



Certified Phlebotomy Technician

# Candidate Handbook

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## **Vision:**

Our vision is to become the gold standard of allied healthcare certification examinations.

## **Mission:**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) delivers excellence in healthcare certification testing by developing comprehensive, relevant, and up-to-date examinations. Through industry-leading practices, we ensure absolute exam integrity. Our mission is to support individuals who want to further their education and excel in their chosen healthcare field.

## **Values:**

NHCO is committed to:

**Integrity** - We pledge to provide psychometrically driven, up-to-date, and secure examinations in allied healthcare fields.

**Public Benefit** - Our examinations prepare certificants to deliver the highest level of patient care in both public and private healthcare settings.

**Excellence** - We commit to continually providing the highest quality exam content, exam delivery procedures, and post-examination reporting to help candidates improve their knowledge.

## **About the NHCO**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) has been a trusted leader in healthcare education and certification since 2011. With a strong commitment to excellence, the NHCO has certified over 100,000 healthcare professionals across the United States.

The NHCO's certification examinations are meticulously developed by expert psychometricians and maintained by the Exam Review Committee. This rigorous process includes job analysis, the creation of a detailed test plan, item development, test assembly, setting the passing score, and ongoing data analysis. Through continuous assessment and exam updates, the NHCO stays at the forefront of industry requirements.

The NHCO is nationally recognized by leading agencies and postsecondary institutions. The certification exam helps ensure that each certified professional is equipped to enter the workforce confidently. Selecting the National Healthcare Certification Organization for certification ensures access to the most current and comprehensive medical knowledge. The NHCO's commitment to education and future success defines its legacy of quality and excellence in healthcare certification.

## **The General Credentialing Board**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) General Credentialing Board raises the standards for healthcare professionals by ensuring competency in phlebotomy. The Board is an independent and autonomous governing body for the NHCO's certification programs. Its purpose is to maintain the NHCO's integrity regarding eligibility, examination development and administration, examination maintenance and scoring, and all other certification decisions.

## **Certification as a Phlebotomy Technician**

When a candidate receives certification as a Phlebotomy Technician, it demonstrates healthcare-specific competency and a commitment to consumer safety. Certification is issued for a period of two (2) years from the date of issuance. A Phlebotomy Technician's certification validates their skills in clinical settings and their knowledge of phlebotomy, including successfully performing venipuncture and capillary puncture procedures, processing and handling specimens, and maintaining patient confidentiality.

## **Benefits of Certification**

Becoming a Certified Phlebotomy Technician (CPT) offers numerous benefits. The certification process allows individuals to demonstrate a specific level of knowledge and skills essential to the profession. Achieving this certification signifies to employers a strong commitment to and respect for phlebotomy. Candidates validate their expertise by successfully passing the national certification exam and meeting high standards. Furthermore, maintaining certification highlights the importance of continuous professional growth and career development.

Most employers now require formal training and certification for employment. Certification assures consumers that their phlebotomist is fully qualified for the role.

## **Non-Discrimination Statement**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) accepts all properly completed examination applications from eligible applicants regardless of the applicant's age, sex, race, religion, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin, or any other characteristic protected under applicable state or federal laws.

## **Statement of Impartiality**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) is fully committed to conducting all of its certification activities with the highest degree of impartiality, integrity, and fairness. NHCO recognizes that impartiality is essential to ensure public confidence in its certification programs, its governance processes, and the credibility of its credentials.

To protect this principle, NHCO has established and maintains a robust framework that actively identifies, monitors, and manages any risks to impartiality. This includes:

- Ensuring that all decisions related to certification, policy development, disciplinary actions, and appeals are made free from undue influence or bias.
- Requiring all Board members, committee members, volunteers, and staff to disclose actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest and recuse themselves from decisions where impartiality could be compromised. See the Recusal Process contained in Policy 34.0 - Mitigation of Conflict and Recusal Policy.
- Prohibiting commercial, financial, or other pressures that could improperly affect certification decisions or organizational policies.
- Promoting transparency in all policies, procedures, and decision-making processes.

- Maintaining clear boundaries between organizational functions to ensure fairness and impartiality.
- Requiring adherence to a formal Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy for all individuals involved in NHCO operations.

NHCO regularly reviews and improves its impartiality safeguards as part of its commitment to continuous quality improvement and stakeholder trust. All individuals involved in NHCO's certification processes share responsibility for upholding these standards.

