



National Healthcare Certification Organization



Certified Phlebotomy Technician

Candidate Handbook

NHCO MISSION:

NHCO provides excellence in Phlebotomy proficiency testing by:

- Developing comprehensive and relevant examinations.
- Ensuring absolute examination integrity and reporting.
- Supporting and furthering education, research, and awareness around best phlebotomy practices.

VALUES: The NHCO is committed to:

Integrity: We pledge to provide a psychometrically driven, industry current, and unassailable examination process.

Public Benefit: Our examinations ensure the highest level of phlebotomy proficiency for both public and private healthcare.

Excellence: We commit to continually provide the highest quality of examination content, procedures, and reporting.

About NHCO

The National Healthcare Certification Organization was founded in 2019 and immediately acquired the National Association of Phlebotomy Technicians, who since their inception in 2009 has tested more than 30,000 healthcare professionals throughout the United States. The NHCO is committed to providing the highest quality phlebotomy examination and continues to improve with newly found information and psychometric review. The first step the NHCO takes in creating their gold standard examinations is first in job analysis. Job analysis determines the competencies that are required for safe and effective practice in the tested field. NHCO's psychometricians define the knowledge, abilities, and skills required for safe and effective practice in the field covered by the exam with the help of phlebotomy experts. The second step is then to create a test plan; every question written for the examination must address one of the specified tasks on this test plan.

Through regular assessment and with different versions of the examination the NHCO is able to remain current in the qualifications needed in order to enter the profession. A psychometric team evaluates the statistical properties throughout the life of one exam before any new form of the exam is released and implemented. NHCO certification is recognized and approved nationally through agencies and postsecondary institutions.

Board of Testing

The NHCO board of testing was also founded in 2011 to raise the standards for healthcare professionals to ensure their competency in phlebotomy. The board of testing is an independent and autonomous governing body for the NHCO's certification programs. Their purpose is to maintain the NHCO's integrity in regards to eligibility, examination development and administration, examination scoring and all other certification decisions.

Everything offered by the board of testing is developed to be nationally accepted for certification programs. The board of testing is solely responsible for making essential decisions related to the development, administration, and ongoing maintenance of the certification programs.

Certification as a Phlebotomy Technician

When a candidate receives certification as a phlebotomy technician it not only demonstrates healthcare-specific competency, but also a commitment to consumer safety. With each Phlebotomy Technician gaining certification it validates their skills in clinical settings and knowledge in all things phlebotomy; such as performing a venipuncture procedure successfully, capillary puncture procedures, specimen processing and handling and maintaining patient confidentiality.

Benefits of Certification

There are many benefits to become a certified Phlebotomy Technician. The certification process itself is often voluntary where the individuals demonstrate a certain level of knowledge and skills important to this profession.

When obtaining the voluntary certification it proves to employers a strong commitment and respect to phlebotomy as a profession and patient care. It also shows their knowledge validated by challenging the national exam and exceeding expectations. Through their efforts in maintaining their certification year after year, they demonstrate that professional growth and development are both important in their performance as professionals.

Because of the many benefits of this certification, it has now become an expectation with most employers to receive a formal training and certification to gain employment. Certification provides a level of confidence for a consumer that their phlebotomist is qualified to do what they claim they can do.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The NHCO does not discriminate against any candidate for certification on the basis of race, color, age, gender, national origin, religion, disability, marital status, parental status, ancestry, sexual orientation, military discharge status, source of income, or any other status protected by applicable local, state, or federal laws. All candidates for certification will be judged solely on the published eligibility criteria determined by the board of testing. NHCO provides an equal opportunity for anyone willing to challenge the national exam.

Eligibility

NHCO has certain guidelines and rules to ensure that each application receives fair and impartial treatment for all applicants. All individuals certified by the NHCO go through each eligibility requirement to ensure they have an acceptable level of knowledge and skill needed to demonstrate healthcare competency and a commitment to patient safety in medical facilities and practice settings.

