development; organizational consulting; testimony; program design and evaluation; and administration. This Ethics Code applies to these activities across a variety of contexts, such as in person, postal, telephone, internet, and other electronic transmissions. These activities shall be distinguished from the purely private conduct of coders, which is not outlined in the Ethics Code.

The modifiers used in some of the standards of this Ethics Code (such as reasonably, appropriate, potentially) are included in the standards when they would (1) allow professional judgment on the part of home health or hospice professionals, (2) eliminate injustice or inequality that would occur without the modifier, (3) ensure applicability across the broad range of activities conducted by these professionals, or (4) guard against a set of rigid rules that might be quickly outdated. As used in this Ethics Code, the term reasonable means the prevailing professional judgment of professionals engaged in similar activities in similar circumstances, given the knowledge the professional had or should have had at the time.

In the process of making decisions regarding their professional behavior, home health and hospice professionals must consider this Ethics Code in addition to applicable laws. In applying the Ethics Code to their professional work, home health and hospice professionals may consider other materials and guidelines that have been adopted or endorsed by professional organizations and the dictates of their own conscience, as well as consult with others within the field. If this Ethics Code establishes a higher standard of conduct than is required by law, home health and hospice professionals should meet the higher ethical standard.

Home health and hospice professionals are committed to increasing accurate documentation, correct coding, and proper billing. They are committed to the growth of professional knowledge and to the use of such knowledge to improve the legal and financial situation of medical practitioners or employers. They are committed to the use of professional knowledge to implement an effective compliance program and improve the regulatory situation of medical practitioners or employers. This Ethics Code provides a common set of principles and standards upon which home health and hospice professionals build their professional work.

This Ethics Code is intended to provide specific standards to cover most situations encountered by home health and hospice professionals. The development of a set of ethical standards for work-related conduct requires a personal commitment and lifelong effort to act ethically; to encourage ethical behavior by employers, employees, and colleagues; and to consult with others concerning ethical problems.

General Principles

General Principles, as opposed to Ethical Standards, are an aspiration, something we strive toward. Their intent is to guide and inspire home health and hospice professionals toward the very highest ethical ideals of the profession. General Principles represent the underlying thoughts and ideals of our Ethical Standards.

Principle A: Attitude

Home health and hospice professionals strive to benefit those with whom they work and take care to do no harm. In their professional actions, home health and hospice professionals seek to safeguard the welfare and rights of those with whom they work and other affected persons and entities. When conflicts occur between obligations or concerns, they attempt to resolve these conflicts in a responsible fashion. Because professional judgments and actions may affect the lives of others, home health and hospice professionals are alert to and guard against personal, financial, social, organizational, or political factors that might lead to misuse of their influence.

Principle B: Duty

Home health and hospice professionals establish relationships of trust with those with whom they work. They are aware of their professional responsibilities to society and to the specific situations in which they work. Home health and hospice professionals uphold professional conduct, clarify their professional obligations, accept appropriate responsibility for their behavior, and seek to manage conflicts of interest that could lead to exploitation or harm. Home health and hospice professionals consult with, refer to, or cooperate with other professionals to the extent needed to serve the best interests of those with whom they work. They are concerned about the ethical compliance of their employers and colleagues' professional conduct.

Principle C: Integrity

Home health and hospice professionals seek to promote accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness in their profession. In these activities home health and hospice professionals do not steal, cheat, or knowingly engage in fraud, subterfuge, or intentional misrepresentation of fact. Home health and hospice professionals strive to maintain their integrity and to avoid unwise or unclear commitments.

Principle D: Respect

Home health and hospice professionals respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy and confidentiality. Home health and hospice professionals are aware that special safeguards may be necessary to protect the rights and welfare of patients, clients and employers. Home health and hospice professionals are aware of and respect cultural, individual differences including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status and consider these factors when working with members of such groups.

11 Ethical Standards

Resolving Ethical Issues

- **Misuse of Work**
  If home health and hospice professionals learn of misuse or misrepresentation of their work, they take reasonable steps to correct or minimize the misuse.
- **Conflicts Between Ethics and Law**
  If a home health and hospice professional's ethical responsibilities conflict with law, regulations, or payer policy, home health and hospice professionals will take steps to resolve the conflict. If the conflict is not solved, home health and hospice professionals will abide by the law, regulations, or other legal authority.
- **Conflicts Between Ethics and Organizational Demands**
  If the requirements of an organization for which they are working conflict with this Ethics Code, home health and hospice professionals will make every attempt to resolve the conflict and still follow the Ethics Code.

Competence

- **Boundaries of Competence**
  Home health and hospice professionals will provide services and teach only within the scope of their competence, based on their education, training, study, or professional experience.
- **Lifelong learning**
  Home health and hospice professionals will work to develop and maintain their competence.

Human Relations

- **Discrimination**
  In their work-related activities, home health and hospice professionals do not engage in unfair discrimination based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law.
- **Sexual Harassment**
  Home health and hospice professionals do not engage in sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is sexual solicitation, physical advances, or verbal or nonverbal conduct that is sexual in nature, that occurs in connection with the home health and hospice professional's activities and that either (1) is unwelcome, is offensive, or creates a hostile workplace or educational environment, or (2) is sufficiently severe or intense to be abusive to a reasonable person in the context. Sexual harassment can consist of a single intense or severe act or of multiple persistent or pervasive acts.
- **Other Harassment**
  Home health and hospice professionals do not knowingly engage in behavior that is harassing or demeaning to others due to factors such as those persons' age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status.
- **Avoiding Harm**
  Home health and hospice professionals take reasonable steps to avoid harming their clients or employers or others with whom they work.
- **Conflict of Interest**
  Home health and hospice professionals will not take on a professional role when personal, professional, legal, financial, or other interests could reasonably be expected to (1) impair their objectivity, competence, or effectiveness or (2) expose the organization to harm or exploitation.

