Candidate Handbook
for State Credentialing
for the
National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination
(NCMHCE)
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

All questions and requests for information about state licensure requirements should be directed to the state credentialing board to which you are applying. (Refer to insert for state-specific information.)

All questions and requests for information about the NBCC examination program should be directed to:

   Center for Credentialing & Education
   3 Terrace Way
   Greensboro, NC 27403
   Voice: 336-482-2856
   Fax: 336-482-2852
   Web site: www.cce-global.org

All questions and requests for information about examination scheduling should be directed to:

   Pearson VUE
   5601 Green Valley Dr.
   Bloomington, MN 55437
   Voice: 866-904-4432
   Web site: www.pearsonvue.com

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook provides information about the examination and registration process for the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE). It outlines the design and content of the examination and guides candidates through the examination process, from registration through test-taking. For your convenience, this handbook may be downloaded from www.nbcc.org.

ABOUT NBCC

The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) is internationally recognized as a leading provider of counselor credentialing examinations. Fifty states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia administer NBCC examinations as part of their counselor credentialing requirements. Based on its reputation for excellence in the examination field, NBCC has provided consultation services for examination and credential development to many other organizations in the United States and abroad, including NBCC’s affiliate the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE). NBCC has contracted with CCE to oversee the examination process.

INDEPENDENT TESTING AGENCY

CCE has contracted with Pearson VUE to assist in the administration and scoring of the NCMHCE. Pearson VUE is headquartered in suburban Minneapolis, Minnesota, with regional offices in Australia, China, Dubai, India, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

NBCC, CCE and Pearson VUE do not discriminate against candidates on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation or national origin.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Please check with your state board for specific information about application procedures and any additional requirements. If you have previously achieved a passing score on an NBCC examination, contact your state board to determine if you are exam-exempt. You may be required to apply to your state board prior to sitting for the NCMHCE. (Please refer to insert for state-specific information.) Candidates may not schedule an examination until they have registered with CCE.

EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION

The examination is delivered by computer at more than 900 Pearson VUE testing centers located throughout the United States. Generally, there are no application deadlines and a candidate may submit a registration form and fee at any time. Testing is normally the first two full weeks of each month. Please refer to your state’s registration form for information on both application deadlines and examination scheduling. The examination is administered by appointment only on dates authorized by CCE, Monday through Saturday, beginning at 8 a.m. with the last appointment starting at 5:30 p.m. Candidates should contact Pearson VUE for particular locations and details. Available dates will be indicated when scheduling your examination. Candidates are scheduled on a first-come-first-served basis. Therefore, candidates are advised to submit registration material approximately 60 days prior to the desired exam period.

HOLIDAYS

Examinations are not offered on the following holidays:

- New Year’s Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
- Christmas Eve Day (Limited hours)
- Christmas Day
REGISTERING FOR AN EXAMINATION

To begin the registration process, complete the form required by your state. Candidates should ensure that the examination registration form has been properly completed and that the information provided is accurate. Careful attention will enable prompt and efficient processing. Candidates cannot schedule an examination appointment with Pearson VUE until the registration form has been processed. Pearson will then send e-mail notification to registered candidates with examination scheduling procedures.

REGISTRATION FORM EXPIRATION

A candidate who fails to test within six months after registering with CCE forfeits the registration and all fees paid to take the examination.

EXAMINATION REREGISTRATION

If you were unsuccessful in your examination attempt, you may retest after a three-month waiting period by completing another examination registration form. The actual retest date will depend on the monthly testing schedule and site availability. A separate fee is required each time you register for the exam.

FEES AND REFUND POLICY

Candidates must submit the appropriate fee with the registration form. Payment may be made by credit card (VISA, MasterCard or American Express), cashier’s check, money order or personal check made payable to NBCC. Examination fees are not refundable or transferable and expire if registration is not completed within one year. Please refer to your registration form for the examination cost.

Checks for nonsufficient funds (NSF) will not be redeposited. If a check does not clear the bank for any reason, the candidate will incur a fee of $35. The candidate must send a certified check or money order for the amount due, including the NSF fee, to NBCC to cover returned checks. Postdated checks are not accepted.

SCHEDULING AN EXAMINATION

After you have completed the registration process and are approved to schedule your examination, you will receive an e-mail from Pearson VUE with your candidate ID number. There are two ways to schedule an appointment for the examination:

1. **Online scheduling is the preferred method.** To use this service:
   - Retrieve your candidate ID number from the e-mail you received.
   - Go to [www.pearsonvue.com/cce](http://www.pearsonvue.com/cce) and select “Create Account.”
   - Follow the simple, step-by-step instructions to select your examination program and register for an examination.

OR

2. **Telephone:** Call Pearson VUE at 866-904-4432 to schedule an examination appointment. This toll-free number is answered from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central time Monday through Friday. You may experience extended hold times.

