Certified Correctional Health Professional
Mental Health

Candidate Handbook

Specialty Certification for Correctional Mental Health Professionals

A Program of the National Commission on Correctional Health Care

From the Premier National Certification Program for Professionals in Correctional Health Care

CCHP Board of Trustees
1145 W. Diversey Pkwy.
Chicago, IL 60614
www.ncchc.org/cchp-mh
Professional Recognition

Mental health professionals working in correctional settings face unique challenges. They must provide effective, efficient care to a high need and often high acuity population while navigating strict security regulations, crowded facilities and the myriad legal and public health considerations unique to this specialty. To meet these challenges, continual professional growth is essential. Specialty certification provides formal recognition for practitioners who have engaged in a process of ongoing, focused and targeted professional development in the field of correctional mental health. Specialty certification in correctional mental health is a validation of your dedication to continuing competence and quality service delivery.

Purpose

The purpose of the CCHP-MH specialty examination is to measure a candidate's knowledge, understanding and application of national standards and guidelines essential to the delivery of appropriate mental health care, legal principles for practicing within a correctional mental health care system, ethical obligations of correctional mental health professionals and the role of mental health professionals in delivering health care in the correctional environment.

Eligibility

Eligibility is extended to all qualified mental health professionals as defined by NCCHC’s Standards for Mental Health Services in Correctional Facilities (2015), MH-A-02: “psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric social workers, licensed professional counselors, psychiatric nurses, and others who by virtue of their education, credentials, and experience are permitted by law to evaluate and care for the mental health needs of patients.”

Prior to submitting an application, applicants must have:

- Current CCHP certification
- Graduate level (master’s and above) degree
- Professional licensure within a U.S. state (for Canada and U.S. territories, credentials will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis)
- Equivalent of three years of full-time practice in a correctional environment

Application and Candidacy

Elements of the application:

- Copy of professional licensure or proof of license eligibility, e.g., copy of diploma, if license to practice is not required by law in your state
- Signed application statement

For application deadlines for each exam, see www.ncchc.org/CCHP/calendar.

Once the application, supporting materials and examination fee have been received and approved, applicants will receive acknowledgment of their candidacy to take the CCHP-MH exam. Candidates must register before the registration deadline for the exam they wish to take. Incomplete applications will be
kept on file for six months, after which time a new application and fees must be submitted. A candidate must take the exam within one year of the application approval date.

**Deferment and Cancellation Policies**

The exam may be deferred up to one year from the date the application is approved. Deferment must be requested in writing at least 10 business days before the originally scheduled examination date. To cancel the application, a written cancellation request must be received at least 10 business days before the examination date. $100 of the application fee will be refunded.

**Exam Dates and Locations**

Examinations are offered throughout the year, including at NCCHC’s conferences, PSI test centers across the country, and online. For a list of exam dates and locations, visit [www.ncchc.org/CCHP/calendar](http://www.ncchc.org/CCHP/calendar).

**Exam Registration and Admission**

Candidates must register for the exam through NCCHC (live locations), PSI (test centers) or Prometric (online), confirming the date and location where they wish to take the exam.

**NCCHC Conference Sites:** Approximately two weeks before the scheduled date candidates will receive an admission notice with the address of the site. The admission notice and a valid state photo ID or driver’s license are required to gain admission.

**PSI Test Centers:** Please follow the instructions provided by PSI during exam registration.

**Prometric Online Exams:** Please follow the instructions provided by Prometric during exam registration.

**ADA Compliance**

The CCHP Board of Trustees makes every effort to ensure that test centers are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you require special accommodations, please submit a written request at least 90 days before the examination date.

**The Examination**

The proctored, written examination is composed of 80 to 100 multiple-choice, objective questions. Candidates are allowed two hours to complete the examination.

**NCCHC Conference Sites:** Report to the exam site as instructed on the admission notice. Candidates arriving late may be admitted, but will not be given additional time to complete the exam.

**PSI Test Centers:** Report to the exam site as instructed by the test center and adhere to test center regulations.
No pagers, cell phones, alarms or similar devices may be operative during the exam. Personal digital assistants (PDAs) and other handheld computers also are prohibited. Any person using such devices will be dismissed from the test center and disqualified from the examination. No books, reference materials or study aids of any sort are allowed in the exam room.

**Online exams:**
NCCHC offers online exams with live remote proctors through Prometric. Take your exam from the comfort and safety of your home, or anywhere, at a date and time that is convenient for you. Internet access, a laptop or PC and a web camera are required. There are additional requirements available at [www.ncchc.org/online-exams](http://www.ncchc.org/online-exams). Prior to beginning the exam, candidates will need to complete a system test.

**Exam Scoring and Reporting**
Examination questions, answers and grading guidelines are developed by the CCHP Board of Trustees and CCHP-MH Subcommittee. The candidate should choose the single best answer to each item. There is no penalty for incorrect answers; it is to the candidate's advantage to answer each item even when uncertain of the correct response. No credit is given for items for which more than one response is selected.

The tests are graded electronically. Candidates will receive the results by email within two weeks. Only a pass or fail will be reported to the candidate. A list of passing candidates may be published; no reference is made to candidates who defer taking the examination or do not attain a passing score.