  Home health and hospice professionals will not accept any gift, gratuity, payment or other inducement from anyone that would call into question the objectivity and/or validity of their work product.

Privacy and Confidentiality

- **Maintaining Confidentiality**
  Home health and hospice professionals have a primary obligation and take reasonable precautions to protect confidential information within the limits of law or established by institutional rules.
- **Minimizing Intrusions on Privacy**
  Home health and hospice professionals discuss confidential information obtained in their work only for appropriate professional purposes and only with persons clearly concerned with such matters.
- **Disclosures**
  Home health and hospice professionals may disclose confidential information with the appropriate consent of the individual client/patient, or another legally authorized person on behalf of the client/patient unless prohibited by law. Home health and hospice professionals disclose confidential information without the consent of the individual only as mandated by law, or where permitted by law for a valid purpose.

Advertising and Other Public Statements

- **Avoidance of False or Deceptive Statements**
  Public statements include but are not limited to paid or unpaid advertising, certification applications, other credentialing applications, brochures, printed matter, directory listings, personal resumes or public comments such as print or electronic transmission, statements in legal proceedings, lectures and public oral presentations, and published materials. Home health and hospice professionals do not make false, deceptive, or fraudulent statements concerning their training, experience, or competence; their credentials; or their institutional or association affiliations.
- **Media Presentations**
  When home health and hospice professionals provide public advice or comment verbally, in print, by the internet, or other electronic transmission, they take precautions to ensure that statements are based on their professional knowledge, training, or experience, are in accord with law or policy, and are ethical.

Record Keeping and Fees

- **Fees and Financial Arrangements**
  A home health or hospice professional shall make sure all their charges are clearly stated in an agreement specifying compensation and billing arrangements. All fee practices will be consistent with law and will not misrepresent costs or charges.
- **Accuracy in Reports to Payors and Funding Sources**
  In their reports to payors for services and in coding and billing activities, coders shall take reasonable steps to ensure accurate reporting.

Education and Training

- **Accuracy in Teaching**
  Home health and hospice professionals take reasonable steps to ensure that course materials are accurate regarding the subject matter to be covered, basis for evaluating progress, and the nature of course experiences. When teaching or training, home health and hospice professionals will present all information accurately, without bias and based upon reputable sources.
- **Student Disclosure**
  Home health and hospice professionals will take every possible step to ensure the privacy of any grades or other student information and will establish a timely and specific process for providing feedback to students.

- **Standard Tests**
  Should home health and hospice professionals have access to any standard tests or certification exams, they will keep such information confidential and not release confidential information concerning the tests, the answers or any information concerning the scoring or development of the test or exam. Discussion of items pertaining to and included in the AHCC tests is permitted for the sole purpose of test development as directed by AHCC.

12 Privacy Policy Statement

DecisionHealth the sole owner of AHCC is committed to protecting your privacy and holds our relationship with users in the highest regard. This policy describes the ways that personally identifiable and anonymous information about our credential holders, online users, event registrants and print subscribers is gathered, our information sharing practices, and how credential holders, online users and print subscribers may request changes to the way this information is shared.

Personally Identifiable Information We Collect and Use

Information Collection

DecisionHealth® is the sole owner of the information collected on the AHCC website. DecisionHealth® collects information from our users at several different points on our website.

Registration

During registration a user may be required to give contact information (such as name and email address). We use this information to contact the user about services on our site for which he/she has expressed interest. Some information is optional while other information may be required. In some cases a unique identifier (such as, username and password) may be required in order to obtain further benefits from our website.

Information Use

Our primary goal in collecting personal information is to provide you with the best and most useful content and services. In addition, we may use the information collected from you to contact you from time to time regarding our products and/or services. At all times you have the right to request that we cease contacting you by 'opting out' of our communications.

Cookies

Like other websites, DecisionHealth sites use cookies to improve your experience with our online content. For instance, we may use a cookie to identify members so they don't have to re-enter their email address and password when they come to our sites. We use both session ID cookies and persistent cookies which enable us to track and target the interests of our users to improve the content on our site. Usage of cookies tells us nothing about who you are and is no way linked to any personally identifiable information. By adjusting your settings on your browser, you may elect not to allow cookies to be collected. However, it is likely that some areas of the site will not function properly if you do so.

Log Files

Like most standard website servers we use log files. This includes internet protocol (IP) addresses, browser type, internet service provider (ISP), referring/exit pages, platform type, date/time stamp, and number of clicks to analyze trends, administer the site, track user's movement in the aggregate, and gather broad demographic information for aggregate use. IP addresses, etc. are not linked to personally identifiable information.

Third Party Advertising

Some of our advertisers use third-party companies to serve their advertisements on our sites and, in some cases, in our HTML-formatted newsletters. Often, these third-party advertising companies employ cookie and pixel tag technologies to measure the effectiveness of web and email advertisements. We do not give any personally identifiable information to them as part of this relationship. Use of their tracking technology is subject to their own privacy policies.

Legal Disclaimer

Though we make every effort to preserve user privacy, we may need to disclose personal information when required by law wherein we have a good-faith belief that such action is necessary to comply with a current judicial proceeding, a court order or legal process served on our website.

Aggregate Information (non-personally identifiable)

We may share aggregated demographic information with our partners, third parties for marketing, promotional, and other purposes. This is not linked to any personally identifiable information.

