

NOCA News

2003 Conference Issue

NOCA Assesses the Present and Designs the Future of Credentialing at the 2003 Conference

The 2003 annual educational conference, Assessing the Present and Designing the Future of Credentialing, incorporates opportunities attendees need for professional development, continued education and networking. This year's comprehensive conference was specifically designed to address all skill levels—from beginner to advanced—and offer additional chances for professionals in the certification industry to take advantage of expert presentations relevant to today's credentialing community.

“So often it seems that NOCA members, non-members and attendees at the conference do not take advantage of everything the program has to offer,” said Bill Hogan, 2003 Program Committee Chair. “More participation brings better results and more information and contacts to take away with you when you leave Orlando. In 2003, the committee tried to open up the program to attendees and allow more participation in all events.”

NOCA has traditionally hosted a pre-conference workshop preceding the official start of the meeting. This year, two, four-hour workshops are on the schedule focusing on legal issues and the use of Internet technology. In previous years, attendees paid extra to attend the pre-conference workshop. This year, however, any full registrant of the conference is able to attend the pre-conference workshop at no additional cost.

Pre-conference activities extend beyond workshops and include the public member forum, led by David Swankin of the Citizen Advocacy Center (CAC) based in Washington, DC. Reputed for their efforts in public member representation on boards, Swankin and his team address participants on the need and benefit of a public member network.

Following the 2002 conference, evaluations showed that educational content and networking opportunities with colleagues, potential suppliers and potential customers ranked among the top reasons attendees registered for the annual conference. This year's program addresses this need with 28 concurrent sessions (eight more than 2002), two keynote addresses from the Disney Institute, networking breakfast, exhibit hall, roundtable discussion breakfast, receptions and more.

This edition of NOCA News contains the complete schedule of events for the conference. For more information on conference events, visit the registration desk or speak with a NOCA staff member.

President's Message

By Gary Smith, NOCA President

Welcome to the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort and the 2003 NOCA annual educational conference, *Assessing the Present and Designing the Future of Credentialing*. This year's conference not only "assesses the present" status of the certification and credentialing industry through educational sessions on modern practices in the industry and networking opportunities, it also serves as the launching pad as we "design the future of credentialing."

One of NOCA's static goals is to consistently increase visibility for our organization and the industry as a whole. In 2003, we saw the laborious efforts of our volunteers, committees and leadership to achieve this goal and build on the foundation for future work in 2004. As a volunteer organization, our purpose is to serve our members, and they are our primary audience when expanding our communications and visibility. In April, we sent the first of the newly developed monthly member updates to all members. Designed as a quick bulletin concisely summarizing the previous month's activities, the monthly member updates provided members with direct links to the organization through its Web site and e-mail.

Outside of the membership, NOCA continues to increase its visibility with the certification industry and federal and state regulatory bodies. In early Fall, NOCA issued a news release resulting from one of the online poll questions on PR Newswire that reached more than 10 quality news outlets. Later, NOCA was featured in the ChicagoLand Forum. Personally, I was privileged to present on NOCA's behalf to the American Society for Association Executives (ASAE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to the Professional Certification Advisory Board (PCAB).

The NCCA is also expanding its visibility in the regulation and certification industry. In 2003, California became the first state to require that all crane operators be certified through a program accredited by the NCCA. The National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO) worked closely with the state to pass the legislation and further ensure public protection.

NOCA's continued success depends on the work of our members and leadership to increase visibility for the organization and the industry. Competency assurance remains a growing field of interest for the federal and state legislature, the international certification community and general consumers. NOCA and NCCA's position as a leading resource of educational programming, publications, networking, standard setting and accreditation will continue to expand in the future.

As the 2003 president, I have been privileged to work with an exceptional Board, talented Commission and dedicated group of committee volunteers. I encourage all conference attendees to network with colleagues and expand your knowledge base through the educational programming and social activities scheduled for the 2003 conference.

Executive Director's Message

By Wade Delk

Each year at the annual educational conference the NOCA Board of Directors, committee chairs and myself provide an update on the past year's activities at the Annual Business Meeting. The purpose of this meeting is not only to update you on 2003 programs, but to give you the opportunity to learn more about the organization, the activities and programs it sponsors and how your organization can benefit from NOCA membership. Additionally, the goal of this meeting is to help encourage involvement in these activities and promote membership growth.

What will you see, hear and learn at this year's annual business meeting? In July, NOCA launched a series of online poll questions surveying all visitors to the NOCA Web site on issues becoming more prevalent in the profession. The first poll garnered more than 100 responses. Each subsequent poll has seen more than 200, and in some cases nearing 300, responses. This year's educational programming has also seen a boost in participation.

In July, NOCA held its 2nd annual audio seminar, Transforming Job Analysis Data into Test Specifications. The success of this workshop is unprecedented. More than 70 sites and nearly 160 people participated in the workshop via conference call, an increase of more than 200 percent. Comments and evaluations from participants confirmed this workshop has proved successful—plan to see more audio workshops in the future. The fall educational series started in Chicago at Question Writing 101: Everything You Need to Know to Create High Quality Test Questions, in October. Again, we saw an increase in participation (up approximately 36 percent from the previous year). Toronto served as host to NOCA's final one-day workshop of the year on Oct. 24th. More than 65 people attended NOCA's first Canadian workshop.

The NCCA also experienced a successful year implementing the new NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs. For more information, see the NCCA Report.

Join the NOCA leadership at the Annual Business Meeting, Friday, Nov. 21, 8:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. I would like to extend thanks to Gary Smith for his service to the organization during his presidency as well as to the NOCA Board of Directors, NCCA Commission, committee chairs and all volunteers who helped make this an exciting year in NOCA's history. We look forward to a successful and valuable conference.

