

**Healthcare Accreditation Certification Program**  
Center for Improvement in Healthcare Quality



**Candidate Applicant  
Handbook**



**Effective January 2012**  
Center for Improvement in Healthcare Quality  
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## A Message from the HACP Examination Board Chair

Dear Colleague:

Congratulations on your decision to seek certification in the field of healthcare accreditation. You will soon join the growing ranks of healthcare professionals across the United States who have come to recognize the value of HACP certification.

The Healthcare Accreditation Certification Program (HACP) is developed and administered by the Center for Improvement in Healthcare Quality (CIHQ). CIHQ is a private organization helping healthcare entities comply with standards and regulations necessary to improve the quality of care provided in their communities.

If you're involved in healthcare, then you and your organization are impacted by federal regulations and external accreditation standards. There is an acute need for experts who can guide their organization in compliance activities.

What makes HACP different from other certification programs is its focus on the accreditation and certification arena. We've talked to hundreds of healthcare professionals who've told us how much of their job involves complying with standards and regulation. There is a legitimate need for a certification program that enables healthcare professionals to demonstrate their expert competency in an area that transcends the entire organization!

Being HACP certified is more than just "knowing the regs". Accreditation standards and CMS regulations – to a large extent – form the foundation of an organization's ability to consistently deliver safe, quality patient care.

As you read this handbook and prepare for the examination, I would like to both recognize and thank you for the commitment that you have chosen to make in furthering the cause of professional competence in the accreditation and regulatory arena. Best of luck!

Warmest Regards:

Richard Curtis, RN, MS, HACP  
Chair – HACP Examination Board



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## About this Handbook

This handbook contains current and pertinent information about the Healthcare Accreditation Certification Program (HACP) examination. This information is considered current as of January 2012. The HACP examination is developed and administered by the Center for Improvement in Healthcare Quality (CIHQ). Any prior versions of this handbook are considered null and void as of January 1, 2012.

It is your responsibility to be familiar with the contents of this handbook and to abide by any requirements contained herein.

It is recommended that you keep this handbook readily available as a reference tool both before and after taking the examination.

## Mission

CIHQ seeks to assure the safety and quality of care rendered in our communities by improving the professional competence of individuals involved in the healthcare accreditation and regulatory arena.

## Vision

HACP certification is the definitive barometer of individual professional competence in the area of healthcare accreditation and regulatory compliance.

## Statement of Non-Discrimination

The HACP examination and certification is offered to all eligible candidates regardless of age, gender, race, religion, national orientation, marital status, or disability. Discrimination by CIHQ or any organization associated with the development and/or administration of the HACP examination is strictly prohibited.

## Contacting CIHQ

All correspondence as well as applying for the HACP examination should be directed to:

CIHQ-HACP  
P.O. Box 6206  
Santa Maria, CA 93456  
ATTN: HACP Examination Board  
Phone: (866) 324-5080  
Fax: (805) 934-8588

Debra Benson – Program Administrator  
Email: [dbenson@cihq.org](mailto:dbenson@cihq.org)

[www.cihq-hacp.org](http://www.cihq-hacp.org)



## Eligibility Requirements

Unlike many certification programs, HACP is not about your title, or how many degrees you have after your name, or even what your job is. HACP is about proving your knowledge of accreditation standards and key federal regulations.

There are no eligibility requirements. We do recommend that you be actively or recently employed in a hospital setting with at least two years experience. We've also found it helpful to have a good knowledge base of clinical and support processes in a hospital setting.

## Examination Content & Distribution of Questions

The HACP exam addresses key CMS conditions of participation for acute care hospitals. The specific content and distribution of questions for the 2012 examination appears below:

Condition of Participation	Number of Questions	Percent of Exam Total
• §482. Certification Process	11	11%
• §482.12 Governing Body	4	3%
• §482.13 Patients' Rights	17	14%
• §482.21 QA/PI Program	3	2%
• §482.22 Medical Staff	5	4%
• §482.23 Nursing Services	2	2%
• §482.24 Medical Record Services	9	7%
• §482.25 Pharmaceutical Services	20	17%
• §482.26 Radiological Services	1	1%
• §482.27 Laboratory Services	3	2%
• §482.28 Food and Dietetic Services	3	2%
• §482.30 Utilization Review	3	2%
• §482.41 Physical Environment	3	2%
• §482.42 Infection Control	7	6%
• §482.43 Discharge Planning	5	4%
• §482.45 Organ, Tissue and Eye Procurement	3	2%
• §482.51 Surgical Services	6	5%
• §482.52 Anesthesia Services	7	6%
• §482.53 Nuclear Medicine Services	2	2%
• §482.54 Outpatient Services	1	1%
• §482.55 Emergency Services	2	2%
• §482.56 Rehabilitation Services	1	1%
• §482.57 Respiratory Services	2	2%

The content of the exam is derived from an expert analysis of the scope and breadth of knowledge necessary to effectively provide guidance and consultation to a healthcare organization in successfully complying with the aforementioned standards and regulations. The content is reviewed and revised as necessary on an annual basis based on changes to standards and regulations.

If a standard or regulation changes during the year, and the nature of the change affects one of the exam questions, the correct answer to the question will continue to be the standard or regulation that was in effect at the time the exam was issued.



## Examination Format / Pass Score

The examination consists of 120 multiple choice questions. Questions are derived directly from the examination content. Each question was field tested to assure clarity, appropriateness, and accuracy. There is one correct answer per question. The pass / fail score for the examination is established annually based on a statistical analysis of the exams degree of difficulty. For 2012, the minimum pass score has been set at 75% (90 out of 120 questions).

The HACP Examination Board reviews and approves the examination on an annual basis.

## Certification

You must pass the HACP examination in order to be certified. Certification is valid for a two year period, effective the date that you pass the exam.

If you do not pass the exam or you allow your certification to expire at the end of the two year period (following a 30 day grace period), then the certification will be considered null and void, and you will need to reapply for examination.

## Recertification

In order to maintain the HACP credential, you must be recertified every two years. Applications can be downloaded from the HACP website ([www.cihq-hacp.org](http://www.cihq-hacp.org)). Recertification can be obtained by paying the recertification fee, and by either of the following:

- Re-taking the HACP examination
- Providing evidence of 24 hours of continuing education units (CEU). One hour of study or instruction equals one CEU. The CEU must address areas consistent with Joint Commission standards and/or CMS Conditions of Participation. CIHQ offers CEU's free of charge to certified individuals through the HACP website. CEU's can also be awarded for selected leadership activities and other involvement in preparing your organization for its accreditation and/or certification. See the HACP website for details.

## Displaying the HACP Certification

Individuals who maintain their certification in good standing are permitted to use the credential HACP after their name. In addition, CIHQ will provide an official certificate and as well as a lapel pin bearing the HACP credential.

## Administering the HACP Examination

The HACP examination may be taken either on-line at any time in the comfort and convenience of your home or office, or by a proctored in-person examination held annually. CIHQ has partnered with Exam Builder.com to administer the on-line examination. Exam Builder.com is used by some of the largest corporations in the United States and is considered the leader in web-based examinations.

## Application Process

You must first apply for the HACP examination. Applications can be obtained from the HACP website ([www.cihq-hacp.org](http://www.cihq-hacp.org)). Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Exam and other fees – if applicable – must be paid in full at the time the application is submitted. Fees are non-refundable.



1. Submit your application by downloading the form on-line and mailing or faxing the information to CIHQ. You may also register on-line or by phone. If you are paying by check, then you must submit your application by mail. Credit cards may be used in any type of registration
2. You will need to decide at the time of your application whether you want to take the exam on-line, or in-person at the annual proctored examination. The in-person exam is offered in June of 2012.
3. Once CIHQ has received and approved your application, you will be notified by email or USPS of your approval and given your **UNIQUE CANDIDATE ID number. YOU WILL NEED THIS NUMBER AT THE TIME OF YOUR EXAMINATION. DO NOT LOSE THIS NUMBER!** Bring this number with you if you are taking the in-person proctored exam.
4. If you have elected to take the exam on-line, you will be contacted by CIHQ. On-line examinations are usually available within one business day of receiving your candidate ID number. You will have a full year (365 days) to take the examination on-line.
5. If you are taking the exam in-person, you will be notified by CIHQ of the exact location of the exam. Applicants will be responsible for procuring their own travel arrangements. **Remember to bring your approval notification containing your Unique Candidate ID number to the test site.**

If utilizing the proctored in-person exam testing option, the application is valid until the date of the exam. If you do not take the examination at that time, you are allowed to take the exam on-line for an additional fee. Contact CIHQ for details.