Links

Our websites may contain links to other sites. Please be aware that DecisionHealth is not responsible for the privacy practices of such other sites. We encourage our users to be aware when they leave our site and to read the privacy statements of each and every website that collects personally identifiable information. This privacy statement applies solely to information collected by this website.

Surveys & Contests

We may provide you the opportunity to participate in contests or surveys on our site. Participation in these surveys or contests is completely voluntary and the user therefore has a choice whether or not to disclose this information. The requested information typically includes contact information (such as name and email address). Contact information will be used to notify the winners and award prizes. Anonymous survey information will be used for purposes of monitoring or improving the use and satisfaction of this site. Users' personally identifiable information is not shared with third parties unless we give prior notice and choice. Though we may use an intermediary to conduct these surveys or contests, they may not use users' personally identifiable information for any secondary purposes.

Changing Your Privacy Options

To update your registration information, update your newsletter subscriptions or opt-out, contact customer service at 1-800-650-6787 or *customer@decisionhealth.com*

Notification of Changes

This Privacy Policy may be modified from time to time. If there is a material change in our privacy practices, we will post those changes to this privacy statement. If there is a significant change, we will indicate on our sites that our privacy practices have changed and provide a link to the new privacy statement.

Questions

If users have any questions or suggestions regarding our privacy policy, you can contact us at:

DecisionHealth®
201 West Lake Street, 226
Chicago, IL 60606

Phone: 1-800-650-6787

13 Proprietary Rights

All proprietary rights in the examinations, including copyrights and trade secrets, are held by AHCC. In order to protect the integrity of the examinations and to ensure the validity of the scores reported, candidates must adhere to strict guidelines regarding proper conduct in handling copyrighted proprietary examinations. Any attempt to reproduce all or part of the examinations, including, but not limited to, removing materials from the examination room, aiding others by any means in reconstructing any portion of the examinations, selling, distributing, receiving or having unauthorized possession of any portion of the examinations, is strictly prohibited by law. Alleged copyright violations will be investigated and, if warranted, prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. It should be noted that all examination scores may be invalidated in the event of this type of suspected breach. Candidates may not write on any examination materials distributed by or belonging to AHCC unless authorized by the proctor/test administrator.

A candidate can be disqualified from taking or continuing to sit for an examination, or from receiving examination results, or the candidate's scores might be cancelled, if AHCC determines through proctor observation, statistical analysis, and other evidence that the candidate's score may not be valid or that the candidate was engaged in collaborative, disruptive, or other unacceptable behavior during the administration of the examination.

Examination (pass/fail) results are confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone without candidate's written consent, unless directed by valid and lawful subpoena or court order. If you would like your examination results to be released to a third party, you must provide AHCC with a written request that specially identifies the types of details (such as examination date, pass/fail status, etc.) about the examination results that the third-party should receive.

AHCC exam content does not require scoring by judges. AHCC exam content utilizes a multiple-choice format, with only one correct response for each item. All candidates must pass the initial certification exam to be awarded a AHCC credential. No AHCC credential holder is granted certification without having to meet the examination requirement established for certification.

14 Special Accommodations for AHCC Examination Candidates under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

AHCC will comply with the ADA and will provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities that substantially limit one or more major life activities. "An individual with a disability" is one who:

- Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits that person in one or more major life activities; OR
- Has a record of such a physical or mental impairment; OR
- Is regarded as having such a physical or mental impairment.

"Major life activities" are activities that an average person can perform with little or no difficulty (for example walking, talking, hearing, seeing, and performing manual tasks).

"A qualified individual with a disability" is one who:

- With a disability, satisfies the requisite skill, experience, education, and other requirements of the service, program, or activity, OR
- With or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the service, program, or activity.

NOTE: To be protected under the ADA, a person must be a "qualified individual with a disability."

Candidate Responsibilities

1. Candidates must meet the stated eligibility requirements for the examination for which the candidate has applied.
2. Candidates requesting accommodations under the ADA must complete and submit the form labeled "Request for Accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)" provided by AHCC.
3. Candidates must provide or arrange to provide documentation verifying the disability and supporting the request for accommodations.
4. Supporting documentation verifying the disability and the candidate's need for specific accommodations must be completed by a licensed professional or certified specialist appropriate for the disability and must include:
    a. A formal diagnosis using professionally recognized diagnostic criteria
    b. A discussion of necessary accommodations and previously recommended or provided accommodation
    c. A statement of how the disability affects the candidate's "major life activities"
5. Documentation must reflect that the candidate has been evaluated by the licensed professional or certified specialist within the past three years. If a candidate has a long-standing disability that is not likely to improve, documentation older than three years may be acceptable if provided with an update obtained within the past three years.
6. Reasonable accommodations that may be provided for AHCC's examinations include:
    a. An accessible testing site
    b. A separate testing room
    c. Extended testing time
    d. A screen magnifier
    e. A reader

7. The application for accommodations and supporting documentation will be reviewed and the candidate will be notified, in writing, of the accommodations approved for that candidate. The accommodations provided will be appropriate for the documented disability but may not be the exact accommodations that have been requested.
8. Accommodations requested by a third party (for example, a teacher or family member) will not be honored.
9. Accommodations that are not required by the ADA and will not be provided include those that:
    a. Alter the knowledge and skills measured by the examination and may affect the validity of the examination
    b. Provide an unfair advantage for the disabled candidate
    c. Compromise examination security
    d. Are requested for candidates who speak English as a second language
    e. Address temporary physical conditions
    f. Provide personal services and devices (for example, wheelchairs, hearing aids)
    g. Pose an undue financial or administrative burden on AHCC or the proctor/location providing test administration

15 Credential Verification

Certification status may be verified by employers, government agencies, and accrediting agencies by accessing the Directory of Certified Credential Holders on the AHCC website.