Member News

NOCA welcomes the following new members:

American Board of Registration of Electroencephalographic and Evoked Potential Technologists, Inc. is based in Springfield, IL. Janice Walbert is the representative to NOCA and may be reached at 217/553-3758.

Henry Winston Banks is located in Chicago and may be reached at wbanks@foodtrain.org.

Georgene Berman is located in Euclid, OH and may be reached at 216/266-0281 or via e-mail at gbberman@ra.rockwell.com.

Center for Credentialing and Education is based in Greensboro, NC. Susan Shafer is the representative to NOCA and may be reached at 336/482-2856 or via e-mail at shafer@cce-global.org.

Citigate Global Intelligence and Security is located in Laurel Springs, NJ. Frank W. Nasuti is the representative to NOCA and may be reached at 856/207-3598 or via e-mail at frank.nasuti@citigategis.com.

The Cooper Institute is located in Dallas. Laura Fast is the representative to NOCA and may be reached at 972/341-3274 or via e-mail at lfast@cooperinst.org.

Financial Planners Standards Board is located in Toronto, ON, Canada. Cary List is the representative to NOCA and may be reached at 800/305-9886 or via e-mail at List@cfp-ca.org.

National Academy of Sports Medicine is located in Calabasas, CA. John Bracken is the representative to NOCA and may be reached at 800/460-6276.

Ontario College of Social Workers & Social Service Workers is located in Toronto, ON, Canada. Glenda McDonald is the representative to NOCA and may be reached at 416/972-9882 or via e-mail at gmcDonald@ocswssw.org.

PSI Examination Services is based in Glendale, CA. Tadas Dabsys is the representative to NOCA and may be reached at 818/244-0033 or via e-mail at tadas@psionline.com.

Professional Golfers' Association of America is based in Palm Beach Gardens, FL. Chris Hunkler is the representative to NOCA and may be reached at 772/462-8502 or via e-mail at chunkler@pgahq.com.

United States Chamber of Commerce is located in Washington. J.P. Moery, CAE is the representative to NOCA and may be reached at 202/463-5560 or via e-mail at jmoery@uschamber.com.

Wohl Communication Services, Inc. is based in Gaithersburg, MD. Myrna Wohl is the representative to NOCA and may be reached at 301/340-9272 or via e-mail at myrna@wohlcomm.net.

NCCAOM Publishes Award Winning Job Analysis

The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) published its award winning 2002 Job Analysis for the Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Profession online at www.nccaom.org.

The survey, conducted in conjunction with Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc. (AMP), received the American Society for Association Executives (ASAE) 2003 Associations Advance America Award.

“Fulfilling our mission to protect and benefit the public, NCCAOM, in consultation with AMP, will use the results of the survey to guide the exam development process that supports our certification programs in acupuncture, Chinese herbology, Asian bodywork therapy and Oriental Medicine,” stated Christina Herlihy, Ph.D., NCCAOM CEO. “We have made this survey available online in its entirety so that everyone has the opportunity to gain from its in-depth analysis of the OM profession.”

ARDMS Practice Exams Go Online

The American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (ARDMS) announced that practice examinations for all of its physics/principles and instrumentation examinations are now available online at www.ardms.org under “Practice Exams.”

The online examinations are similar to the real ARDMS examinations in content, topic areas covered, style of questions and pace. The test-taker will receive results immediately following the exam and the report will highlight areas of weakness for further review.

“These practice examinations will be a valuable tool for anyone who wants to assess their knowledge of ARDMS examination content,” notes ARDMS Chair Kari Boyce, Ph.D., RDMS, RDCS.

CompTIA Prepares to Launch New Certification

The Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) is receiving attention among information security managers for its new, entry level-based certification *Security+*. According to experts, *Security+* targets entry-level IT security professionals and offers an opportunity for IT pros seeking new opportunities in a difficult job market. David Foote, president of Foote Partners LLC, an IT work force research company, suggests a huge information security job boom is in the future driven by heightened awareness of security issues national wide, accelerating e-business development and an overdue loosening of IT budgets.

CompTIA has been developing *Security+* since the beginning of 2003. They recruited 24 industry, government and academic representatives to serve on the steering committee. The goal was to create a vendor neutral certification that set a base line for security skills

covering five areas: general security concerns, communications, infrastructure, basic cryptography and operational and organizational security.

The cost of the certification exam is \$149 for CompTIA members and \$200 for non-members. For more information visit www.comptia.org.

ADEC Study Compares Certified and Non-Certified Grief Counselors

The Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC) released the results of a causal-comparative research study designed to explore the similarities and differences between non-certified and certified grief counselors in the areas of education, training, experience, credentials and supervision.

According to the findings, certified grief counselors report significantly more experience as counselors at the post-master's level, significantly more grief counseling experience, significantly more credentials, significantly higher mean composite scores on the 14 knowledge areas adapted from ADEC and the National Board for Certified Counselors and significantly higher scores on 12 of the 14 individual knowledge areas.

For more information visit ADEC online at www.adec.org.

Build It and They Will Come is Only True in Hollywood

By Georgia Patrick, The Communicators, and Michelle Nichols, BusinessWeek Online

The movie *Field of Dreams*, starring Kevin Costner, was a huge financial success but it left behind a phrase that has caused financial frustration for many associations and certification organizations: Build it and they will come. While the idea worked magically for a baseball diamond in an Iowa cornfield, it falls short for even the best certification programs.