NHCO is nationally recognized and approved to award certified phlebotomy technician's their credentials after each candidate demonstrates their competence.

- Each candidate must be above the age of 18.
- Each candidate must have all their qualifying education and experience completed within the past five years.
- Each candidate must have a minimum of a high school diploma or G.E.D. or other equivalent credentials.

Finally, the applicant is required to submit a copy of their diploma, certificate of completion, of official transcripts as soon as possible after passing the certification exam to ensure a timely receipt of their certification. The certificate will not be released until all the required documents are received. Every candidate must be able to provide evidence they have successfully performed a minimum of 100 venipunctures and ten capillary sticks on *live* individuals.

ELIGIBILITY OPTIONS (please select one of the following, and include all required documentation/fees):

__ Current Student - Enrolled in an NHCO approved school.

- You must be a High School Graduate or hold equivalent credentials, such as a GED
- You must have been trained at an authorized training school approved by the NHCO
- You must submit a copy of your Phlebotomy Certificate of Completion, or official signed transcript.
- You must have applied within 2 years of the graduation date of your Phlebotomy Training program
- You must apply online at our website – www.HealthCareCertifications.com

__ Graduate - Graduate of a state approved Phlebotomy training program within the last 5 years.

- You must be a High School graduate or hold equivalent credentials, such as a GED.
- You must have been trained at an authorized training school approved by the NHCO.
- You must submit a copy of your Phlebotomy Certificate of Completion, or official signed transcript.
- You must apply online at our website - www.HealthCareCertifications.com

__ Experience - One full year (2,080 hours) as a Phlebotomy Technician within the past 5 years.

- You must be a High School graduate or hold equivalent credentials, such as a GED.
- You must have 2,080 hours of full time employment in a clinical setting as a Phlebotomist.
- You must submit a copy of your Phlebotomy Certificate of Completion, or official signed transcript at www.HealthCareCertifications.com in your student portal.

Acceptable supporting documentation includes.

1. Letter of phlebotomy experience from current or previous employer including detailed dates.
2. College transcripts, high schools transcripts, diploma or GED.
3. NON-US Transcripts. All NON-US Transcripts must be evaluated by NACES – National Association of Credential Evaluation Services. To obtain an application, instructions, and information, please visit <http://www.naces.org/members.html> - You should have your transcripts/degrees/diplomas/certifications evaluated PRIOR to making full application to sit for the examination.

Eligibility Appeals

Candidates who have been denied their eligibility for initial certification can request reconsideration of the decision. The request must be formal and be submitted in writing within thirty days of the original decision. The request should include all the reasons the candidate believes they are eligible for certification and how they comply with the published requirements. The NHCO will then review the formal request within fifteen days and inform the candidate if they have been granted eligibility to take the examination.

Exception Requests

Candidates are expected to meet certain requirements in order to be eligible to take the exam. The only exceptions to these requirements are described here.

All candidates seeking an eligibility exception must complete the appropriate request form. This form can be found at <http://www.HealthCareCertifications.com/exception.html>. All decisions concerning exception requests will be communicated in writing only. Decisions are final.

All candidates seeking a recertification exception in regards to attestations required must complete the appropriate NHCO request form. All decisions concerning exception requests will be communicated in writing only. Decisions are final.

State Licensing Exception Requests

The NHCO eligibility requirements only apply to NHCO certification and are separate from any eligibility requirements set forth under state law, regulation, or rule. Candidates are responsible to know and understand their state's requirements. Candidates are encouraged to conduct research beforehand to determine the current requirements for practicing phlebotomy in their state.

Certification and Applicable Fees

Candidates must pay an examination fee for each exam attempt. The application fee is \$100 per attempt, further information can be found on the NHCO website at www.HealthCareCertifications.com.