AHCC demonstrates transparency and disclosure to the public by maintaining a public Directory of Certified Credential Holders on the AHCC website. This directory lists only those credential holders who have an active credential status and does not disclose any confidential information such as number of certification attempts, contact information or any other personal candidate data.

16 AHCC Appeals Policy and Procedure

Because the performance of each question on the examination that is included in the final score has been pretested, there are no appeal procedures to challenge individual examination questions, answers, or a failing score. The Certification Programs will always apply the same passing score ("cut score") and the same answer key to all candidates taking the same form of the exam. Appeals may be made on the following grounds:

- Candidate eligibility
- Revocation of credential
- Inappropriate examination administration procedures or environmental testing conditions severe enough to cause a major disruption of the examination process

All appeals must be submitted in writing to:

AHCC Certification Program
201 West Lake Street, 226
Chicago, IL 60606

Or email: *customer@decisionhealth.com*

The candidate must explain in detail the nature of the request and the specific facts and circumstances supporting the request, including reasons why the action or decision should be changed or modified. The candidate must also provide accurate copies of all supporting documents.

Eligibility and revocation appeals must be received within thirty (30) days of the initial action. Appeals for alleged inappropriate administration procedures or severe adverse environmental testing conditions must be received within sixty (60) days of the release of examination results.

AHCC will respond within thirty (30) days of receipt of the appeal. If this decision is adverse, the candidate may file a second-level appeal within thirty (30) days.

A three-member panel of the appropriate Certification Committee will review the initial decision and respond with a final decision within forty-five (45) days of receipt.

17 Security

General Security Policy

All proprietary rights in the examinations, including copyrights and trade secrets, are held by AHCC. In order to protect the integrity of the examinations and to ensure the validity of the scores reported, candidates must adhere to strict guidelines regarding proper conduct in handling copyrighted proprietary examinations. Any attempt to reproduce all or part of the examinations, including, but not limited to, removing materials from the examination room, aiding others by any means in reconstructing any portion of the examinations, selling, distributing, receiving or having unauthorized possession of any portion of the examinations, is strictly prohibited by law. Alleged copyright violations will be investigated and, if warranted, prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. It should be noted that all examination scores may be invalidated in the event of this type of suspected breach. Candidates may not write on any examination materials distributed by or belonging to AHCC unless authorized by the proctor/test administrator.

A candidate can be disqualified from taking or continuing to sit for an examination, or from receiving examination results, or the candidate's scores might be cancelled, if AHCC determines through proctor observation, statistical analysis, and other evidence that the candidate's score may not be valid or that the candidate was engaged in collaborative, disruptive, or other unacceptable behavior during the administration of the examination. Examination (pass/fail) results are confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone without candidate's written consent, unless directed by valid and lawful subpoena or court order. If you would like your examination results to be released to a third party, you must provide AHCC with a written request that specially identifies the types of details (e.g., examination date, pass/fail status, etc.) about the examination results that the third-party should receive. All items and forms are maintained at the offices of the Association of Home Care Coding & Compliance. Access is restricted during business hours to staff (via a key card) and authorized visitors (visitors pass). Doors are locked at all times. The building security is monitored after hours by an electronic security system and by a security company. All secure testing material is maintained within the office suite in secured cabinets. Item banks and other secure materials maintained by AHCC are password protected.

18 Frequently Asked Questions

How can I find out if there is a Prometric testing location in my area? How can I find out if Prometric testing center near me has availability on a certain date?

1. Visit https://proscheduler.prometric.com/scheduling/searchAvailability.
2. Select **HCPro, LLC** from the Select a Sponsor drop-down menu.
3. Select **Association of Homecare Coding & Compliance** from the Select a Program drop-down menu.
4. Select the exam you wish to sit for from the Select a Test drop-down menu.
5. Click the right arrow to advance to the Search Availability page.
6. Enter your preferred location and date range to find a test center near you and a test date that works for your schedule, then click the right arrow to advance. Here you will see a list of available locations and testing dates.

How should I prepare for the exam? How much coding experience is suggested before taking the exam?
The most successful credential candidates have on-the-job experience, have attended coding or OASIS training events, and have followed a course of self-study. Review this Candidate Handbook for more detail about the eligibility and qualifications we recommend for each AHCC exam.

We also recommend the following study guides to help you prepare for your respective exam(s):

- **HCS-D:** https://store.decisionhealth.com/books/study-guides/2027-hcs-d-certification-study-guide
- **HCS-H:** https://store.decisionhealth.com/books/study-guides/2027-hcs-h-certification-study-guide
- **HCS-O:** https://store.decisionhealth.com/books/oasis/2026-hcs-o-certification-study-guide

If I purchase the study guide and other DecisionHealth study materials and have some background in coding and/or OASIS, will I pass the certification exam?
All study materials are optional. A self-study program is encouraged; however it does not guarantee a candidate will pass the exam. Review this Candidate Handbook for more details on the eligibility and qualifications required to take each of the AHCC exams.

Is there some type of resource I can print out that walks me through the credentialing process?
Yes, this candidate handbook contains all the information you will need to understand and prepare for a AHCC credential.

How do I register for an exam?
Please see the AHCC website for details about how to register for an exam. You'll find registration details and more under Certification and Training / AHCC Credentials / Exam Information or at https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/ahcc-exam-information/ and at Certification and Training / AHCC Credentials / About AHCC Credentials or at https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/about-ahcc-credentials/.