It's too bad our world is more complicated than Hollywood's. NOCA member associations invest innumerable hours creating, updating and maintaining top-quality certification programs. This requires a huge investment, not only in terms of money but also time and energy. Still, the bitter truth is even the best programs do not sell themselves to all their potential customers. It's time certification associations left the Hollywood mind-set and began to talk earnestly about sales and marketing.

While sales and marketing are often lumped together, they are really two, distinct functions that hopefully, work hand-in-hand. Marketing builds visibility, desire, branding and value with potential customers; Sales builds on that customer conversation and closes the sale. Compared to a football game, marketing is getting the ball to the 10-yard line and a sale is analogous to scoring the touchdown. It is absolutely a team effort because sales without marketing would be inordinately expensive. Imagine asking every single person in Ohio if they would like to be certified to be an Oncology Nurse. Crazy! Yet marketing without sales would be like telling every Oncology Nurse in Ohio about every detail of the certification program but never asking them if they would like to get started with the process. Also crazy!

While it's important to have a good quality certification program, the missing link that keeps the number of certified individuals in associations from reaching their potential is a fairly natural concept—building connections to members throughout the entire sales and marketing process.

At its most basic level, connecting is natural because people do it every day, with their family members, co-workers and other people they meet. At a deeper level, however, connecting becomes more difficult because it forces associations to stop focusing on how great and wonderful their certification programs are and instead, redirect their focus to building meaningful connections with their potential members' needs, wants and even dreams.

This connection process can go even further, as associations look at connecting with their “customer's customer” too whether it's their member's employer, manager or paying customer. As an example from the business world, think of the “Intel inside” stickers found on many computers. Intel went beyond connecting with the computer manufacturers and built a connection with their customer's customer—the end user.

Build it and they will come was the basis for a beautiful movie, which was nominated for the Academy Award's Best Picture of the Year. However, when the idea is applied to national certification programs, it comes closer to Worst Idea of the Year for many reasons, only a few of which have been touched on in this brief article. If credentialing organizations and associations with certification programs focus on their connections with their members look for them and then develop, expand and leverage them—they really can reach their own *Field of Dreams*.

Georgia Patrick is the certification marketing leader and president of The Communicators, Inc., www.communicators.com. Contact her at georgia@communicators.com. Michelle Nichols is a sales guru and the Savvy Selling columnist for BusinessWeek Online, www.savvyselling.com. Contact her at michelle.nichols@verysavvyselling.com. This article is a NOCA exclusive and now included in the Intensely Practical Selling and Marketing Certification Seminar by Nichols & Patrick.

Tips for New Certification Organizations: Making a Certifiable Cake from Start to Finish

Installment 2—The First Layer

By Cheryl L. Wild, Ph.D.

In the last issue of *NOCA News*, we began a series of articles on building a certification program. We used the analogy of making a cake for the certification process.

Installment one of the Tips for New Certification Organizations series discussed and provided information on resources to build the foundation and the basic understanding needed to plan a certification program. Installment two discusses the first layer of the cake, the layer that holds up each additional layer, planning.

Today's Tip: Planning, including strategic planning, market analysis and business planning, should occur before you start developing your certification program.

What does planning include?

1. Identify the mission of the certification program—purpose, certificants and services provided.
2. Review of the opportunities and risks for the certification program—competitors, economic impacts on the program, government and legal impacts on the program, size of the potential certificant population, etc.
3. Review of the strengths and weaknesses of the sponsoring organization and the implications of those factors for the certification program.
4. Identify measurable goals which address the mission, opportunities, risks, strengths and weaknesses identified earlier.
5. Develop a project plan including steps required to achieve the goals, responsibilities, budget, timeline and monitoring responsibilities. (I would like to emphasize two ideas at this point. One, this is a plan for getting you to the point where you will have a detailed business plan for your certification program, not the final plan. Secondly, it is critical to achieving your goals that you develop a habit of not only setting goals, but also reviewing progress on these goals—quarterly reviews by an advisory committee would be one way to go.)
6. Conduct market research—including research on both the potential certificant and their employers.
7. Determine the marketing strategy you will employ for the certification program and the products and services you will offer.
8. Determine your final business plan (products, services, schedule, assigned responsibilities, budget, partnerships, etc.). This plan may require several iterations (back in the kitchen, our eyes may have been bigger than our stomach's—the analogy is live and well).
9. Monitor the progress on your business plan as you proceed.
The omission of the planning stage before developing a certification examination is one of the most frequent mistakes made by volunteer groups starting a certification organization. In my experience, novices to certification believe that every certification program will make money, developing a certification program will only take a few months and anyone who says otherwise must be an obstructionist (or a consultant out to make money).

The organizational professional is often in a difficult position due to this widespread misconception about building a certification program that contradicts initial beliefs and typically does not make money in its first few years, requires several years of planning and requires expanded staff resources expertise to develop and maintain. Sally Harthun, the Manager of Certification at the American Society for Quality (ASQ), offers her view of the importance of planning and encouraging volunteers to plan. She shared the following:

Planning is essential to the success of any certification program. ASQ has developed a document called Guidelines for Establishing a New ASQ Certification to share with our members. The guidelines describe the various steps involved in developing a certification, including a market analysis and plan for the certification which shows a sufficient, definable, continuing market for the certification and an expenditure plan and

financial analysis which shows the financial impact to the sponsoring organization and the ongoing support required to make the certification program a success.

For more information or a copy of the Guidelines for Establishing a New ASQ Certification, please contact Sally at sharthun@asq.org.

Readers who are interested in learning more about planning for certification programs might also be interested *The Business of Certification, A Comprehensive Guide to Developing a Successful Program*, by Joan and Lenora Knapp (published by the American Society of Association Executives, 2002).

