Christopher Kent Finds Credibility and Excellence Through Advanced Certification

by Amy Graves

The CCHP-Advanced program recognizes CCHPs who have demonstrated excellence, commitment and contribution to the field of correctional health care. Christopher Kent, CCHP-A, not only contributes by serving as a compliance auditor for Wexford Health Sources, Inc., but also goes above and beyond for the CCHP program. Volunteering his time and resources, Kent often proctors CCHP exams at Wexford facilities across the country and is a strong advocate that his colleagues become certified.

When encouraging others to take the exam, Kent says, “When I tell people that I’m a Certified Correctional Health Professional, it goes a long way. When I mention Advanced certification, it goes that much further. Certification has allowed me to achieve a certain level of integrity and trustworthiness with people who don’t know who I am.”

Kent began working in correctional health care in 2001 at the recommendation of a former coworker. He was hired as a medical assistant and worked at both a jail and a prison, but his assignments soon gave him experience in nursing care, long-term care, mental health, medical records, intake and more. He worked his way up to acting health services administrator, and then his manager gave him responsibility for accreditation, saying, “You like challenges. Get it done.”

As senior corporate compliance auditor, Kent’s responsibilities include assisting with start-ups of new contracts, implementing electronic health records and serving as accreditation specialist, educator, trouble-shooter and acting manager as needed.

Certification = Credibility

As soon as Kent learned of the CCHP program, he applied and was certified in July 2005. He became a CCHP-A on Jan. 1, 2011. A great proponent of CCHP certification, he says a chief reason he wanted to become certified was credibility. “In my line of work, it offers a great deal of credibility when I offer my services to a site whose goal is to meet federal requirements. Also, I always try to pursue and become the best. Certification offered this to me.”

Kent says certification has benefited him professionally by increasing his responsibility in his work and allowing him to understand the bigger picture of the development of national accreditation standards. “Certification has strengthened my ability to review a system or process and pick out what’s broken. I can then use my knowledge from CCHP requisites to provide solutions for those issues.”

Though Kent enjoys working in corrections, he is not blind to the challenges it presents. “The word ‘corrections’ itself connotes a complicated work environment with challenges outside what others would view as the norm,” he says. “The population is ever-changing: aging patients, intakes, end-of-life situations and the complications that come with mental health patients are just a few of such challenges.” However, Kent maintains that the difficulty of the work makes the rewards that much sweeter.

Achieving CCHP-A certification has also benefited Kent personally. “[Certification] inspires me to set goals for myself and reach for those goals,” he says. “The CCHP-A test was difficult. However, I was determined to pass and through the information provided by NCCHC, I was able to do just that.” Kent’s passion for the CCHP program is evident in his work and he is an excellent model of the type of professional the CCHP-A program strives to acknowledge.

Amy Graves is the certification specialist for NCCHC.

Step Up! Seeking Candidates for Board

Serving on the Certified Correctional Health Professional board of trustees is a great way to “give back” to this important program and the thousands of people who participate in it. But the benefits go both ways: It also is a wonderful opportunity for leaders to continue their professional growth and build their network of colleagues.

If that piques your interest, step up! CCHPs in good standing are encouraged to seek nomination, or to nominate a fellow CCHP to serve on the board. Elections are held every year to fill a three-year term. Comprised of 10 correctional health professionals, the board is charged with guiding the CCHP program and making it more responsive to the needs of the correctional health care community. Trustees also develop, score and evaluate the certification exams. Upon acceptance of nomination, candidates will be asked to submit a short statement describing their ideas about the direction of the program.

Elections will be conducted online this summer. The new trustees’ term will begin immediately after the board meeting in October. To review eligibility requirements and make a nomination, go to www.ncchc.org/program-governance. Nominations must be made by July 2.

CCHP Exam Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 19</td>
<td>Broomfield, CO</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 16</td>
<td>Regional sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 19</td>
<td>Las Vegas, NV</td>
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We are seeking sites for regional exams as well as CCHPs to proctor the exams. To participate, contact the certification specialist at 773-880-1460 or cchp@ncchc.org. See the complete calendar at www.ncchc.org/cchp/calendar.