How do I submit a request for special accommodations at a Prometric testing center?
Register for the exam and click **Yes** for ADA accommodations. You will receive an email from AHCC asking you to complete an ADA request for accommodations. AHCC will review the ADA form and supporting documentation, and if the accommodations are approved, you will receive instructions for scheduling your exam.

Can I take my exam at an international Prometric testing center, outside of the United States? How do I schedule this?
Yes, you can take an exam at an international Prometric testing center, if the AHCC exam is available at that location. Contact customer service for more information at 1-800-650-6787 or customer@decisionhealth.com.

What resources can I take into an exam?
Please visit https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/ahcc-exam-information/ to see what materials are allowed when taking your exam. Scroll down the page to "Allowed materials" and under the exam you will see the allowed materials for the specific certification exam. This information is also in this Candidate Handbook. By scheduling an AHCC exam you are acknowledging you have read and agree to the Allowable Resources.

What is the passing rate of each exam?
This information is on the AHCC website at https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/ahcc-exam-information/.

The passing score for the HCS-D exam is 76%.
The passing score for the HCS-O exam is 76%.
The passing score for the HCS-H exam is 75%.

Please note that the passing rate of each exam may change with the updated exams every year.

Cancellations made **7-29 business days** prior to the day of a scheduled exam date **at a Prometric testing center or by remote proxy** are subject to a **$35 service fee**. Registrants who do not report for the exam at the testing center or by remote proxy or are over 30 minutes late to a scheduled test and are not admitted, and who do not cancel at least 7 business days before the day of their scheduled exam date are liable for the full registration fee. Contact customer service to cancel an exam at 1-800-650-6787 or customer@decisionhealth.com.

Can I cancel my scheduled exam at any time? Or, if I'm not ready, can I just skip my scheduled exam at a Prometric computer-based testing center?
If you cancel or reschedule an exam scheduled with Prometric 7-29 days before the day of your scheduled test date, Prometric will charge a $35 fee.

If you:

- Cancel or reschedule an exam less than 7 days before the day of the test;
- Fail to appear for a scheduled test; or
- Arrive more than 30 minutes after the scheduled start time and are refused admission

You will be charged the full fee for your exam ($339 for first exam attempt; $99 for retakes.

Cancellation/Reschedule Period	Cancellation/Rescheduling Fee
30 or more days before the day of the test	none
7-29 days before the day of the scheduled test	$35 per reschedule/cancellation
• Cancel or reschedule an exam less than 7 days before the day of the test; • Fail to appear for a scheduled test; or • Arrive more than 30 minutes after the scheduled start time and are refused admission	Full testing fee ($339 for first exam attempt; $99 for retakes.)

When will I receive my certificate and pin?
If you passed your exam, you'll receive:*

- A frameable certificate acknowledging the credential earned and date of certification;
- A score report; and
- An AHCC lapel pin

These items will be sent via USPS within 6 weeks of taking the exam.

*Certificate and pin mailed to US addresses only. Printable certificate available in the CEU Tracker.

What jobs can I get with this certification? Is there a job board on your AHCC site?
To learn more about the core competencies each certification tests, review this Candidate Handbook.

You can access the AHCC job board by visiting and logging in to the AHCC website at https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/, and hovering over **"Membership"** and then clicking on **"Career Center"** from the home page.

Can I get a detailed breakdown of my exam results?
You will receive a score report identifying how you performed in each competency area. For more information about how the exams are scored, refer to this Candidate Handbook. To protect the integrity of the examination, AHCC cannot release a candidate's specific answers to questions on any certification examination, nor will AHCC discuss rationale for specific correct answers to examination questions.

Exam Retakes

How long must I wait before I can schedule a retake?
You **must wait at least 3 business days** after you've taken your initial exam to schedule a retake. You have 90 days from your initial exam date to retake the exam. Please note: This also applies to any additional retakes after the first retake exam.

How do I register for a retake exam? How can I get to the retake form?
There is no retake form. To register for your retake exam:

1. Visit https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/.
2. Click the "Login" button at the top right-hand corner of the page and log in.
3. Click the "CEU Tracker" button.
4. Select the certification exam you wish to retake and click "Retake Now" in the tracker. After you have registered and paid for the retake exam fee, you will receive a confirmation email. Once you receive the confirmation email,. you can schedule your retake examination at any Prometric testing center or by remote proctor.

Remember! You must wait at least 3 business days after you've taken your initial exam to schedule a retake. This also applies to any additional retakes after the first retake exam.

Recertification

How many CEUs are required to recertify?
You must earn twenty (20) CEUs between the anniversary date and expiration date of your current credential cycle before you can recertify. To recertify you must:

- Earn ten (10) of the required CEUs by completing your mandatory annual home health coding, OASIS, hospice coding, or home health compliance self-assessments. To view instructions for accessing self-assessments, visit https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/maintaining-your-credentials. CEUs earned from self-assessments are loaded into your tracker by AHCC within three (3) business days.

- Earn the remaining 10 or more CEUs by participating in accepted and qualified CEU activities. Document that activity in your CEU tracker. Make sure to keep any documentation of CEUs for at least one year for auditing purposes.

What are self-assessments?
Self-assessments are two, fifteen (15) question quizzes that test a certification holder on the most up-to-date information for home health coding, OASIS, or hospice coding. Completing the two self-assessments provides proof of up-to-date training and demonstrates continued competence in home health coding, OASIS accuracy, hospice coding, or home health compliance.