### **CPT Program and Examination Development**

The eligibility requirements and examination materials for the Certified Phlebotomy Technician (CPT) certification program are based on a thorough study of the current scope of practice in phlebotomy. Initially, a group of diverse subject matter experts participated in a job analysis to define the scope of practice for a phlebotomy technician. A national survey was conducted to further define and solidify the scope of practice and to determine the content areas appropriate for examination. The related survey results were representative of core work activities performed and the knowledge used by phlebotomists in the day-to-day performance of their jobs. A representative panel of phlebotomy professionals reviewed the results and, based on the data, identified the core work activities and essential knowledge associated with the fundamental competency in phlebotomy. The content of this examination was derived from the identified scope of practice and essential knowledge domains and, thus, reflects the day-to-day practices of phlebotomists nationwide.

Periodically, a representative panel of phlebotomist professionals (educators, practitioners, etc.) reviews the current scope of practice and the results of the national survey. They review existing examination test questions for relevance and accuracy, and validate the examination content to determine whether adjustments are needed or a new job analysis survey is warranted. The CPT certification examination has been designed by a trained psychometrician. It is reviewed periodically in a setting facilitated by a trained psychometrician in accordance with industry testing standards for validity and reliability.

### **Eligibility**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) has guidelines and rules to ensure that each applicant receives fair and impartial treatment. All individuals certified by the NHCO must meet the eligibility requirements to demonstrate an acceptable level of knowledge for healthcare competency.

#### **I. General Eligibility Criteria**

To be eligible for the NHCO CPT examination, an applicant must meet **all** of the following general requirements:

- **Minimum Education**
  - Be a high school graduate or hold a state-recognized equivalent (e.g., GED, HiSET).
  - Documentation: Official high school transcript, diploma, or equivalent credential.
- **Minimum Age**
  - Candidates must be at least 18 years of age at the time of application.

- **Application Submission**
  - All candidates must submit a complete application through the official NHCO portal: [www.NHCOcert.com](http://www.NHCOcert.com).
- **Eligibility Attestation**
  - All applicants must sign the Eligibility Attestation Statement certifying that all submitted information is accurate and truthful under penalty of disqualification or revocation.

## II. Eligibility Routes

To be eligible to sit for the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) Certified Phlebotomy Technician (CPT) exam, a candidate must qualify under **one** of the following two eligibility routes:

### Route 1 – Training and Education (Completed Within the Last 4 Years)

- Completion of a phlebotomy training program through:
  - A state-approved or nationally accredited institution; **OR**
  - A branch of the United States Military.
- Required Documentation:
  - Certificate of completion or official transcript.
  - The program must include a practical component with documentation of:
    - Minimum 30 successful venipunctures **AND**
    - Minimum 10 successful capillary collections on live individuals.
- Training programs must have been completed within four years of the date of examination application submission.

### Route 2 – Employment Experience

- Applicants who have not completed a formal training program may qualify based on verifiable work experience in the field of phlebotomy:
  - Option A – One Year**
    1. Employed as a full-time Phlebotomy Technician for at least one continuous year within the past two years.
  - Option B – Two Years**
    - Employed as a full-time Phlebotomy Technician for at least two cumulative years within the past four years.
- Required Documentation:
  - Employer Verification:** (one of the following)

- A completed employer verification form signed by a supervisor; OR
- An official letter from the HR department confirming employment and total hours worked within the required timeframe

**Proof of Hours Worked:**

- Pay stubs that clearly show accumulated hours for each applicable period of employment

**Clinical Experience Documentation — evidence of at least:**

- 30 successful venipunctures, AND
- 10 successful capillary collections performed on live individuals

**Appeals**

Individuals have the right to appeal decisions made by the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) regarding their certification eligibility, certification status, or renewal of certification with the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO).

Appeals apply to:

- Denial of initial certification or renewal
- Suspension or revocation of certification (not related to disciplinary or misconduct issues)
- Eligibility decisions prior to examination

Appeals do not apply to:

- Examination results or scoring decisions (see Policy 7.0 – Complaint Policy)
- Examination misconduct, proctoring issues, or technical incidents (see Policy 28.0 – Examination Security Policy)
- Disciplinary actions taken under the NHCO’s Policy 11.0 – Disciplinary Policy

**Submission of Appeals**

**1. How to Appeal**

Appeals must be submitted using the official directions and appeal form provided on the candidate's online NHCO portal account at [portal.NHCOcert.com](http://portal.NHCOcert.com). Appeals must include:

- All relevant documentation (e.g., denial letters, proof of graduation, letters of recommendation, etc.)
- A copy of the correspondence received from the NHCO (e.g., examination denial, eligibility determination)

**2. Deadline**

Appeals must be received within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the NHCO decision being appealed. Late appeals will not be considered.