Application Requirements

NHCO provides both online and paper applications when candidates are applying/registering to take the exam. Paper applications are only made available with a formal request and must be emailed to info@HealthCareCertifications.com. All payment for the exam must be online with a debit or credit card. NHCO is currently accepting VISA, MASTERCARD, DISCOVER, and AMERICAN EXPRESS. Checks or cash are not accepted under any circumstances.

Required Documentation

NHCO requires a source of verification of all educational certificates/degrees. Each candidate must also provide evidence of attending a phlebotomy program or submit a qualification by experience form signed by their supervisor to ensure each candidate is competent in the critical skills required in phlebotomy.

Candidate profile and registration

All candidates must create a candidate profile and apply to sit in on a designated test date for the certification exam, at the school in which they attended Phlebotomy Training.

Candidate profiles are created online through the NHCO at www.HealthCareCertifications.com. Do NOT create more than one profile. All candidates should create their profile on behalf of themselves instead of a parent, teacher, school official, sponsor, case worker or any other party.

Candidates can immediately register for the exam after they finish creating an online profile. Each candidate must read and understand all of NHCO's rules and requirements before sitting for an examination. There will be an attestation agreement in the registration process that must be read, and then the candidate is expected to agree or disagree with the agreement. If a candidate does not agree with the attestation agreement, they will not be able to take the examination until they agree to the agreement. After a successful registration/application the candidate will receive a confirmation email.

Attestations

All candidates will be bound by the attestations made at the time of registration.

Each candidate is instructed to read each point CAREFULLY and must attest to each statement in order to take the exam.

- I am the actual candidate registering for the exam and no other person is completing this registration on my behalf.
- I possess either a high school diploma or the equivalent.
- I have or will have successfully completed a training program or relevant work experience prior to sitting in for the exam.
- For California residents only: I understand I may take the Phlebotomy Technician certification exam after completing the coursework portion of the training program and prior to completing the required externship approved by LFS.

- I have read the candidate handbook for this exam and meet all of the eligibility requirements listed and abide by the NHCO code of conduct and all other rules and policies described in the candidate handbook.
- I understand that the removal or attempt to remove questions or other assessment material from the test site is prohibited. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, record, reproduce, distribute or disclose these assessment questions by any means, in whole or in part. A violation of this type will result in civil and criminal penalties.
- I can verify on my behalf I will not cheat or violate the confidentiality of the examination.
- I understand that NHCO will publish a list of certified candidates and that my employer and state regulatory board may be notified if my certification expires or is revoked.
- I understand that any claim I may have related to the good-faith enforcement of these policies or the unintentional damage or loss of my exam records will not exceed the amount of my application fee for this examination.

Exam Scheduling

All applications for testing must be received by NHCO a minimum of 7 days prior to the requested test date. All applications that are submitted will be processed within three to five business days. Each candidate will receive a confirmation of their spot for the testing date they requested or will be contacted directly for an alternative testing arrangement by an NHCO representative.

Cancellations, Rescheduling, and Refunds

Candidates must contact the NHCO at least 48 hours prior to their scheduled testing date. NHCO is not responsible for any expenses incurred by the applicant due to cancellation of a test session, location changes, time changes, or other incidents and events.

Candidates attempting to reschedule the exam must do so 48 hours prior to the scheduled appointment by contacting the NHCO directly through phone or email. Rescheduling is subject to availability of space at a testing site. Applications are valid for one year from the date of submission. All candidates who request to withdraw from the exam must do so 48 hours prior to the exam delivery date, and will receive a full refund of the examination fee paid. Failing to contact the NHCO sooner than 48 hours will result in a forfeiture of exam fees.

Exam Preparation

NHCO's promise to each candidate:

The NHCO phlebotomy examination is developed and maintained through psychometricians, and the board of testing. This includes a job analysis and detailed test plan including item development and test assembly. This is also where setting the passing point and data analysis take place.

Studying for the examination:

NHCO does not require, provide, or endorse any specific study guide, review products and training courses. Candidates are encouraged to prepare for the examination with any educational materials they choose. NHCO review materials are not a requirement purchase for testing and they do not

guarantee a passing score on the exam. No study resources are prerequisites for the certification examinations.