When scheduling an examination, be prepared to confirm a location and a preferred date and time for testing, and to provide your client candidate ID number. Pearson VUE will use this number only as an identification number in maintaining your record. When you contact Pearson VUE to schedule an examination appointment, you will be notified of the time to report to the testing center. Please make a note of it, because you will not receive an admission letter.
TESTING CENTER LOCATIONS

Pearson VUE testing centers have been selected to provide accessibility to most candidates in all states and major metropolitan areas. A current listing of Pearson VUE testing centers, including addresses and driving directions, is available at Pearson VUE’s Web site (www.pearsonvue.com). Specific address information will also be provided when a candidate schedules an examination appointment.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES

CCE and Pearson VUE comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and strive to ensure that no individual with a disability is deprived of the opportunity to take the examination solely by reason of that disability. CCE and Pearson VUE will provide reasonable accommodations for candidates with disabilities.

Wheelchair access is available at all testing centers. Candidates with visual, sensory or physical disabilities that would prevent them from taking the examination under standard conditions may request special accommodations and arrangements. Please refer to the examination registration form for state-specific information on special accommodations.

Candidates testing with approved special accommodations should schedule their examination via Pearson VUE’s toll-free number and inform Pearson VUE of the need for special accommodations. Candidates should not schedule the exam without confirmation of the approved special accommodations. Candidates who schedule their examination date prior to confirmation of the approved special accommodations will forfeit the scheduled exam and the exam date will be rescheduled.

Candidates approved for extra time due to English as a second language must pay an additional fee of $60 to receive this accommodation.

EXAMINATION APPOINTMENT CHANGES

You may reschedule an examination appointment by calling Pearson VUE at 866-904-4432. There is a $25 fee to reschedule within seven days of your appointment. You cannot reschedule less than 24 hours prior to your appointment.

MISSED APPOINTMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

A candidate forfeits the examination registration and all fees paid to take the examination when he or she:

- Intends to reschedule an examination but fails to contact Pearson VUE at least 24 hours before the examination appointment.
- Arrives more than 15 minutes late for an examination.
- Fails to report for an examination appointment for any reason.

A complete examination registration form and examination fee are required to reregister for the examination.

INCLEMENT WEATHER, POWER FAILURE OR EMERGENCY

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen emergencies on the day of an examination, Pearson VUE will determine whether circumstances warrant the cancellation and subsequent rescheduling of an examination. The examination will usually be rescheduled if the testing center personnel are unable to open the facility. If power to a testing center is temporarily interrupted during an administration, your examination will restart where you left off and you may continue the examination.

Every attempt is made to administer the examination as scheduled; however, should an examination be cancelled at a testing center, all scheduled candidates will receive notification by e-mail or telephone regarding rescheduling or reregistration procedures.
EXAMINATION CONTENT

The simulations on the NCMHCE are designed to sample a broad area of competencies, not the recall of isolated facts. Therefore, the simulations assess clinical problem-solving ability, including identifying, analyzing, diagnosing and treating clinical problems.

The examination consists of 10 clinical mental health counseling cases. Each case is divided into five to eight sections classified as either Information Gathering (IG) or Decision Making (DM). The examination covers the following areas:

Assessment and Diagnosis
Example assessment and diagnosis work behaviors include the following:
• Integrate client assessment and observational data;
• Identify precipitating problems or symptoms;
• Identify individual and/or relationship functioning; and
• Identify relevant family issues.

Counseling and Psychotherapy
Example counseling and psychotherapy work behaviors include the following:
• Inform client about ethical standards and practice;
• Clarify counselor/client roles;
• Implement individual counseling in relation to a plan of treatment; and
• Evaluate referral information.

Administration, Consultation and Supervision
Example administration, consultation and supervision work behaviors include the following:
• Maintain case notes, records and/or files;
• Determine if services meet clients’ needs;
• Communicate orally with others to maintain professional communications; and
• Assist clients with obtaining services.

EXAMINATION FORMAT

A clinical mental health counselor is required to make important clinical decisions regarding the well-being of clients. Therefore, a clinical simulation examination is used to more realistically assess knowledge in such decision-making.

The NCMHCE is a clinical simulation examination. Each problem will consist of three components: Scenario, Information Gathering (IG) sections and Decision Making (DM) sections. Each problem begins with a scenario. The scenario provides the setting and introductory client information (e.g., age, gender, presenting problem(s)).

In Information Gathering (IG) sections, you are expected to gather all relevant information for answering the questions. This might include family background, status of physical health, previous experience in counseling, etc. Read all information items before choosing the responses you consider necessary for responding to the simulation item. When making a selection, click the circle next to a response and then click the corresponding “submit” button to obtain feedback.

You should select all options that are appropriate. If you select more or fewer options than are appropriate, this will adversely impact your Information Gathering score.