**Review Process**

1. Appeals will be reviewed by the VP of Certification.
2. The VP of Certification will:
  - Acknowledge receipt of the appeal
  - Request additional information if necessary
  - Review all submitted materials within thirty (30) calendar days
3. All final decisions will be communicated to the candidate via email and documented in the NHCO records.
4. All decisions issued under this policy are final and not subject to further appeal.

### **State Licensing Exception Requests**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) eligibility requirements apply only to NHCO certification and are separate from any eligibility requirements set forth in state law, regulation, or rule. Candidates are responsible for knowing and understanding their state's requirements and are, therefore, encouraged to conduct research before certifying.

### **Certification and Applicable Fees**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) fees as of January 1, 2026, are as follows:

- Certification Practice Exam: \$40.00
- Certification Study Materials: \$50.00
- Certification Preparation Package: \$75.00
- Certification Examination Fee: \$125.00
- Second Certification Examination Attempt Fee: \$125.00
- Third Certification Examination Attempt Fee: \$125.00
- Certification Renewal Fee Per Renewal Period (Every Two Years): \$100.00
- Appeal Fee: \$25.00
- Name Change Fee: \$25.00
- Reinstatement Fee: \$25.00

In addition to the required \$100.00 Certification Renewal Fee, a Reinstatement Fee will apply to all candidates who hold an expired certificate at the time of renewal.

### **Application Submission**

Candidates must apply and pay for the NHCO certification examination on the NHCO website.

### **Candidate Portal and Registration**

Each candidate must create an online portal account through the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) website. Candidates should not create more than one account. A candidate should only create an account on their own behalf. The following parties should not create online accounts for examination candidates: parents, teachers, school officials, sponsors, case workers, or any other party.

Candidates can immediately complete the exam application after they finish creating an online account and complete their purchase. Each candidate must read and understand all of the National Healthcare Certification Organization's rules and requirements before sitting for an examination. The exam application will include an attestation agreement that must be signed. If a candidate does not agree to sign the attestation agreement, their exam application will not be approved. After successfully submitting an exam application, the candidate will receive an email stating their approval status.

### **Attestation**

All candidates will be legally bound by the attestation agreement in their Exam Application. Each candidate is instructed to carefully read the attestation, as it must be signed to take the exam. The attestation states:

I do hereby acknowledge that all the information submitted in connection with my application to the certification program is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that falsified information on this application is grounds for denial of acceptance for examination or certification revocation and may bar me from future certifications or renewals. I further acknowledge and agree that the NHCO may release my examination scores and credentialed status to agencies, such as those that regulate the practice of phlebotomy, current/potential employers, NHCO-recognized programmatic accreditation agencies, and NHCO-contracted vendors involved in the process of certification. I understand that NHCO certificants may also have their names and credentials published in various NHCO publications from time to time, such as when the NHCO is congratulating new certificants, etc.

### **Exam Scheduling**

All submitted applications will be processed within seven (7) to ten (10) business days. After receiving approval notification, candidates can take the exam through their online candidate portal. Exams must be taken within 90 days of the application purchase date.

### **Cancellations, Rescheduling, and Refunds**

Candidates have 90 days to take the exam from the date of purchase. No refunds will be given once the exam has been purchased. If a candidate begins an attempt and chooses not to complete the exam, the attempt will be considered forfeit, and a new attempt must be purchased. Candidates who do not complete the exam within 90 days must submit a retake application. The NHCO is not responsible for any expenses incurred by the applicant due to the cancellation of a test session or other incidents and events in the candidate's personal life that may affect an exam attempt.

### **Exam Preparation**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) does not require specific study guides, review products, or training courses. Candidates are encouraged to prepare for the examination with any educational materials they choose. While the NHCO does offer certification preparation materials, those review materials are not required for testing and do not guarantee a passing score on the exam.

Achieving a high score on any practice test does not guarantee a candidate will pass the certification exam. The items on practice exams are not the same as those on the certification exam.

For proctoring information in preparation for testing, please see the Exam Proctoring Guide found in your Candidate Portal.

### **Exam Standard Setting**

To make recommendations to the NHCO on passing scores for the CPT examination form(s), the NHCO's contracted psychometrician conducted a one-day standard-setting study with Subject Matter Experts (SME). The SMEs reviewed the 100-item scored exam forms (115 total; 15 unscored) used in the standard-setting study. The standard-setting methodologies included a modified Angoff, Direct Consensus, Hofstee, and Beuk. The outcome is noted within the exam specifications. This is conducted as deemed appropriate under typical national testing standards.