Exam Specifications

Time allotment: 3 hours

Format: Paper-based

Item type: four multiple choice options

Total amount of questions: 115 including the 15 pretest questions

Exam Taking Strategies

First, make sure all personal information is correct. Note the start of the examination to determine a midway mark and pace yourself accordingly. Read every question carefully before reading the possible answers. Answer all questions before the time is up, there is no penalty for guessing. Questions and responses are in random order and have no pattern. No paper exams can have stray markings or incomplete erasures.

Language

NHCO only offers examinations in English. There are no special accommodations requesting translation dictionaries or extra time on the exam for people who do not speak English.

Taking the Examination

Testing Sites:

All testing sites must be approved by NHCO before the examination is proctored.

What to expect:

Each application should be approved by NHCO certification staff. To ensure equal and fair treatment to all candidates each exam is delivered under strict security with standardized procedures. Candidates are expected to be appropriate at all times and failure to comply will result in the termination of the candidate's testing session and invalidate their test score.

After the exam is finished and scored, candidates will not receive any information regarding specific questions missed and their individual responses.

- All candidates are required to present a valid, government issued photo ID. Student ID's are not acceptable.
- Candidates are invited to dress casually and comfortably, sunglasses and hats of any kind are not permitted.
- No writing utensils are provided to the candidate, they are expected to each bring two #2 pencils with erasers.
- Arrive 15 minutes prior to the scheduled testing time, once the exam has begun no one is permitted into the testing site.

- Candidates may only bring their pencils and erasers into the testing room along with car keys and their ID. All other materials and electronic devices should be left at home, in the car, or placed in an unreachable area during their exam.
- Every candidate must act professional and can be instructed to leave the testing site if they don't comply with NHCO policies.
- Candidates will be observed the entire time during testing.
- Candidates must do their OWN work, any indication to the contrary will void results and invalidate their certification.
- Candidates cannot ask the proctor for any assistance in reading or interpreting test questions.
- Candidates are forbidden to share and discuss examination content with anyone. NHCO certifications exam content is copyrighted and protected by law.

Special Accommodations

The NHCO will make accommodations for individuals with documented disabilities according to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). In order to be considered for special accommodations this form must be completed properly and fully. It is also important to note that with filling out this form and submitting it, the request can be denied and is not guaranteed. Decisions are made on a case-to-case basis considering all the information submitted and in accordance with the law.

Candidates will be notified in writing of the decision regarding their request for an accommodation. Each request that is received by the NHCO will be processed as quickly as possible, but please be aware the request should be submitted at least 30 days before they plan on taking the examination. The NHCO is not responsible for the candidates failure to properly submit their request or their failure to submit all the required documents initially. Candidates must register online before requesting any accommodations and completing the registration process. Candidates must complete their own application.

Candidates who receive a testing accommodation are subject to the same policies as all other exam takers, for example, cheating will never be tolerated. The NHCO reserves the right to make final judgment regarding testing accommodations. The information that the candidate provides regarding a disability and special accommodation will be treated with strict confidentiality and will not be shared with any source, except for the NHCO and testing vendors.

After the Examination

Every candidate will receive their exam score immediately upon completion of the examination and will also receive an email with the same information. If the candidate passed, they will then be sent a certificate in the mail. If the candidate failed, they will be contacted and instructed on how to register for the exam again.

Candidates are not graded on a curve and do not compete against fellow candidates. The candidate is required to score a 72% or higher in order to pass the exam. All individuals who pass the exam regardless of their score demonstrate an acceptable level of knowledge.

Retesting Policy

Candidates who do not pass their exam the first or second attempt can retest after thirty days. After If you do not pass after your third time challenging the examination, you will have to wait six (6) months to challenge the exam again.

Complaints regarding Exam Content

Candidates may submit formal complaints about the examination process. All requests must be made in writing and submitted no later than 30 days after the exam score report was issued. All complaints must be detailed in the suspected error or problem and their requested solution to the problem incurred.