Sustaining Member in the Spotlight

PSI Examination Services

PSI provides test development, test administration and related services for employment and licensing examinations. PSI also offers consulting services for test validation, EEO compliance and employee selection. PSI has four divisions, each of which specializes in providing services that assess skills, competencies and abilities.

Examination Services Division – providing test development and test administration services for ongoing licensing and certification programs across the country.

Test Publications Division – developing and supporting cognitive and aptitude tests for personnel selection, for major corporate clients and government.

Aptitude Testing for Industry Division – providing comprehensive evaluations of individual candidates for sales, staff, and managerial positions.

Consulting and Litigation Division – offering consulting services to both private and public sectors on test validation, EEO compliance and employee selection.

Headquartered in Glendale, CA, PSI is independently owned and operated. The company has been in business since 1946, longer than any other major testing vendor. PSI's licensing and employment examinations have been successfully administered to millions of candidates. PSI's state-of-the-art test generation and tracking software provides flexibility, convenience and security for both candidates and clients.

Visit us on the web at www.psonline.com or www.psiexams.com or call us toll-free at 800/367-1565.

PSI Examination Services
100 West Broadway, Suite 1100
Glendale, CA 91210

Phone: 800/367-1565
Contact: Tadas Dabsys, Vice President

NCCA Update

By Cynthia Durley, M.Ed., MBA

In January 2003, the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) launched the new *NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs* after an intensive project to develop accreditation standards to reflect the best of the original NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Organizations, in addition to addressing changing professional focus in the areas of governance, psychometric and administration issues not covered by the original Standards.

Once this 'zero-based' Standards development project was completed, it became the task of the 2003 NCCA Commission to implement the new Standards to new applicants for program accreditation and to those organizations wishing to renew NCCA accreditation at the program level. In addition, the Commission was tasked with guiding the transition from a Commission that accredited organizations to a Commission that accredits certification programs. Since implementing the new Standards, the Commission has accredited 19 programs from 8 organizations. These NCCA accreditations join those 48 organizations that had earned NCCA accreditation prior to January 2003 under the original NCCA Standards.

The Commission's goal is not only to review applications, but also to help organizations interested in accreditation understand and implement the NCCA Standards in their own organizations as well as prepare a complete and thorough application. To achieve this goal, the NCCA is presenting a session during the 2003 NOCA annual educational conference on Thursday, Nov. 20 from 3:15 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. Commission Co-Chair Larry Fabrey, Ph.D. and Commissioner Jan Towers, Ph.D. will lead the session with support from other Commissioners onsite to answer questions and facilitate discussion.

The Commission has also prepared the *NCCA Accreditation Application Package* for new applicants for NCCA accreditation and organizations wishing to renew NCCA accreditation of their programs. The goal of the application package is to ensure programs follow the guidelines for a complete application easing the preparation for applicants and resulting in an application that the Commissioners can easily maneuver and review.

The NCCA Commission congratulates all organizations that have received NCCA accreditation for their certification programs. A complete list of these programs is available online at www.noca.org and are listed below. The bullets indicate certification programs accredited by NCCA since January 2003. Those listed without bulleted programs are organizations that earned their five-year NCCA accreditation before implementation of the new NCCA standards. When these organizational accreditations expire, those that choose to renew NCCA accreditation will apply for accreditation by program.

Organizations/Programs with NCCA Accreditation

American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Program

American Association of Critical-Care Nurses Certification Corporation

American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics, Inc.

American Board for Occupational Health Nurses

- Case Management
- Certified Occupational Health Nurse
- Certified Occupational Health Nurse – Specialist

American Board of Medical Specialties in Podiatry

American Board of Opticianry

ACNM Certification Council

American Chiropractic Neurology Board

- Diplomate of the American Chiropractic Neurology Board

American Council on Exercise

- Clinical Exercise Specialist
- Group Fitness Instructor
- Lifestyle and Weight Management Consultant
- Personal Trainer

American Medical Technologists

American Nurses Credentialing Center Commission on Certification

American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers

American Registry of Radiologic Technologists

- Registered Technologist

Board for Certification in Podiatry

Board of Certified Safety Professionals

Board of Registered Polysomnographic Technologists

Board for Orthotist/Prosthetist Certification

Certification Board of Infection Control and Epidemiology

Certification Board for Music Therapists

Certification Board for Sterile Processing and Distribution

Certification Board Perioperative Nursing

Certification of Disability Management Specialists Commission

Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc.

Certifying Board for Dietary Managers

Certifying Board of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates

Commission for Case Manager Certification

Commission on Dietetic Registration of the American Dietetic Association

Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification

Council on Certification of Nurse Anesthetists

- Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist

Dental Assisting National Board

- Certified Dental Assistant
- Certified Orthodontic Assistant
- Certified Dental Practice Management Administrator

Healthcare Quality Certification Board

- Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality

International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners
 Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology
 Lamaze International
 Liaison Council on Certification for the Surgical Technologist
 National Athletic Trainer's Association Board of Certification
 National Board for Certification in Hearing Instrument Sciences
 National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy

- Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant
- Occupational Therapist Registered

National Board for Certified Counselors

- Master Addictions Counselor
- National Certified Counselor

National Board for Respiratory Care

- Certified Pulmonary Function Technologist
- Certified Respiratory Therapist
- Perinatal/Pediatric Respiratory Care Specialty
- Registered Pulmonary Function Technologist
- Registered Respiratory Therapist

The National Certification Board of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners and Nurses
 National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Body Work
 National Certification Corporation for the Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing Specialties
 National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine
 National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators
 National Contact Lens Examiners
 National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification, Inc.
 National Examining Board of Ocularists
 National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians

- NREMT – Basic
- NREMT – First Responder
- NREMT – Intermediate/85
- NREMT – Intermediate/99
- NREMT – Paramedic

National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) Certification Commission

- Certified Personal Trainer
- Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist

North American Registry of Midwives
 Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation
 Ophthalmic Photographers' Society, Inc. Board of Certification
 Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board

Do “Best Practices” Exist in Certification Development?