### **Exam Specifications**

**Passing score:** 560/800 or higher

**Total questions:** 115, including 15 pretest questions

**Time allotment:** 2 hours

**Format:** Online, proctored

**Question type:** Four multiple-choice options per question

To reach the best possible exam outcome, read through every question carefully before reading the possible answers. Choose the most correct answer. Questions are administered in random order. Exams will be automatically submitted at the two-hour mark. A time-countdown clock is provided during the exam.

### **Taking the Exam**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) and the contracted exam proctors maintain examination administration and security standards to ensure that all candidates have the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. Audio and video surveillance equipment continuously monitors the assessment location for security purposes. All examination questions are the copyrighted property of the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO). Under federal copyright law, it is forbidden to copy, reproduce, record, distribute, and/or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Candidates cannot discuss the contents of the examination or remove any examination information at any time. Doing so may subject a candidate to disqualification from earning certification and severe civil and criminal penalties.

- All candidates must apply for examination approval via NHCO's online system.
- Candidates are approved upon verification of all required educational or experiential prerequisites.
- Upon approval, candidates will receive instructions to self-register for the examination.
- Candidates must complete a technology onboarding process to confirm compatibility with remote proctoring software.
- Candidates must present a valid, unexpired, government-issued photo ID (e.g., driver's license or passport). Student IDs are not accepted.
- Candidates should dress appropriately for identification and monitoring purposes. No sunglasses, hats, hoods, or head coverings (unless for religious or medical purposes with prior NHCO accommodation approval) are permitted..

- Candidates must remain in the test area for the full duration of the examination. Leaving the test area during the examination will result in disqualification, unless an exception is approved or validated by NHCO based on documented or proctor-verified circumstances.
- The examination is timed and will auto-submit at the conclusion of the assigned testing period, which is typically two hours unless otherwise adjusted for approved accommodations.
- Candidates are monitored via live proctoring. Behavior inconsistent with security protocols will be flagged for review.
- Candidates must complete the exam independently. Any form of cheating, including the use of unauthorized materials or communication with others, is grounds for disqualification.
- Proctors may not assist with interpretation, clarification, or explanation of exam content.
- Exam candidates are forbidden to share and discuss examination content with anyone. The NHCO's certification exam content is copyrighted and protected by law.
- The NHCO's Staff monitors exam candidates' proctoring dashboards. Behaviors that are not allowed per the exam security guidelines will be flagged and reviewed.
- The exam will automatically submit when the time count reaches two hours.
- Exam scores are evaluated once a candidate's proctoring results have been reviewed.
- Exam candidates who did not meet the proctoring security policies will be notified via email that their attempt is void per the Disciplinary Policy.
- Exam candidates who meet the proctoring security policies but do not obtain a minimum passing score will be notified via email that they have failed the certification exam.
- Exam candidates who meet the proctoring security policies and obtain a minimum passing score will be notified via email that they have passed the certification exam. A digital certificate will be provided to the test taker.
- Please review the "Exam Rules of Conduct" below for more information on what is and is not allowed during the exam.

### **Exam Rules of Conduct**

Candidates are expected to understand and follow each rule clearly stated below.

1. All exams must be completed in a single two-hour session.
2. Candidates are not permitted to pause the exam and return later to complete it for any reason.
3. Reference books or study materials of any kind are not permitted during the examination.
4. Paper, pens, highlighters, and similar materials are strictly prohibited during the exam.
5. The proctor will not answer any questions related to exam content during the testing session.
6. Once the exam has started, candidates are not permitted to discuss or review the exam until it has been completed.
7. Candidates are allowed one clear bottle of water during the exam. No other food or beverages are permitted.
8. Candidates are not allowed to leave the examination room at any time during the exam. Please use the restroom before beginning the examination.
9. Any attempt to remove exam content from the testing platform is strictly prohibited and will be considered theft of exam materials. This includes copying, photographing, recording, or attempting to memorize exam content for later distribution.

10. Exams may not be taken in public areas.
11. Mobile phones, smartwatches, earpieces, headphones, or any other electronic devices are strictly prohibited during the exam.
12. Electronic devices synchronized with the testing device are not permitted.
13. Reading exam content aloud is not permitted.
14. No unauthorized individuals are allowed in the examination area during the exam session.

### **Special Accommodations**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) shall provide fair and reasonable accommodations pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to individuals with documented disabilities that qualify as medical conditions hindering a person's ability to take the examination under standard testing conditions. The NHCO will consider requests for testing accommodations related to exams from candidates with a documented disability that substantially limits the candidate's sensory, manual, speaking, or other functional skills, including a disability that significantly impairs the candidate's ability to read or otherwise complete the examination. These accommodations can include additional time to take the exam or using approved auxiliary aids.