The NHCO will review all complaints within 15 days of receiving them and will obtain any additional information as needed. The NHCO will make a decision and will notify the board of testing of the result.

NHCO Precautions and Preliminary Measures

NHCO reserves the right to cancel examination scores and can require retesting under certain conditions. This includes but is not limited to;

1. The presence of a test irregularity at a test site.
2. Reports of communication during the examination.
3. Reports of candidates giving or receiving aid from other during the exam.
4. Notice of a proctor not following board of testing procedures.
5. Copying, transcribing, printing, or reproducing proprietary test materials in any matter.

NHCO also reserves the right to investigate any test irregularities and can require retesting and cancellation if such irregularities cannot be explained properly.

Proctor Policy

All proctors are required to complete an official NHCO proctor training and they are all required to sign an oath and agree to abide by all NHCO testing policies and procedures.

Misconduct

NHCO does not tolerate any form of cheating.

All candidates are required to provide accurate and truthful information, which they attest to at the time they register. All candidates must abide by the testing rules of conduct and adhere to the code of ethics issued by NHCO. Any failure to comply will result in the candidate being disciplined.

Testing Rules of Conduct

Each candidate is expected to follow and understand each rule clearly stated below.

1. All exams must be completed in one, three hour session. Candidates are not allowed to stop the exam administration and return later to complete the exam for any reason.
2. No reference book of any kind are permitted during the examination. No scratch paper is permitted. No booklets can be written on and must be returned to the proctor before leaving the examination room.
3. All electronic devices are forbidden during the exam, unless the candidate has received an accommodation request and are still subject to inspection.
4. The proctor will not answer any questions pertaining to the exam and its content.
5. Any discussion or review of the exam after the exam has started is strictly prohibited until the exam is completed.
6. Eating and drinking in the examination room is not allowed unless it is deemed necessary due to a documented medical condition and the examinee has received approval for the accommodation.
7. Leaving the examination room at any time is not allowed. Please visit the restroom prior to sitting and starting the examination. The proctor can only make an exception to this rule under special conditions, such as, only one examinee may be absent at a time. If an examinee leaves the exam room, they will not be allotted extra time.
8. Any attempt or actual removal of exam content from the exam room is prohibited. All test booklets and answer sheets must be delivered back to the proctor at the end of the exam. Any breach of this will be considered theft. This includes any effort to copy, photograph, record, or memorize exam content.
9. Every candidate is honor bound to report any suspected cheating or attempts to steal examination content they witness or hear about or are asked to participate in. Failure to comply to NHCO honor code is a violation of the Testing Rules of Conduct.

False Information Provided by the candidate to NHCO

If a candidate for any reason provides false or inaccurate information about any set requirement NHCO has issued, NHCO has the right to;

- Remove the candidate from the exam before it is administered without a refund.
- Refrain the candidate from retaking the exam and will invalidate test scores.
- Suspend and revoke certification credential with no refund provided.

Suspicion of Misconduct Arising at or During the Examination

- If a candidate is unable to properly identify themselves the proctor will deny access to the exam. The candidate will be allowed to reschedule free of charge but will need a proper form of identification.
- Proctors are expected, on NHCO's behalf to enforce the Testing Rules of Conduct, if a candidate violates these rules the proctor can terminate the exam and remove the candidate

from the examination room. The proctor will then file a formal report with NHCO and from there the NHCO will determine if further discipline is warranted.

Violation of Certain Testing Rules of Conduct

- Any suspected accounts of a candidate cheating will be investigated. NHCO has the right to invalidate test scores and suspend or revoke credentials and forbid the candidate from taking a future exam.
- Any violations amounting to theft of exam content will be investigated. NHCO has the right to invalidate test scores and suspend or revoke credentials and forbid the candidate from taking a future exam.
- NHCO reserves the right to report any violations of these rules to a candidate's employer, licensing body and law enforcement.