Decision Making (DM) sections provide opportunities for making clinical judgments or decisions. These sections may be formatted in one of two ways:

1. Single Best Option—There may be more than one acceptable option, but one option is generally regarded as most acceptable.

2. Multiple Options—Several options are considered appropriate. These sections address decisions in which a combination of actions is required.
In the Decision Making section described as “Single Best Option,” the instructions are to “CHOOSE ONLY ONE” option. You should not assume that your response is incorrect if you are directed to make another selection. The simulation examination format sometimes uses this direction. The “Multiple Options” type of Decision Making will have instructions to “SELECT AS MANY.” When making a selection, click the circle next to a response and then click the corresponding “submit” button to obtain feedback. If you fail to click the circle and submit button, you will not receive information to determine whether to proceed to the next section.

The procedure for taking the NCMHCE is different from that of the more common multiple-choice examinations. Each simulation is identified by a number and the client’s name, and each section is identified by a letter.
SAMPLE CLINICAL SIMULATION

The following is an example of an IG and DM section as it might appear in a problem on the NC MHCE. Remember that in an actual problem, there will be five to eight sections and four to 14 selections per section (depending on the nature of the section). The responses in the shaded right-hand column are uncovered here. In the actual examination you will not be able to see the response unless you select it.

Simulation 1 - Ms. Wagner: You are a clinical mental health counselor in a small group private practice. Ms. Wagner is a 37-year-old female who has scheduled an appointment with you. She states, “My primary care physician said you probably could help me.” For the past three months, Ms. Wagner has been feeling stressed, had problems sleeping, and has not been able to focus on her work.

Section A - Ms. Wagner

During the first session, which of the following would be most important to assess in order to formulate a DSM diagnosis? (SELECT AS MANY as you consider indicated in this section.)

A-1. Mental status A-1. Unremarkable **

A-2. Stressors A-2. Single parent of a 10-year-old girl, elementary teacher at a new school, and father had a heart attack three months ago **

A-3. Previous counseling A-3. None **

A-4. Recreation activities A-4. Not relevant at this time **

A-5. Family history of mental illness A-5. None **

Seven to nine more choices would appear here on a complete simulation.
Based on the information obtained about Ms. Wagner, what is the DSM diagnosis?

(Choose only one unless you are directed to “Make another selection in this section.”)

**Not indicated. Make another selection in this section.**

D-1. Generalized anxiety disorder

D-2. Major depressive disorder, single episode

D-3. Adjustment disorder with depressed mood

D-4. Persistent depressive disorder (Dysthymia)

This section might have one to two more alternatives on a complete simulation.

Preparation for the Examination

Your primary objective in preparing for the examination is to pass. Other objectives such as learning new materials and reviewing old materials are critical toward this objective. Begin by developing your strategy for success.

A good study strategy includes preparation. To prepare, determine first what you need to learn, choose your study materials, and select a quiet, comfortable place that allows you to focus. Before you begin, check to make sure you have everything you need. Try to avoid interruptions.

Developing a study plan will allow you to learn the most as you study. Include setting goals in your study plan. Review what you have studied as often as possible. The more you review, the more you will retain.

Taking the Examination

Your examination will be delivered by computer at a Pearson VUE testing center. You do not need computer experience or typing skills to take the examination. On the day of your examination appointment, please plan to arrive at the testing center early. For your convenience, signs indicating Pearson VUE testing center check-in will be posted at the testing center.

A candidate who arrives more than 15 minutes after the scheduled testing time will not be admitted.

Identification

To gain admission to the testing center, you must present two forms of identification, one with a photograph. The name on your registration and on your photo ID must be
Both forms of identification must be current and include your current name and signature. You will be required to sign a roster for verification of identity.

Acceptable forms of photo identification include a current driver’s license, a current state identification card, a current passport or a current military identification card. Employment ID cards, student ID cards and any type of temporary identification are not acceptable as the primary form of identification.

You must have proper identification to gain admission to the testing center. Failure to provide appropriate identification at the time of the examination is considered a missed appointment, and a refund of your examination fee will not be granted.

SECURITY

NBCC, CCE and Pearson VUE maintain examination administration and security standards so that all candidates have the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The testing center is continuously monitored by audio and video surveillance equipment for security purposes.

The following security procedures apply during the examination:

- No cameras, notes, tape recorders, personal digital assistants (PDAs), pagers or cellphones are allowed in the testing room.
- No calculators are permitted.
- No guests, visitors or family members are allowed in the testing room or reception areas.
- No personal items, valuables or weapons should be brought to the testing center. Only keys and wallets may be taken into the testing room. Pearson VUE is not responsible for items left in the reception areas.