**Rescheduling and Reexamination**
**NCCHC Conference Site Registrants:** Candidates who are unable to take the exam as originally scheduled should notify NCCHC in writing at least 10 business days prior to the examination. No additional fees will be assessed to reschedule. If notification is not received, however, a $45 reregistration fee will be assessed when the candidate reschedules. If the candidate does not pass the exam and wishes to take it again, the reexamination fee is $45.

**PSI Test Center Registrants:** Candidates who are unable to take the exam as originally scheduled should see the FAQs on the PSI website for instructions on how to reschedule or cancel.

**Prometric Online Exam Registrants:** Candidates who are unable to take the exam as originally scheduled should see the FAQs on the Prometric website for instructions on how to reschedule or cancel.

Candidates who do not attain a passing score on their first attempt may retake the exam two additional times within two years of the application approval date.

**Content Outline**
Exam questions are written by experienced correctional mental health professionals and reviewed by professionals who have attained CCHP certification. They are reviewed for construction, accuracy and appropriateness by the CCHP Board of Trustees. The content of the examination is described in the content outline on the following pages. The 11 major content areas are weighted (reflected in the percentages) according to the established test plan.

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This content outline identifies the 11 knowledge areas covered on the examination. Each knowledge area includes, but is not limited to, the study topics listed below.

For details about study materials, see [www.ncchc.org/CCHP-MH-study-materials](http://www.ncchc.org/CCHP-MH-study-materials).

**CCHP-MH Exam Content Outline**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION (5%-10%)</th>
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<td>Access/barriers to care</td>
<td>Emergency response plan</td>
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<td>Responsible health authority</td>
<td>Privacy of care</td>
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<td>Clinical autonomy</td>
<td>Grievance mechanism</td>
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<td>Administrative meetings and reports</td>
<td>Inmate death procedure</td>
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<td>Interdisciplinary collaboration</td>
<td>Documentation of suicide risk</td>
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<td>Policies and procedures</td>
<td>Communication on patients’ mental health needs</td>
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<td>Continuous quality improvement program</td>
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<th>II. SAFETY (3%-7%)</th>
<th>Staff safety</th>
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<td>Infection control</td>
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<td>Federal sexual assault reporting regulations</td>
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<td>Patient safety</td>
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<th>III. PERSONNEL AND TRAINING (7%-12%)</th>
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<td>Clinical performance enhancement</td>
<td>Mental health staffing</td>
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<td>Credentialing</td>
<td>Mental health liaison</td>
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<td>Mental health training for correctional officers</td>
<td>Managing the mentally ill from a corrections administrator’s perspective</td>
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<td>Training for mental health staff</td>
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<td>Medication administration training</td>
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<td>Inmate workers</td>
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<tr>
<th>IV. MENTAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND SUPPORT (5%-10%)</th>
<th>Clinic space, equipment and supplies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health pharmaceutical operations</td>
<td>Clinic space, equipment and supplies</td>
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<td>Medication services</td>
<td>Diagnostic services</td>
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<td>Inpatient psychiatric care</td>
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<th>V. INMATE CARE AND TREATMENT (12%-18%)</th>
<th>Nonemergency mental health services</th>
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<tr>
<td>Information on mental health services</td>
<td>Nonemergency mental health services</td>
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<td>Receiving screening for mental health needs</td>
<td>Emergency services</td>
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<td>Transferred inmates</td>
<td>Segregated inmates</td>
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<td>Mental health assessment and evaluation</td>
<td>Patient escort</td>
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<td>Clinical assessment</td>
<td>Discharge planning</td>
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<td>Multicultural assessment and treatment issues</td>
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Continuity of mental health care during incarceration | Correctional treatment

VI. HEALTH PROMOTION (3%-7%)  
Mental health education and self-care | Healthy lifestyle education and promotion

VII. SPECIAL NEEDS AND SERVICES (12%-18%)  
Basic mental health services | Substance abuse services  
Mental health programs and residential units | Behavioral consultation  
Correctional treatment | Substance abuse and co-occurring disorders  
Treatment plans | Managing disruptive inmates  
Suicide prevention program | Severe and persistent mental illness  
Suicide risk assessment | Assessment and treatment of sex offenders  
Suicide factors | Responding to the needs of diverse inmates  
Suicide lethality | Mental health needs of female inmates

VIII. CLINICAL RECORDS (4%-8%)  
Format and content | Access to custody information  
Confidentiality | Management of mental health information

IX. MEDICAL-LEGAL ISSUES (10%-15%)  
Restraint and seclusion | Executions  
Emergency psychotropic medication | Legal issues in suicide litigation  
Forensic information | Landmark cases  
Informed consent and right to refuse | Litigation pitfalls in mental health  
Research

X. CORRECTIONAL MENTAL HEALTH: PAST AND FUTURE (4%-8%)  
Criminal justice and mental health systems | Correctional and community mental health service models  
A best-practices future

XI. JUVENILES (8%-12%)  
Developmental issues | Suicide  
Self-injury | Substance abuse
The Certified Correctional Health Professional (CCHP) program is sponsored by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care.

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