By Carol MacKenzie

As professional certifications continue to grow in both popularity and notoriety, the issue of best practices also arises. What can an organization do to ensure that its certification program is firmly grounded in reality and practice? The answer is simple—rigor. Rigor in creating and validating the certification protocol is key to establishing a program that truly defines expertise and assesses professional competence.

Last year, a master’s student undertook a research project to explore how professional certification standards are created and to provide a benchmark for the “best practices” used by organizations to ensure that their professional certifications meet workplace requirements. Under the guidance of Judith Hale and with the cooperation of NOCA, the researcher sent an e-mail survey to NOCA members asking those who offer certification programs to respond. A convenience sample of 31 respondents resulted, out of a pool of approximately 225. The respondents were equally divided between specialty boards and professional/membership-based organizations. In addition, there were several respondents from industry/trade associations and accreditation-related organizations. The survey addressed how certifications were developed, how they were validated, how they are marketed and basic demographic data.

The certifications that the respondents offer included those that went into effect as early as 1930 plus new certifications in the process of full implementation. The number of workers certified per individual organization ranged from several hundred to more than 70,000. Among respondents, the number one reason certifications were originally developed was to establish expertise in the profession. The majority of certification programs require some mix of education and experience, coupled with a form of testing to demonstrate competence in that particular field.

NOCA, along with the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB), the National Alliance of Business (NAB) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) all reference the importance of ensuring that the skill standards for certification accurately reflect workplace requirements. All of these organizations are concerned with bringing quality, reliability and validity to certifications standards, for all clearly explain that without those attributes, certifications have little true value in the workplace (NOCA, 1996; NSSB, 2001; NAB, 2001; ISO, 2001).

For the purposes of this research, “best practices” refers to methods that: a) are generally accepted to produce superior results; b) represent a systematic process; and c) demonstrate rigor. Therefore, the researcher first re-examined the number of information sources and methods organizations used to construct their certification requirements, looking specifically for organizations that employed the triangulation process in obtaining their results for both categories. Triangulation is widely accepted in qualitative research as a preferred process for enhancing the credibility of results.

Six respondents, fewer than 20 percent, met this criterion. The six certifying entities in the “best practices” group are evenly divided between specialty boards and professional/membership-driven organizations. To reiterate, these certifying bodies used the triangulation process for both the creation and validation of their requirements. In terms of information sources, all six worked with a panel of expert practitioners for both creation and validation. Half or more used a codified body of knowledge, a panel of academics or a panel of employers for information gathering, again during both development and validation.

All of them conducted job analyses. Half handled them internally and half externally. Everyone used content analysis of job documentation as one of the methods for creation and validation. A comparison of their overall approach vs. all respondents is shown in the following tables. The figures for the “best practices” group are shown in bold in the shaded columns.

Information Sources, "Best Practices" Group vs. All Respondents

Response	Used in Creation	Used in creation	Used in Validation	Used in validation
Panel of expert practitioners	100%	77.4%	100%	64.5%
Codified body of knowledge	83.3%	48.4%	66.7%	35.5%
Panel of academics	66.7%	22.6%	50%	12.9%
Panel of employers	66.7%	22.6%	66.7%	19.4%
Panel of stakeholders	33.3%	25.8%	16.7%	25.8%
Your organization's board of directors	33.3%	16.1%	50.0%	12.9%
Membership Survey	16.7%	19.4%	50%	22.6%
Other	0%	12.9%	16.7%	19.4%

Methods, "Best Practices" Group vs. All Respondents

Response	Used in Creation	Used in creation	Used in Validation	Used in validation
Content analysis of job documentation	100%	61.3%	100%	48.4%
Questionnaires	83.3%	64.5%	83.3%	54.8%
Membership Survey	50%	32.3%	50%	25.8%
Focus Group	50%	29%	33.3%	22.6%
Interviews	50%	25.8%	50%	22.6%
Other	50%	19.4%	16.7%	19.4%
Job Observation	16.7%	9.7%	16.7%	16.1%
Delphi Group	0%	6.5%	0%	3.2%
No Response	0%	6.5%	0%	3.2%
Nominal Group	0%	3.2%	0%	0%

In sum, the “best practices” group epitomizes thoroughness both in the depth and scope of its development process. It is particularly interesting that the “best practices” group involved expert practitioners, employers and academics more often than the rest of the survey respondents. Rigor takes on added importance when the certifying bodies are so far removed from the actual employment setting. And, by working with experts, educators and businesses, certifying organizations have the opportunity to obtain a more well-rounded view of what the demands and expectations are for a particular profession.

Looking at methods, it is noteworthy that the “best practices” group reviewed existing job documentation in every instance. Couple that documentation review with a membership survey and one gets a slice of the desired and actual states in the workplace. Tie that information back to what expert practitioners and employers are saying about the job, and a certifying body would have a clear picture of what workplace requirements actually are. From the researcher’s perspective, to overlook any of these knowledge resources is to short-change both the certification and those seeking it.