Candidates must complete the National Healthcare Certification Organization's (NHCO) Exam Accommodations Request form in its entirety for consideration. Information about requesting accommodations is available in the candidate handbook and on the NHCO website. Candidates should allow a minimum of 5 business days for a decision on a complete application. Candidates whose requests are denied have 30 business days to submit supplementary documentation or request reconsideration. Reconsideration decisions will be communicated within 5 business days.

Incomplete applications requesting special Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) examination accommodations will not be accepted for consideration by the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO). Applicants will be notified via email if their application and/or supporting documentation are insufficient for informed decision-making. They will be referred to the National Healthcare Certification Organization's (NHCO) ADA Accommodation Request form for information on providing complete documentation.

Applicants who do not meet ADA-required standards will be notified via email with a general reason for the decision. Test accommodation decisions and the underlying rationale will only be communicated via email.

### **Exam Misconduct**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) does not tolerate any form of dishonesty.

All candidates are required to provide accurate and truthful information, which they attest to at the time they sign their application. Candidates must also abide by the exam rules of conduct and adhere to the Code of Ethics issued by the NHCO. Any failure to comply will result in the candidate's examination attempt being forfeited. Any known violation of this code will result in disciplinary action as outlined in the Disciplinary Policy.

### **After Exam Completion**

Candidates must receive a score of 560/800 or higher to obtain their certification. Test takers will be notified of their exam results via email within 7-10 business days. The email will include the candidate's exam score and a breakdown of how they did in each focus area. All individuals who pass the exam with a 560/800 or higher demonstrate an acceptable level of knowledge and will become NHCO-certified.

If a candidate obtains a passing score, their high-resolution, printable digital certificate will be attached to the email. The NHCO does not print and mail physical copies of certificates.

### **Score Breakdown**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) exams are scored using a pass/fail method. After the exam is completed, a final score report will be sent via email to the candidate and will be available in the candidate's account. The score report is available 7-10 business days after the exam has been processed and includes whether the candidate passed or failed the exam, the exam score, and information on how the candidate performed in the four focus areas.

As noted above, score reports are designed to provide candidates with feedback about how they performed in each of the major focus areas of the exam. If a candidate fails their exam, they can use this feedback to determine how best to spend time reviewing and preparing for a retake of the exam. If a candidate passes the exam, they may still use this feedback to help improve their knowledge or skill in a particular area where the score was near or below the passing standard. Accompanying your score report letter will be an interpretation guide to help you identify your exam performance in the four (4) focus areas.

Sample Focus Area Breakdown:

<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Questions Correct</b>	<b>Question Quantity</b>
Order and Patient Verification	x/15	15
Safety Protocols	x/24	24
Communication	x/7	7
Phlebotomy Procedures	x/54	54

### **Testing Irregularities**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) reserves the right to withhold examination scores and can require retesting under certain conditions. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. The presence of a test irregularity during the proctoring session.
2. Reports of communication during the examination.
3. Reports of candidates giving or receiving aid from others during the exam.
4. Copying, transcribing, printing, or reproducing proprietary test materials in any manner.

The NHCO reserves the right to investigate any test irregularities and can require retesting and withholding of examination scores if such irregularities cannot be explained properly.

## **Exam Retakes**

### **First and Second Exam Attempts**

Candidates who do not pass the examination on their first attempt may apply to retake the exam after a minimum waiting period of 10 calendar days from the date of their most recent examination. This allows the candidate to review any materials they deem beneficial after the first attempt and ensures that NHCO administrative staff have the necessary time to review and approve candidates' retake applications.

- A new examination application and associated fee must be submitted through the candidate's NHCO online account.
- The examination must be completed within 30 calendar days of the retake application's purchase date. If the examination is not completed within this period, the application will expire and a new application and associated fee will be required.

If a candidate does not pass the examination on the second attempt, the same timeline, application, and fee requirements apply.

### **Third Attempt**

Candidates may attempt the examination a third time under the same conditions as above:

- A minimum waiting period of ten calendar days applies between the second and third attempts.
- A new application and fee are required for each attempt.
- The exam must be taken within 30 calendar days of the application purchase date.

### **Remedial Training Requirement and Fourth Attempt**

Candidates who fail the examination three times must complete remedial training and meet a minimum waiting period of 30 calendar days before becoming eligible for a fourth attempt.