Code of Ethics

The code of ethics applies to all individuals seeking certification through the NHCO. Any known violation of this code will result in disciplinary action as outlined in the disciplinary policy. This was designed and created to provide both appropriate ethical practice guidelines and enforceable standards of conduct for all candidates. Each candidate has the obligation to maintain high standards of integrity and professional conduct and accept responsibility for their actions and to always be truthful and encourage these standards upon others. The code of ethics is available to the public at any time. The following statements are expected to be followed by all candidates:

- I will remain current in my knowledge and skills by participating in continuing education activities within my professional discipline.
- I will solve problems that are within my capabilities and will display the wisdom to seek help when they are beyond my skills and abilities.
- I will adhere to all safety measures placed in my workplace for the well-being of those I serve, as well as my own.
- I will be honest in the performance of all my responsibilities and my professional interactions. If I make mistakes, I will own up to them and work to make them right.
- I will respect and obey the law, and all regulations within the law, that serve to protect the public in connection to matters of practice relation to my professional responsibilities.
- I will protect the confidence and privacy of those who use my services within the constraints of the law and the obligations of my profession and workplace.

Confidentiality

- Confidential information is protected by federal, state, and local laws or regulations, including HIPAA and FERPA. To protect the privacy of all NHCO candidates, NHCO's database of personal information is accessible only by authorized staff and personnel. All confidential information will not be disclosed without expressed written consent from the individual candidate, unless required by law or court order.

- Information that is not considered confidential can be shared with schools or employers. Examples of information that is not confidential includes certification status, certification number, and status of credentials. NHCO allows any individual to verify credentials of certified candidates through a web application.

Credentials

Only candidate who achieves a passing score on the exam will be allowed to use the certification program credential. All certifications are valid for two full years and expire on the date listed on the certificate.

For all candidates who have a current credential are allowed to include the certification credential behind their name. NHCO credentials cannot be used to endorse any product, service or company. Any candidate who fails to comply by this credential use policy will be subject to disciplinary review and has the potential of suspending their certificate.

Maintaining Certifications

The board of testing requires the level of understanding of phlebotomy to never deteriorate. With this standard and expectation put in place it is required to continue professional development and strengthen the candidate's individual knowledge and professional skills.

Recertification allows candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills to assure the public that they have met current professional standards and qualifications required to maintain certification.

Recertification fees

If a certification is not expired the renewal fee is \$50.

If the certification has expired the renewal fee will be raised to \$75.

Verifying Recertifying Applicants

In order to maintain the credibility and integrity of the certification process, the board of testing reserves the right to verify any information provided on recertification applications. Requests for verification may be prior to recertification or at a future time and date. All recertification applications will be reviewed by NHCO directly to ensure that all requirements are met. All applications must have 12 hours of continuing education documentation/verification attached.

If there are any requirements not met the individual will have 15 days to submit the missing information. Also, if the application is selected for audit and the certificant does not respond or does not submit the requested documentation their certification will become inactive until such documentation is submitted.

Recertification Approval

Once an applicant has been approved for recertification, they will receive a new certificate with a newly added expiration date.

Recertification Appeals

A candidate who is denied recertification can request reconsideration of the initial decision. The formal request must be in writing within 30 days of the decision. The request should clearly state the reasons on why the candidate believes they are eligible for recertification and how they comply with the published requirements. The NHCO will review the request within 15 days.

Failure to recertify

If the certificate that was originally issued has been inactive for five or more years the certification as a whole will become invalid and will not be renewed. The candidate will have to retake an approved phlebotomy program and retake the examination. Candidates will have the option to appeal with the board, and must do so in a timely manner.

Certificants who are participating in active military duty or whose personal circumstances preclude timely recertification should contact NHCO and request an exception to this policy, and will be instructed to wait to hear from the board of testing directly.

If any credentials expire, they may not be used for any reason until it has been successfully reinstated.