Do I need to recertify my credential(s) every year (12 months)?
Yes, your AHCC credential (HCS-D, HCS-H, and/or HCS-O) requires an annual recertification to remain active. You must fulfill your annual recertification requirements and submit the applicable fee before your credential expires in order to maintain certification.

How do I recertify my credential?
Recertification of your credential requires that you earn twenty (20) CEUs between the anniversary date and expiration date of your current credential cycle and paying your recertification fee by your expiration date. These dates are found in your CEU Tracker.

To recertify you must:

- Earn ten (10) or more CEUs by participating in accepted and qualified CEU activities and document that activity in your CEU Tracker. Make sure to keep any documentation of CEUs for at least one year for auditing purposes.
- Earn ten (10) of the required CEUs by completing your mandatory annual home health coding, OASIS, or hospice coding self-assessments. CEUs earned from self-assessments are loaded into your tracker by AHCC within three (3) business days. Please keep this in mind as you are responsible for starting your recertification process early enough to meet the required deadlines. Please keep the self-assessment CEU certificates for your records, in case you are audited.
- Pay your recertification fee by clicking the "Recertify Now" button on your CEU tracker after you have completed your twenty (20) CEUs.

Is there a grace period to recertify my credential after the expiration date?
Yes, you have 90 days from the expiration date of your credential to fulfill the recertification requirements. Any recertifications submitted within the 90 days after the credential expires will be subject to a 15% late fee in addition to the recertification fee. Note that 90 days after a credential expires it will be revoked and cannot be recertified.

There is an Appeal section on the AHCC Request for Consideration form. Can I submit any complaints and issues I have on this form?
No, there are only **four** instances in which the Appeal form will be reviewed. Certification holders and candidates can request an AHCC review of decisions made or actions taken related to the following **four situations only**:

- Test administration
- Test results
- Certification status (censure, suspension, revocation)
- Denial of continuing education credits

CEUs

Can I earn CEUs by earning another AHCC certification?
No. At this time AHCC has not designated this as a valid CEU activity.

Do CEUs carry over from one reporting period to another?
No. You can only report CEUs earned during the current recertification cycle.

Where and how do I access my CEU Tracker?
Click on the "**CEU Tracker"** button at the top right-hand corner on the AHCC website (https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/), and log in to your account.

Where and how do I access the two mandatory self-assessments?
Visit the maintaining your credentials page of the AHCC website at https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/maintaining-your-credentials. Under the "Accessing Your Self-Assessments" section, please read and follow the instructions.

How do I submit CEUs that are not pre-approved by AHCC to see if they would be approved?
CEUs must be earned within your current recertification cycle and must be ***relevant to your specialty credential***. For more information on what types of educational activities qualify, visit the AHCC's website section on "**Qualifying Continuing Education Activities**" by hovering over the "Certification and Training" drop-down tab. The direct link is https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/qualifying-continuing-education-activities. This information is also in this Candidate Handbook. All CEUs submitted must meet the qualifications outlined here. Please keep the self-assessment CEU certificates for your records, in case you are audited.

Please note: AHCC cannot approve CEUs for a non-AHCC event if CEUs were not offered by the sponsoring organization or individual.

How do I know if CEUs earned at non-AHCC events count toward my recertification requirement?
The education event sponsor must offer CEUs at the time of the event. You should have a certificate of completion from the education sponsor indicating the number of earned CEUs, the education title, your name and the date of the education. Education topics should directly relate to your certification.

AHCC cannot approve CEUs for an education activity if the original event sponsor did not provide CEUs. If the education activity meets these requirements, enter the earned CEUs in your tracker and retain your certificate of completion for your records in case you are selected for a random audit.

Where can I get CEUs relevant to my specialty credential?
For a list of the types of educational activities that qualify for CEUs, visit the AHCC website section on **"Qualifying Continuing Education Activities**" at https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/qualifying-continuing-education-activities. This information is also in this Candidate Handbook.

All AHCC members can earn two CEUs each month by taking a monthly quiz based on the *AHCC Insider* ezine content. Visit the Publications page, https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/publications/, to find a link to your available CEU quizzes.

Login and Password issues

I can't log in to the AHCC website. How do I find my login information?
You can enter your email in the Login screen at https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/Login, click on the "Forgot password" link, and your password will be sent to your email. Please make sure you are entering the email that is associated with your AHCC membership.

If you are still having trouble logging in, please email Customer Service at customer@decisionhealth.com or call 1-800-650-6787 (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time).

I can't remember my password to the AHCC website. How do I reset my password?
You can reset your password by entering your User Name. Visit https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/Login. In the Login screen, click on the "Forgot password" link. The email to reset your password will be sent to the email that is associated with your AHCC membership.

How do I update my email and other personal information for my certification record(s)?
You can check most of your information by logging into your AHCC account at https://ahcc.decisionhealth.com/. At the top right-hand corner of the page, click "My Account." You can reset your password by clicking the button in your account information. If you need to update your email address and/or other personal information, please email Customer Service at customer@decisionhealth.com or call 1-800-650-6787 (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time).

What is the yearly audit?
In order to ensure high standards of competency and continuing education, AHCC will conduct an annual audit. A randomly selected, percentage sample of recertification applications submitted from the prior reporting period will be sampled to participate in the audit. If audited, you will be required to provide documented proof of all CEU activity reported during the reporting period to AHCC within 30 days.

If you are unable to provide documented proof within 30 days, your certification will be considered inactive and you will have one year to complete the recertification process by providing the documentation or obtaining new CEUs. All audit documentation is reviewed for completeness and accuracy by AHCC. If all documentation is complete and the appropriate number of CEUs are earned, you will be notified that your credential is valid until the next recertification due date. If, after submission of CEUs, it is determined that some or all CEUs are not applicable, an appropriate amount of time will be allowed for you to earn additional replacement CEUs.