#### **Remedial Education Criteria:**

Candidates must complete **one** of the following:

- A structured remedial course through a state- or federally-approved training program **or**
- A minimum of twenty hours of documented remedial education in the subject matter areas outlined in the candidate's previous examination results.

Documentation must include:

1. Course outline or syllabus
2. Instructor contact information
3. Proof of completion (e.g., certificate or signed training log)

All documentation must be uploaded through the candidate's official NHCO portal at [www.NHCOcert.com](http://www.NHCOcert.com) and is subject to verification or audit. Falsified or incomplete documentation may result in disqualification from further testing or certification.

### **Fourth Through Sixth Attempts**

Upon verification of completed remedial education:

- Candidates may take the examination up to three additional times (Attempts 4–6).
- A minimum of ten calendar days is required between each attempt.
- A new application and fee must be submitted for each attempt.
- Each exam must be completed within 30 calendar days of the application purchase date.

### **Final Attempt Limit**

Candidates are permitted a maximum of six attempts to pass the examination.

Candidates who do not pass the examination within six attempts will be required to restart the certification process in full, including:

- Re-enrolling in and completing a full initial training course approved by a state or federal agency **AND**
- Submitting new documentation of course completion **AND**
- Reapplying for certification with a new application and fee.

### **Complaints**

Complaints to the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) that do not fall within the parameters of the NHCO's Disciplinary Policy shall be processed and determined in accordance with the information below.

1. A complaint must relate directly to the National Healthcare Certification Organization's program policies and procedures and may include, but is not limited to, issues regarding expired authorization to test, re-test authorization period, candidate handbook information, and other publications. No other complaints will be considered.
2. A complaint must be submitted in accordance with the directions on the website, addressed to the Executive Director of the NHCO, and signed by the complainant. Complaints must be submitted no more than thirty (30) days from the date of the incident, which is the subject of the alleged concern. Unsigned complaints will be returned to the complainant. Acknowledgment of receipt of the complaint will be provided to the complainant(s).

A National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) staff member will investigate and address the complaint within thirty (30) days of receiving the complaint. Once a complaint has been investigated and addressed, the outcome will be communicated by the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) to the complainant(s) via email, and the complaint is final and will be considered closed. The resolution of the complaint is not appealable.

3. Names of the complainant(s) will be held in confidence by the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) unless written permission is granted by the complainant(s) to reveal their name(s). This requirement shall be waived if the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) is required to provide any information or documentation pursuant to a bona fide judicial or governmental process.
4. The NHCO's staff will document all complaints, note the action taken, and provide appropriate follow-up within 90 days of the original complaint.

### **Professional Code of Ethics**

The Code of Ethics governs all individuals seeking certification through the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO). It was crafted to establish clear ethical practice guidelines and enforceable standards of conduct for all candidates. Each candidate is expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity and professionalism, take responsibility for their actions, and consistently demonstrate honesty while promoting these principles to others. The Code of Ethics is accessible to the public at any time.

The following statements are expected to be followed by all candidates:

- I will solve problems within my capabilities and display the wisdom to seek help when they are beyond my skills and abilities.
- I will adhere to all safety measures in place at my workplace for the well-being of those I serve and my own.
- I will be honest in the performance of all my responsibilities and my professional interactions. If I make mistakes, I'll acknowledge them and work to correct them.
- I will respect and obey the law and all regulations that serve to protect the public in connection with matters of practice related 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.
- I will remain current in my knowledge and skills by participating in continuing education activities within my professional discipline.

### **Conduct Breaches**

The General Credentialing Board has approved specific reasons for which disciplinary action(s) may be taken against the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) examination candidates, certificants, and

non-certified individuals. These reasons center on breaches of testing conduct rules and the professional Code of Ethics. Some of the approved reasons for disciplinary action include, but are not limited to:

1. Obtaining or attempting to obtain certification or renewal by fraud, deception, or artifice.
2. Knowingly assisting another person or persons in obtaining or attempting to obtain certification or renewal by fraud, deception, or artifice.
3. Unauthorized use of a certification certificate or falsification of credentials or other National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) documents.
4. Unauthorized possession, use, copying, reproduction, and/or distribution of any official National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) examination materials, including any part of the examination questions or problems.
5. The following dispositions of offenses directly related to the practice of phlebotomy that give cause to question the individual's ability to practice in a safe and competent manner:
  - a) Conviction in a court of law, after all appeals have been exhausted, of:
    - 1) a drug or alcohol-related offense concerning the individual's practice.
    - 2) a job-related offense indicating the individual's intentional negligence and/or purposeful misconduct that endangers a patient's health and/or safety.
    - 3) an act of physical violence (murder, assault, rape, robbery, etc.) that would cause questions as to the individual's ability to interact with patients and others on the job appropriately.
  - b) Revocation or denial of a license or certificate to practice phlebotomy or another health-related profession by an authorized state agency due to:
    - 1) a drug or alcohol-related offense concerning the individual's practice.
    - 2) a job-related offense indicating the individual's intentional negligence and/or purposeful misconduct that endangers a patient's health and/or safety.
    - 3) an act of physical violence (murder, assault, rape, robbery, etc.) that would cause questions as to the individual's ability to interact with patients and others on the job appropriately.
  - c) Voluntary surrender of a license or certificate to practice phlebotomy, or another health-related profession, by a credentialed individual and/or examination candidate to