As far as demonstrating competence goes, all six in the “best practices” group use written tests as their assessment vehicle. The researcher views this as a weak link, given that the ability to pass a test does not adequately demonstrate workplace performance. In light of the various educational technologies available today, how else can expertise be evaluated beyond paper and pencil tests? From the research, some suggestions are portfolio reviews, videotapes of practitioners in the workplace, the use of multidimensional item response theory (MIRT) in computerized adaptive testing (CAT). While complex and subject of numerous practical considerations, simulations results of MIRT CAT can produce advantages from a psychometric perspective (Luecht, 1996).

It is evident that further research is required to validate the “best practices” findings outlined here, as well as to delve further into alternative assessment methods that are more closely linked to workplace performance.

For additional information on this research project, please check the NOCA Web site at www.noca.org.

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Crane Operators in California and New Jersey Require NCCA Accredited Certification

New legislation in California and New Jersey requires crane operators receive certification issued by an NCCA accredited certification program.

Effective June 1, 2005, under an amendment of Article 98 of California's General Industry Safety Orders, the California State Government will require all operators hold a valid certification of competency for the type of crane he/she operates issued by a program accredited by the NCCA. Currently, The National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO) is the only NCCA accredited program for the profession.

“The new regulations passed in California and other states or similar regulations currently under investigation indicate the growing concern for public safety and professional competence,” said Cynthia Durley, NCCA Commission Chair. “By earning NCCA accreditation, the NCCCO addresses this concern by ensuring its certification program meets the most rigorous standards for professional certification available to the certification and credentialing industry.”

Graham Brent, NCCCO Executive Director, worked closely with the California state government and the NCCA to help pass the legislation.

The NCCCO program requires operators pass a physical examination, a substance abuse test and a written examination developed, validated and administered in accordance with the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. The certificants must also pass a “hands-on” examination to demonstrate proficiency in operating the specific type of crane.

New Jersey followed a similar path for its crane operators. On Sept. 4, Governor James E. McGreevey signed new provisions into law requiring all mobile crane operators be certified by NCCCO or an equivalent NCCA accredited body by April of next year. The New Jersey law also creates a seven-member Crane Operators License Advisory Board charged with enforcing the provisions, implementing a schedule of penalties for violations and establishing a code of ethics and standards of practice for licensed crane operators.

In a similar move, the Hawaii department of labor and industrial relations began enforcing a new requirement for state certification of crane operators who perform construction work effective Oct. 1. The new law, similar to California and New Jersey,

requires certification through the NCCCO for more than 600 crane operators employed by private employers.

The Recognition of Certification Programs in Licensure: An Intersection of Two Credentialing Activities

The full text of the paper authored by James R. Fidler, Ph.D., American Medical Technologists, Patricia A. Johns, Ed.D., Florida Department of Health and Karen Nickel, Ph.D., California Department of Health Services is available online at www.noca.org. The following article is a summary of the main points presented in the paper.

“The global interest in ensuring that critical tasks are performed only by qualified practitioners gives rise to programs designed to assess competency,” states the authors of *The Recognition of Certification Programs in Licensure: An Intersection of Two Credentialing Activities*. In the current regulation marketplace, multiple organizations exist to achieve competency assessment including state licensing boards and national certification boards (most commonly non-profit, professional organizations). The paper listed above focuses on situations where licensure and certification overlap and specifically addresses the advantages and disadvantages to certification recognition.

The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association and National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999) define licensing as “the granting, usually by a government agency, of an authorization or legal permission to practice an occupation or profession” (p. 177) and certification as “a voluntary process, often national in scope, by which individuals who have been certified have demonstrated some level of knowledge and skill in an occupation” (p. 172). Although the purpose and goals of licensing and certification are very similar, differences in authority, populations and administrative perspectives keep the two separate in the regulation realm.

The authors suggest that in practice, licensure and certification do not always need to be mutually exclusive. In some cases certification recognition benefits not only state licensing boards in terms of cost and efficiency, but also benefits the certifying agency on many levels. The myriad of advantages, disadvantages and procedural recommendations are extensive and can be overwhelming, however the authors present a thorough and concise review of the general process, key factors to investigate and the advantages and disadvantages to the major stakeholders involved in certification recognition.

What is certification recognition and how does the general process begin?

Certification recognition, in this paper, is discussed in terms of the intersection of licensure and certification activities operating within a cooperative framework. Specifically, the authors focus on the specific instances where a “licensing bureau issues a license, in whole or in part, on the recognition of a certification, although the converse is also relevant and occurs in the field.” Either stakeholder, the licensing board or certification agency, can initiate a discussion of recognition. The state becomes more aware of the existence of a national certifying body most often when the state government passes a law mandating the regulation of a particular industry. To best

implement a regulatory process and ensure competency, the state may investigate certifications provided in the profession and initiate communication with the certifiers.

National certifying bodies may also initiate the process by reviewing the disciplines it regulates and their accompanying state mandates and petition state boards for recognition of their certification. Regardless of who initiates the process, all stakeholders should go through a comprehensive review process of the cooperating organization to determine if certification recognition is possible.

What are the key factors influencing certification recognition?

A thorough investigation by either group that initiates the discussion of certification recognition is absolutely necessary to ensure the most beneficial outcome for the state, certification body and the consumers regulation is intended to protect. The key factors influencing the decision to recognize another organization's certification are extensive and involve in-depth communication between stakeholders. Below is a summary of the key factors however, a more detailed summary is available in the complete article online at www.noca.org.

Legal Issues

The primary consideration should be the legal authority granted to the state to regulate a particular industry (typically communicated through a mandate) or, in the case of a national certifying body, the starting point is the organization's governing charter and bylaws. The ideal time to facilitate recognition is at "program genesis." However, more commonly, a statute regulating the profession is already in place and therefore the governing components must be reviewed to determine the availability of recognition and outline what changes must be made to satisfy both the state mandate and the stipulations outlined in the organization's bylaws.