19 Appendix A – Domains

HCS-D Exam Domains

HCS-D Professional Domain Definition: HCS-D professionals improve the quality of healthcare by ensuring the timeliest information and resources available are used for accurate coding. The profession encompasses services in analyzing, and disseminating individual patient clinical diagnostic data. It serves the following healthcare stakeholders: patients, providers, patient care organizations, research and policy agencies, payers, and other healthcare-related entities.

Eighty (80) percent of all CEUs must be earned within HCS-D Domains, which are divided into the areas below.

Domain I: Assign accurate diagnosis codes (75%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Assign accurate diagnosis codes from the classification system
- Review and sequence the diagnosis codes according to ICD-10 coding guidelines
- Determine if a payment diagnosis will be listed according to CMS guidelines
- For CMS payers, ensure there is a valid PDGM primary diagnosis code and review for active comorbidity codes
- Validate diagnosis codes using coding conventions and guidelines
- Ensure that the assigned codes reflect the clinician and medical documentation
- Review Face-to-Face documentation and confirm the focus of care based on the Face-to-Face encounter

Domain II: Conduct documentation reconciliation (15%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Review available documentation and apply critical thinking skills to determine if a query to the medical provider is necessary
- Determine how to construct a proper query
- Collaborate with clinicians, managers, or administrators about incomplete information or documentation deficiencies
- Obtain clinician agreement with code assignment and sequencing
- Notify appropriate agency personnel regarding annual updates and code set changes
- Ensure complete and accurate documentation of all communication (verbal, written, electronic) used to verify diagnosis accuracy
- Reconcile the focus of care based on discrepancies between the Face-to-Face encounter and comprehensive assessment

Domain III: Ensure that all activities are done in a legal and ethical manner that supports agency policy, regulatory and professional guidelines (10%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Maintain patient confidentiality, privacy, and security
- Conduct activities in a legal, ethical, and professional manner

HCS-H Exam Domains

HCS-H Professional Domain Definition: HCS-H professionals improve the quality of healthcare by ensuring the timeliest information and resources available are used for accurate coding. The profession encompasses services in analyzing, and disseminating individual patient clinical diagnostic data. It serves the following healthcare stakeholders: patients, providers, patient care organizations, research and policy agencies, payers, and other healthcare-related entities.

Eighty (80) percent of all CEUs must be earned within HCS-H Domains, which are divided into the areas below.

Domain I: Assign accurate diagnosis codes (75%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Ensure that the terminal diagnosis and assigned codes reflect the clinician and medical documentation
- Assign accurate diagnosis codes from the classification system
- Review and sequence the diagnosis codes according to ICD-10 coding guidelines.
- Validate diagnosis codes using coding conventions and guidelines

Domain II: Conduct documentation reconciliation (15%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Review available documentation and apply critical thinking skills to determine if a query to the medical provider is necessary
- Determine how to construct a proper query
- Collaborate with clinicians, managers, or administrators about incomplete information or documentation deficiencies
- Obtain clinician agreement with code assignment and sequencing
- Notify appropriate agency personnel regarding annual updates and code set changes
- Ensure complete and accurate documentation of all communication (verbal, written, electronic) used to verify diagnosis accuracy

Domain III: Ensure that all activities are done in a legal and ethical manner that supports agency policy, regulatory and professional guidelines (10%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Maintain patient confidentiality, privacy, and security
- Conduct activities in a legal, ethical, and professional manner

HCS-O Exam Domains

HCS-O Professional Domain Definition: HCS-O credential holders are professionals with specialized knowledge in applying clinical assessment findings to Medicare specific data collection items. To perform this task, they must possess and demonstrate expertise in the understanding and application of Medicare instruction contained in the OASIS guidance manual, Category specific Questions and Answers and quarterly updates.

Eighty (80) percent of all CEUs must be earned within HCS-O Domains, which are divided into the areas below.

Domain I: Conduct documentation reconciliation (15%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Review appropriate medical records including, but not limited to: Face-to-Face encounters, History and Physicals, discharge summaries, clinic notes, comprehensive assessment including drug regimen review, and other pertinent documentation and apply critical thinking skills to determine if a query of the medical provider is necessary
- Determine how to construct a proper query, if necessary for OASIS purposes
- Collaborate with clinicians, managers, or administrators about incomplete information or documentation deficiencies
- Obtain any prior agency documentation from previous encounters per regulatory guidance
- Ensure the completeness of the patient documentation
- Review all documentation available within the appropriate timeframe to complete the OASIS

Domain II: Validate the accuracy of OASIS responses (60%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Apply the basic rationale behind OASIS guidance
- Identify the correct OASIS responses based on relevant documentation within the appropriate timeframe.
- Ensure that the OASIS responses are consistent with the POC
- Ensure the comprehensive assessment is based on the OASIS guidelines and resources

Domain III: Correct OASIS response errors according to OASIS guidance and documentation standards (25%)

Tasks associated with this domain include:

- Identify errors and inconsistencies in OASIS responses
- Obtain clinician agreement on modifications to the OASIS responses
- Correct OASIS response errors in the absence of the assessing clinician
- Maintain the documentation of corrections

20 Appendix B – Competencies

Home Health Coding Specialist Competencies

1. **Technology:** Apply existing and emerging technologies for the collection of clinical data, the transformation of clinical data to useful health information, and the communication and protection of information on analog (for example, paper) or electronic media (for example, web-based software).