an authorized state agency after the filing of a complaint proceeding by an authorized state agency alleging:

- 1) a drug or alcohol-related offense concerning the individual's practice.
- 2) a job-related offense indicating the individual's intentional negligence and/or purposeful misconduct that endangers a patient's health and/or safety.
- 3) an act of physical violence (murder, assault, rape, robbery, etc.) that would cause questions as to the individual's ability to interact with patients and others on the job appropriately.

These actions may result in an individual receiving a warning, a formal censure, or revocation of certification for a specified period of time or indefinitely. For more information on disciplinary action(s), review the NHCO's Disciplinary Policy.

### **Denial or Revocation of Certification**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) may consider revocation or denial of certification. Examples of the activities that may cause revocation or denial of certification include, but are not limited to, the following:

2. Possession of, use of, and/or attempt to use altered or falsified certification cards or certificates.
3. Obtaining or attempting to obtain certification or renewal by fraud or deception.
4. Knowingly assisting another to obtain or attempt to obtain certification or renewal by fraud or deception.
5. Unauthorized possession, use, copying, reproduction, and/or distribution of any official National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) examination materials, including any part of the examination questions or problems.
6. Violation of examination rules, including but not limited to cheating on the examination.

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) retains the sole authority to amend or repeal its policies regarding denial or revocation of certification at any time, including but not limited to the authority to add new grounds for denial or revocation and add provisions for suspension of certification.

### **Certification Verification**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) is required to provide certification verification information to members of the public, such as employers, background check services, or other third-party information verification services. Therefore, each candidate who passes the certification exam is listed in the online verification tool available on the NHCO's website. The current status of the certificant will be listed. The NHCO does not disclose either failed attempts or the candidate's exam score on this tool.

## **Confidentiality**

Confidential information is protected by federal, state, and local laws or regulations. To protect the privacy of all NHCO candidates, the NHCO's database of personal information is accessible only to authorized staff and personnel. All confidential information will not be disclosed without express 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 include certification status, certification number, and status of credentials.
- The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) allows individuals to verify the credentials of certified candidates through the online certificate verification tool on the NHCO's website.

## **Credentials**

Only candidates who achieve a passing score on the exam will be allowed to use the certification program credential. All certifications are valid for two full years. The Certified Phlebotomy Technician (CPT) mark may be used only by individuals who have passed the national certification examination and hold a current, valid certification issued by the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO).

All candidates with a current credential are allowed to include the certification after their name. The NHCO's credentials cannot be used to endorse any product, service, or company. Any candidate who fails to comply with this credential use policy will be subject to disciplinary review and has the potential of suspending their certificate.

## **Maintaining Certifications**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) requires that all certificants engage in continuous personal and professional development. To uphold the highest standards of professionalism, the NHCO requires certificants to renew their certification every two years. This process ensures that certificants stay up to date with changes in the field of phlebotomy, focusing on the knowledge and skills necessary to perform at the highest level of excellence in clinical settings.

Continuing education (CE) with an approved site is required to renew a certified phlebotomy technician (CPT) certificate. Examples of approved sites can be found on the NHCO's website. It is recommended that CE selection align with the CPT exam focus areas, cover mandated topics, and/or explore recent industry changes that affect phlebotomists' duties. Phlebotomists should seek course topics that are directly relevant to their occupation and select those that both review essential knowledge and offer opportunities for continued learning in their chosen field. For detailed information on acceptable continuing education topics, see the Continuing Education Guidelines section in this handbook.

- Certificants may use continuing education from their employer(s). The NHCO will notify the certificant of approval via email.

Continuing education (CE) must be submitted through the candidate's online profile. All submitted continuing education or work experience documentation is subject to audit.

## **Active Certificates:**

For certifications that are active, the requirements for renewal are as follows:

- 20 hours of continuing education

Continuing education must be completed with an approved site. Examples of approved sites can be found at [NHCOcert.com](http://NHCOcert.com).