Comparative Costs

"Recognizing a reliable, valid, national examination that measures entry level competency in a given profession will almost always be cost effective for a state licensing agency," state the authors. The state will review the cost per candidate for licensing and examination and include factors such as projected salaries, expenses and equipment needs for a new regulation to determine the overall costs. The state also should review the cost per candidate from the national certifying body to determine the comparative cost. The authors add, "Cost should never be the only deciding factor in an evaluation."

Assessment of Equivalence and Consistency

Included in the appendix of the paper is a questionnaire that helps state licensing boards and other certifying bodies determine if favorable conditions exist for recognition. The questionnaire is composed of three parts: Part A gathers preliminary information including the certifier's identity and certification process; Part B expands on Part A for more detailed information; and Part C assesses agencies employing a practical or performance examination. Questions include, but are not limited to:

- What is the purpose of the certification under consideration?

- Is an examination used in the certification process and if so, what is its purpose?
- What qualifications must applications for examination and/or certification meet?
- What level of performance is the examination designed to measure?

Eligibility Requirements

“With few exceptions, licensing and certification eligibility requirements center on three, time-honored predictors: education, experience and/or training and knowledge in the field (examination),” the authors suggest. In some professions, the requirements to satisfy these three areas are consistent statewide or possibly nationwide. However, for other professions such as psychology, clinical laboratories and radiography, requirements differ from state to state. When organizations consider recognition of another group’s certification, they should understand not only who created the standards, but also what the basis for the standards was when they were created. The authors also advise that standards and regulations should be routinely monitored to determine if they remain consistent in all areas as time passes.

Psychometric Issues

“Knowledge in the field” is one of the most predominant factors in competency assessment and is often evaluated through an assessment instrument or examination. Included in the questionnaire in the appendix of the paper is a tool to facilitate a review of the psychometric information. Upon completion of the psychometric review, authors stipulate it will be clear whether or not the organizations should continue the process of recognition. If they continue, the next stage is to gather more detailed information on the validity, reliability and security of the testing instruments used.

Policy Issues

Policy issues may impact the final outcome even if the above factors are all positive. “From the certifier’s perspective, an agency must evaluate whether or not a state’s legislative restrictions or eligibility standards are lower than its own and whether or not any difference is acceptable. The certifier must also address the issue of concordant certification and licensure based on one set of standards or the same examination. If practitioners are licensed, are they also certified? Overall, it is important for the certifier to be aware of how its examination or certification are employed by states and determine if those uses are appropriate and acceptable.”

The process of recognition does not end with the key factors listed above. The organizations involved should also consider the following areas:

- Purpose of the credential
- Handling and tracking information pertaining to disciplined credential holders
- Interagency access and sharing of information
- Periodic reviews of recognized agencies

What advantages and disadvantages exist for states and certifying bodies?

Certification recognition offers many advantages to the stakeholders involved, however, as detailed in the key factors above, the potential for disadvantages is strong when all factors are not addressed, negotiated, changed and periodically updated.

From the perspective of a certifying agency, the advantage to recognition is a larger number of certificants, increased revenue (which may also lead to enhanced services and benefits to both certificants and licenses) and validation of the program. The state agency benefits by reducing costs, eliminating the duplication of efforts to develop standards and examinations, and implementing and launching new programs faster and more efficiently. The question of lower costs due to recognition becomes increasingly important in a recovering economy.

The candidates benefits from portability of credentials, elimination of duplication in the application and examination process, reduction in confusion and provision of a centralized source of information.

With all the advantages listed above, what is the downside of recognizing an existing credential? The state may encounter issues of validity if the certification body's standards and content are miscalibrated with those of the state, confusion may arise if more than one certification is recognized and the state must closely monitor changes in certification program standards and procedures for the process to remain valid. Alternatively, the certifier faces a considerably increased administrative workload from the extensive communication and maintenance needed and may have to release previously secured information and documents for a thorough review.

According to the authors, there is no wrong or right answer to the question of credential recognition. However, as discussed briefly above, and expanded in the full paper available online, there exists an overlap between the two major divisions responsible for competency assurance—state licensing boards and national certification programs. Considering the issues outlined in *The Recognition of Certification Programs in Licensure: An Intersection of Two Credentialing Activities* both states and certifiers can begin a knowledgeable investigation into the question of recognition.

Postscript:

Since the initial preparation of this publication, the State of California enacted a law, effective April 9, 2003, recognizing certification examinations in the regulation of phlebotomists. The State, however, does not use the term “licensing” but rather refers to competency documentation as a state-issued certificate. As would be the case with a license, a state certificate is required to practice phlebotomy. In the regulation of phlebotomists, practitioners must pass a written examination given by a state-approved certifying organization. In addition to recognizing examinations administered by certification agencies the State has a number of additional requirements that practitioners must also satisfy in order to obtain a state-issued certificate.

At the time the law was enacted, the State determined that approximately 10 agencies awarded certification in this discipline. Six months following the enactment of the law, approximately half of the agencies identified were approved by the State as recognized phlebotomy certification organizations.

A key aspect of the State's approval rests on a provision whereby no practitioners are "grandfathered" into state-issued certificates based on prior certification. The State will only recognize certification examinations administered by agencies after the date of the agency's approval. Practitioners who were certified prior to the date of the agencies approval by the State are required to retest with a certifying agency.

Phlebotomists working in the State when the law was enacted (and phlebotomists working up to five years prior) have three years in which to comply with the law. By law, phlebotomists not obtaining a certificate by the conclusion of the three-year grace period are prohibited from practicing phlebotomy.