## Examination Fees

The examination fees for 2012 are as follows:

- Standard registration \$245.00
- Employed by a CIHQ member organization \$195.00

A list of member organizations can be obtained from the HACP website

Fee's are subject to change without notice.

There is a separate fee for those applicants who wish to attend the HACP preparation course which is offered in conjunction with the in-person proctored exam. Details can be obtained from the HACP website ([www.cihq-hacp.org](http://www.cihq-hacp.org)).

## Appeals

Because the performance of each question on the examination has been pre-tested, there are no appeal procedures to challenge individual examination questions, answers, or a failing score.

Appeals may be considered for alleged inappropriate examination administration procedures or environmental testing conditions severe enough to cause a major disruption of the examination process and which could not have been avoided.

All appeals must be submitted in writing to the HACP Examination Board within 30 days of the examination date. The appeal must note the specific circumstances or reasons why you believe the examination process was inappropriately administered or disrupted.

The HACP Examination Board Chair 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 HACP Examination Board will review the Chair's decision and respond with a decision within thirty (30) days of receipt. The decision by the panel is considered final.



## Agreements and Authorizations

By applying for the HACP examination, you understand and agree to the following:

1. You authorize CIHQ to make whatever inquiries and investigations that it deems necessary to verify your credentials and professional standing. Further, you understand that CIHQ will treat the contents of your application as well as all documents relating to certification as confidential, except when required by legal compulsory process.
2. You authorize CIHQ to use information from your application and subsequent examination for the purpose of statistical analysis, provided your personal identification has been deleted. You also authorize CIHQ to post your name, title, organization, city, and state on its website and publications for the purpose of recognizing your certification achievement.
3. You understand that the initial certification period is two years following successfully passing the examination and agree to meet current requirements if you wish to maintain active certification status thereafter. You further understand that CIHQ has the authority to change requirements to attain and maintain certification from time to time.
4. You have read and understand the information provided in this Applicant Handbook or on the HACP website at [www.cihq-hacp.org](http://www.cihq-hacp.org).
5. You understand that false information may be cause for denial or loss of your certification. You understand that you can be disqualified from taking or continuing to sit for an examination or from receiving examination scores if CIHQ determines through either proctor observation or statistical analysis that you engaged in collaborative, disruptive, or other prohibited behavior during the administration of the examination.
6. Finally, you agree to abide by the requirements and guidelines set forth in this handbook and on the HACP website.

If you do not understand or agree to all of the above noted agreements and authorizations, then you are not considered eligible for the examination, should not apply, and may not take the exam.

## Process for On-Line Examination

1. Once CIHQ has received and approved your application, you will be notified by email or USPS of your approval and given your **UNIQUE CANDIDATE ID number**. ***YOU WILL NEED THIS NUMBER AT THE TIME OF YOUR EXAMINATION. DO NOT LOSE THIS NUMBER!***
2. You may take the exam at the date and time of your own choosing. The exam is time limited. Three hours are allotted to take the exam. Once you have begun the exam you must complete it in one sitting. There is no saving the exam for completion at a later time.
3. You are not permitted to use any study aides, notes, the HACP study guide, or other materials when taking the examination. You are not permitted to have other individuals assist you in any way in answering questions.
4. To assure the validity of the on-line examination process, the examination is timed and the questions are randomized.
5. The on-line exam is accessed through a link on the home page of the CIHQ-HACP website: [www.cihq-hacp.org](http://www.cihq-hacp.org). When instructed, enter your candidate ID number.



6. Once you have accessed the exam, follow the directions as noted. Your results will be immediately available to you once you have completed the examination. Copying test questions is strictly prohibited. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Doing so may subject you to severe civil and criminal penalties
7. In the event of a loss of internet signal, you will be permitted to re-take the exam. It is strongly recommended that you use hard-wired internet access rather than wireless access. CIHQ must be able to confirm loss of the internet signal in order to retake the exam.