- Certificants may use continuing education from their employer(s). The NHCO will notify the certificant of approval via email.

## **Expired Certificates:**

For certifications that have been expired for one day and up to two years, the requirements for reinstatement are as follows:

- 30 hours of continuing education

For certifications that have been expired for more than two years but less than four years, the requirements for reinstatement are as follows:

- 40 hours of continuing education

If certification has been expired for more than four years, candidates must meet eligibility requirements and retake the certification examination.

## **Continuing Education Guidelines**

All continuing education must be from a verifiable and approved site to be accepted by the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO). It is the responsibility of certificants to meet any mandated specific continuing education (CE) requirements to renew licensure in their current state of residence. Phlebotomists should look for CEs accredited by reputable organizations, such as state departments of public health or groups like ASCLS. This ensures CE hours can be used to meet state requirements and address individual circumstances.

Continuing education may include topics such as:

Phlebotomy Procedures:

- Phlebotomy Basics
- Understanding the Circulatory System
- Interpreting Requisition Forms
- Standard Lab Tests

- Newborn and Pediatric Screenings
- Order of Draw
- Routine Blood Collections
- Understanding Coagulation
- Point-of-Care Testing
- Lab Values
- Protecting Specimen Quality
- Blood Donation Trends and Standards
- Nonblood Specimens and Analysis

Order & Patient Verification:

- Medical Terminology
- Preventing Common Errors

Safety Protocols:

- Minimizing Workplace Injuries
- Quality Assurance
- Infectious Diseases and Infection Prevention
- Patient Confidentiality and HIPAA Regulations
- Bloodborne Pathogens
- Personal Safety

Communication:

- Soft Skills
- Culture, Race, Gender, and Ethnicity
- Global Healthcare Needs

**Renewal Fees**

The renewal fee is \$100 per renewal period of two (2) calendar years. If a certification has been expired for more than one renewal period, the renewal fee will be applied for each missed two-year renewal period (e.g., two renewal fees if expired for more than two years). Certificants who renew their certification after their expiration date has passed must pay a \$25 reinstatement fee in addition to the renewal fee.

**All candidates should review the NHCO’s eligibility requirements. No refunds will be issued for those who do not qualify. See Policy 17.0 - Payments and Accounting Policy.**

**Certification Renewal Application and Approval**

Once a candidate submits a Renewal Application, the NHCO will review it within 5-7 business days. They will confirm any supporting documentation and approve or deny the application request via email. Once an applicant has been approved for renewal, they will receive an updated digital certificate via email with a new issue date.

If any requirements are not met, the application will be denied and noted in the NHCO’s response email. Denied individuals will have thirty (30) days from the date of notification to submit any missing information.

If a candidate does not submit the missing information within thirty (30) days, they must purchase a new application. Once the missing information has been submitted and approved, applicants will be notified of their approval via email. The email will contain an updated digital certificate with a new issue date.

### **Failure to Renew**

If an individual's certificate has expired for four (4) or more years, the certification as a whole will become invalid. To renew, candidates must meet eligibility requirements and retake the certification examination.

Certificants who are on active military duty or whose personal circumstances preclude timely renewal may contact the NHCO to request an exception to this policy. Individuals must wait to hear from the General Credentialing Board via email regarding requested exceptions. Expired certifications may not be used for any reason until they have been successfully reinstated.

### **Candidate Name Change Policy**

Candidates holding credentials through the National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) may request a name change for issued certification documents. To do so, candidates must submit the Name Change form found on the NHCO's website and pay all applicable fees.

Individuals must also provide a copy of one of the following documents listed below to verify a name change:

- Marriage Certificate
- Divorce Decree
- Current Driver's License
- Social Security Card
- Naturalization Paperwork
- Passport
- Official court document displaying name change

Candidates requesting a name change must apply on the NHCO's website.

### **Antitrust Policy**

The National Healthcare Certification Organization (NHCO) adheres strictly to federal antitrust laws, which prevent agreements among competitors that could affect market dynamics like pricing, market division, or encouraging boycotts. The NHCO's Staff, Board and Committee Members, and certificants are required to make decisions independently and avoid any discussions or agreements on pricing, market territories, or boycotting certain businesses.

Violations of these policies can lead to severe penalties. To avoid inadvertent breaches, it is imperative to refrain from representing the NHCO's stance without express authorization. Seek legal counsel when in doubt, especially during conversations that touch on sensitive topics. If an antitrust issue arises, participants should either stop the discussion to seek legal advice or leave the conversation to prevent personal liability.