Defining the Scope of Practice and Building a Strong Workforce: The Future of Pharmacy Technicians

The full text of the white paper is available online at www.noca.org. The following article is a summary of the main points presented in the paper.

The Council on Credentialing in Pharmacy (CCP), and its member organizations, released a white paper titled, 2002 White Paper on Pharmacy Technicians: Needed Changes Can No Longer Wait, to address the issues facing the pharmacy technician and the pharmacy industry today. The role of the pharmacy technician has undergone significant transformations during the profession's history. More recently the field has experienced an increase in the number of technicians, received access to training opportunities, introduced a national certification and received recognition from an increasing number of state boards.

Despite the positive changes in the industry, the professional qualifications, knowledge and responsibilities of pharmacy technicians are diverse and lack a defined, consistent scope of practice. The Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that there are approximately 250,000 pharmacy technicians in the United States, and experts estimate a growth of 36 percent or more between 2000 and 2010. According to the authors of the 2002 white paper, the time to act is now.

The current demand for pharmacy technicians is driven by three main factors: (1) the pharmacist workforce shortage, (2) the momentum for pharmaceutical care, and (3) increased concern about safe medication use. Although some predicted an influx of pharmacists into the workforce with not enough jobs to support them, the opposite has actually occurred and pharmacy technicians are needed to fill in the gaps. The role of the technician will also expand as technicians play an expanded role in the systematic approach to medication error prevention. As the demand for an expanded role for technicians increase, the need for formal training and education programs also increases.

Initially, technicians received “on-the-job” training in informal settings. Formal training programs developed in the early 1940s in the military and were expanded in the 1960s by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. By the 1980s, the ASHP issued training guidelines designed to help hospitals develop their own training programs for pharmacy technicians. The guidelines were adopted by vocational schools and community colleges in an attempt to develop certificate and associate degree programs.

“In 2001, approximately 247 schools or training institutions in 42 states offered a range of credentials, including associate degrees, diplomas and certificates to pharmacy technicians,” according to the paper. The programs varied in many respects, but most obviously in the length and entrance requirements. The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology Directory lists 36 schools with pharmacy programs that vary in length from 540 – 2145 contact hours.

The minimum acceptable length of the program is a matter of debate. Some pharmacy technician educators deplore a move within the education system to get people into the workforce quickly. They feel that the pharmacy profession should make it clear that, while workforce shortages and the needs of the marketplace are an important consideration, rapid-training strategies do not seem appropriate for healthcare personnel whose activities impact directly on the safe and effective use of medications. There should be a clear relationship between the nature and intensity of education and/or training, and the scope of practice.

The APhA and other associations initiated progress towards standardization through the Model Curriculum for Pharmacy Technician Training, which included findings from the 1992- 1994 Scope of Pharmacy Practice Project and the 1999 PTCB task analysis. The model acknowledges “the need for a level of understanding of basic therapeutics, anatomy, physiology and pharmacology,” but is intended to serve as a “menu” of possible learning outcomes. The authors concur that there is a distinct difference between “educating” and “training” technicians, but to ensure quality both components should be standards-based.

The PTCB has made significant contributions to the field by offering the “Certified Pharmacy Technician” or CPhT certification. The benefits of certification are seen throughout the industry. Studies show that certified technicians remain in practice longer than non-certified technicians do, staff turnover of both pharmacists and technicians decreases in pharmacies employing certified technicians, staff morale is higher, productivity is higher, there is a reduction in errors and customer satisfaction is higher.

“The utilization, education, training and regulation of pharmacy technicians have changed dramatically in the past five years,” resulting in what experts consider interrelated challenges that require a coordinated approach. The authors suggest a shared vision for pharmacy technicians and other supportive personnel to provide a framework within which future change can take place.

The Washington Report

By Stacey Moye, Legislative and Regulatory Affairs

The House and Senate returned to work after the Labor Day holiday. The top agenda item is passing a supplemental appropriations bill of \$87 billion to pay for the reconstruction of Iraq. The debate over this additional spending is likely to be contentious and may hold up progress on other key initiatives.

The House passed its version of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reauthorization earlier this year while the Senate has been moving at a more deliberative pace. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP) is the principal committee of jurisdiction over the WIA, the federal government's principal job training program that is up for reauthorization this year.

NOCA's Government Relations team spent the summer meeting with senior Hill staff and discussing how certification could strengthen efforts to help dislocated workers find new jobs or career paths. On Sept. 17, Senators Mike Enzi (R-WY), Patty Murray (D-WA), Judd Gregg (R-NH) and Ted Kennedy (D-MA) introduced S. 1627, the Workforce Investment Act Amendments of 2003. This bipartisan measure contains a number of key provisions NOCA suggested. The measure would grant state governors more authority over how One Stop Centers will operate.

The Senate bill also includes a provision calling for a national study of the benefits of earning an occupational certification. The results of the study will be presented to Congress and must include recommendations to promote the acquisition of certifications. Another provision calls for 12 pilot projects to establish a system of industry-validated national certifications of skills, in particular in the high technology and homeland security sectors.

The Senate HELP Committee voted S. 1627 out of committee on October 2. It is unknown at this writing whether the Senate will take up consideration of the measure prior to adjourning for the holidays. Votes on the Senate floor are scheduled by the leadership however, with the need to finish appropriations and other higher priority bills, a vote by the full Senate on the measure may not occur for some time. When the bill goes to the floor it is likely to pass. The real struggle will begin when members of the House and Senate meet together in Conference Committee to reconcile differences between the two versions of the reauthorization.

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