## Process for In-Person Examination

Once each year, CIHQ sponsors in-person proctored examinations in different regions of the country. These examinations are preceded by an optional one-day education program directly tied to the test subject matter.

You must note on your application if you wish to take the examination at a proctored site. Check the HACP website ([www.cihq-hacp.org](http://www.cihq-hacp.org)) for the next available test date.

The specific location (hotel, university, conference center, etc.) will be emailed to you with your confirmation letter. If you have not received your confirmation letter three (3) weeks prior to the examination date, please contact CIHQ immediately.

### ON THE DAY OF YOUR EXAMINATION

On the day of the examination, assure that you arrive on time. **ONCE THE EXAM BEGINS, NO CANDIDATE WILL BE ADMITTED.**

To gain admission a candidate needs to present the Unique Candidate ID number and an identification with a current photograph. The identification must be current and include your current name and signature. You will also be required to sign a roster for verification of identity.

Acceptable forms of identification include a current:

- Driver's license with photograph
- State identification card with photograph
- Passport
- Military identification card with photograph

Employment ID cards, student ID cards and any type of temporary identification are **NOT** acceptable as primary identification. Candidates are prohibited from misrepresenting their identities or falsifying information to obtain admission to the examination.

### SECURITY

CIHQ maintains examination administration and security standards that are designed to assure that all candidates are provided the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The testing location is continuously monitored by proctors for security purposes.

The following security procedures apply during the examination:

- Examinations are proprietary. No cameras, notes, tape recorders, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), calculators, pagers or cellular phones are allowed to be on or used during the examination.



- No calculators are permitted.
- No guests, visitors or family members are allowed in the examination room
- No personal items, valuables, or weapons are allowed on tables during the examination

### **EXAMINATION RESTRICTIONS**

- No personal belongings will be allowed to be used during the examination. Pencils will be provided during check-in. **Use of a cellular phone or other electronic devices is strictly prohibited and will result in dismissal from the examination.**
- No paper, booklets or note pads will be allowed in the examination room. You may make notes in the margins of the examination form only.
- No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination.

### **MISCONDUCT**

Individuals who engage in any of the following conduct may be dismissed from the examination, their scores will not be reported and examination fees will not be refunded. Examples of misconduct are when a candidate:

- Creates a disturbance, is abusive, or otherwise uncooperative;
- Displays and/or uses electronic communications equipment such as pagers, cellular phones, PDAs;
- Gives or receives help or is suspected of doing so;
- Attempts to record examination questions or make notes;
- Attempts to take the examination for someone else; or
- Is observed with notes, books or other aids.

### **COPYRIGHTED EXAMINATION QUESTIONS**

All examination questions are the copyrighted property of CIHQ. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Doing so may subject you to severe civil and criminal penalties.

## **Post-Examination Activities**

### **PROCESSING / SCORING OF THE COMPLETED EXAM**

#### **For On-Line Exams:**

You will be notified immediately upon completing the examination whether or not you passed.

#### **For In-Person Exams:**

Candidates will be notified by mail within two weeks after taking the examination whether they have passed or failed. To protect privacy, no results will be provided by telephone or fax. Individual test scores are released only to the individual candidate.



### **SCORES CANCELLED BY CIHQ**

CIHQ is responsible for the validity and integrity of the scores reported. On occasion, occurrences, such as computer malfunction or misconduct by a candidate, may cause a score to be suspect. CIHQ and reserves the right to void or withhold examination results if, upon investigation, violation of its regulations are discovered.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Information about candidates for testing and their examination results are considered confidential. Studies and reports concerning candidates will contain not information identifiable with any candidate, unless authorized by the candidate.

### **Obtaining Your HACP Certification Number**

Each candidate who successfully passes the HACP examination will be assigned a certification number. This number will remain assigned to the individual as long as the certification is maintained in good standing. The certification number will be displayed on the award certificate, your HACP and in the CIHQ database. Please refer to this number when communicating or corresponding with CIHQ.

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