   Topics include, but are not limited to:

   - Electronic health records (EHRs)
   - Software applications (encoders, patient information management systems, chart management and electronic queries.)
   - PDGM Grouper tool

2. **Clinical Data Management:** Apply and analyze quality and clinical resources appropriate to the clinical setting. Includes database management, clinical documentation improvement, and coding compliance using the current diagnosis code set and the current home health payment system to ensure accurate reporting of the rendered services (for example, data integrity and quality of documentation).

   Topics include, but are not limited to:

   - Current home health payment structure
   - Patient-Driven Grouper Model (PDGM)
   - ICD-10-CM Classification System
   - HHRG /HIPPS code compilation
   - WOCN wound classification & guidance

3. **External Forces:** Study regulatory requirements and appropriate compliance initiatives for policies, procedures, protocols, and technology for home health providers.

   Topics include, but are not limited to:

   - HHS OIG
   - HIPAA
   - Compliance
   - Medicare Conditions of Participation
   - Legal or regulatory updates
   - CMS

4. **Clinical Foundations:** Understand human anatomy and physiology, the nature of disease processes, and the diagnosis and treatment of major diseases including common medications and testing. Demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge to support accurate assignment of diagnosis codes.

   Topics include, but are not limited to:

   - Pathophysiology
   - Pharmacology
   - Anatomy and physiology
   - Medical terminology and abbreviations
   - Clinical documentation (all settings)

- Diagnostic and laboratory testing
- Telemedicine

5. **Privacy and Security:** Understand and apply current healthcare regulations that promote protection of medical information and the electronic transmission of health information.

   Topics include, but are not limited to:
   - Release of information
   - Confidentiality
   - Personal health information security

Hospice Coding Specialist Competencies

1. **Technology:** Apply existing and emerging technologies for the collection of clinical data, the transformation of clinical data to useful health information, and the communication and protection of information on analog (for example, paper) or electronic media (for example, web-based software). Topics include, but are not limited to:
   - Electronic health records (EHRs)
   - Software applications (encoders, patient information management systems, chart management and electronic queries.)
2. **Clinical Data Management:** Apply and analyze quality and clinical resources appropriate to the clinical setting. Includes database management, clinical documentation improvement, and coding compliance using the current diagnosis code set and the current hospice payment system to ensure the accurate reporting of the rendered services (for example, data integrity and quality of documentation). Topics include, but are not limited to:
   - Hospice payment system
   - ICD-10-CM Classification System
3. **External Forces:** Study regulatory requirements and appropriate compliance initiatives for policies, procedures, protocols, and technology for hospice providers. Topics include, but are not limited to:
   - HHS OIG
   - HIPAA
   - Compliance
   - Medicare Conditions of Participation
   - Legal or regulatory updates
   - CMS
   - WOCN wound classification & guidance
4. **Clinical Foundations:** Understand the focus of hospice is on the palliation of a terminally ill patient's pain and symptoms with attention to their emotional and spiritual needs at the end of life. Understand human anatomy and physiology, the nature of disease processes, and the diagnosis and treatment of major diseases including common medications and testing. Demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge to support accurate assignment of diagnosis codes.

   Topics include, but are not limited to:
   - Pathophysiology
   - Pharmacology
   - Anatomy and physiology

- Medical terminology and abbreviations
- Clinical documentation
- Diagnostic and laboratory testing
- Telemedicine

5. **Privacy and Security:** Understand and apply current healthcare regulations that promote protection of medical information and the electronic transmission of health information.

   Topics include, but are not limited to:
   - Release of information
   - Confidentiality
   - Personal health information security

OASIS Specialist Competencies

1. **Technology:** Apply existing and emerging technologies for the collection of clinical data, the transformation of clinical data to useful health information, and the communication and protection of information on analog (for example, paper) or electronic media (for example, web-based software).

   Topics include, but are not limited to:
   - Electronic health records (EHRs)
   - Software applications (encoders, patient information management systems, chart management and electronic queries.)

2. **Clinical Data Management:** Apply and analyze quality and clinical resources appropriate to the clinical setting. Includes database management, clinical documentation improvement, and compliance using the current OASIS and Medicare regulatory guidance to ensure quality and cost effectiveness of the rendered services (for example, data integrity and quality of documentation).

   Topics include, but are not limited to:
   - Current home health payment structure
   - OASIS Guidance Manual
   - WOCN wound classification & guidance
   - Medicare Processing Claims Manual
   - Medicare Conditions of Participation
   - Medicare Federal Register
   - ICD-10-CM Classification System
   - CMS website

3. **External Forces:** Study regulatory requirements and appropriate compliance initiatives for policies, procedures, protocols, and technology for home health and hospice providers.

   Topics include, but are not limited to:
   - HHS OIG
   - HIPAA
   - Compliance
   - Medicare Conditions of Participation
   - Legal or regulatory update
   - CMS

4. **Clinical Foundations:** Understand human anatomy and physiology, the nature of disease processes, and the diagnosis and treatment of major diseases including common medications and testing. Demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge to recognize, interpret, and support accurate OASIS responses.

   Topics include, but are not limited to:

   - Pathophysiology
   - Pharmacology
   - Anatomy and physiology
   - Medical terminology and abbreviations
   - Clinical documentation (all settings)
   - Diagnostic and laboratory testing
   - Telemedicine

5. **Privacy and Security:** Understand and apply current healthcare regulations that promote protection of medical information and the electronic transmission of health information.

   Topics include, but are not limited to:

   - Release of information
   - Confidentiality
   - Personal health information security



Association of Home Care Coding & Compliance

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