EXAMINATION RESTRICTIONS

- Writing materials will be provided during check-in. You must return the writing materials to the proctor at the completion of testing, or you will not receive a score report. No documents or notes of any kind may be removed from the examination room.
- No questions concerning the content of the exam may be asked during the examination.
- Eating, drinking or smoking is not permitted in the testing center.
- You may take a break whenever you wish, but you will not be given additional time to test.

MISCONDUCT

Individuals who engage in any of the following conduct may be dismissed from the examination and will forfeit their scores and fees:

- Creating a disturbance or being abusive or otherwise uncooperative;
- Displaying and/or using electronic communications equipment such as pagers, cellphones or PDAs;
- Giving or receiving help or being suspected of doing so;
- Attempting to record examination questions or make notes;
- Attempting to take the examination for someone else; or
- Being observed with notes, books or other aids.

COPYRIGHTED EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

All examination questions are the copyrighted property of NBCC. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Those who do so may be subject to severe civil and criminal penalties.
BEGINNING THE EXAMINATION

After your identification has been confirmed, you will be directed to a testing carrel. The system will monitor you via video throughout your examination session.

Following the examination instructions, you will begin the timed examination. When you begin the exam, the first page displayed is the nondisclosure agreement (NDA). Candidates must agree to the terms of the agreement to proceed with the exam. Please read carefully and click “Yes” if you agree to the terms of the NCMHCE. You will have five minutes to agree to the NDA, or the examination will terminate.

INSTRUCTIONS

After you agree to the terms of the NDA, you will click the “Next” button and arrive at the tutorial for the examination. This section is timed. You have 10 minutes to review how to navigate and respond to the examination items. Please make sure to read each question carefully and to select items for feedback that will help either form a better clinical impression or make an accurate clinical decision. When you finish the tutorial, you may begin the exam. You will have three hours and 15 minutes to complete this examination.

EXAMINATION SCREEN

Two windows appear on the screen. The scenario window displays the simulations and possible options. Each simulation begins with a brief paragraph in this window that provides preliminary information about a client; subsequent sections contain information about the changing patient situation. A scroll bar is available when necessary to view all text. Each scenario window will also provide the candidate with specific instructions about whether to “CHOOSE ONLY ONE” response in the section or to “SELECT AS MANY” responses as appropriate to gather information about the client.

The case progress review screen is located in the top right-hand part of the screen. Placing the cursor on this box and clicking with the mouse opens a window to review previous simulation questions and feedback provided for previously selected items.

After a candidate selects or submits an option, he or she cannot reconsider and “unselect” it, since the information from that option has been revealed.

In sections where a candidate is instructed to “SELECT AS MANY,” the candidate should select all of the options believed appropriate at the time and then click the “Next” button at the bottom left of the screen to continue to the next section. A dialog box will appear requesting that the candidate confirm he or she wishes to continue to the next section and warning that returning to this section to make additional choices will not be possible. Selecting “Yes” takes the candidate to the next section of the client simulation.

In sections where a candidate is instructed to “CHOOSE ONLY ONE unless directed to make another selection,” the candidate should carefully review each option and then choose the best option. A dialog box will then appear presenting the results for the choice or requesting that the candidate select another response.

FOLLOWING THE EXAMINATION

After completing the examination, candidates are asked to complete a short evaluation of their examination experience. Then, candidates are instructed to report to the examination proctor to receive their score report. Your score report will indicate “pass” or “fail.”

The score report you will receive is an unofficial score report. This unofficial score report will have your photograph on it. CCE will report your official scores to your licensing organization upon verification that you adhere to policies and procedures necessary to sit for the examination. Passing the examination does not guarantee licensure. NBCC, CCE and Pearson VUE reserve the right to withdraw or void official scores if it is found a candidate engaged in misconduct, wrongfully sat for the
examination, or violated the regulations of the respective organizations. Scores are reported in written form only and are not reported over the telephone, by e-mail or by fax.

PASS/FAIL SCORE DETERMINATION

The examination score is determined only by your performance on the NCMHCE. Work history, quality of work, or other personal or professional variables do not constitute or otherwise substitute exam performance.

The passing point for each form of the NCMHCE was set by the examination committee using a criterion-referenced method (Angoff method). The exact passing point may vary from one form of the examination to another, depending on the scored problems included. The examination committee follows strict guidelines in selecting the problems for each examination form and uses linear equating to ensure the versions of the examination are parallel in difficulty.

Each section, Information Gathering (IG) or Decision Making (DM), in a simulation was evaluated by content experts when the simulation was developed, and a minimum pass level (MPL) was established for the section using the scoring weights assigned to the options in that section. The MPL for an individual simulation on the examination (IG or DM) is the sum of the MPL for all of the IG and DM sections contained in the problem; the MPL for the total examination is determined by summing the MPLs for all IG and DM sections on the examination form.

To assist candidates in evaluating their performance on the examination, scores are provided for both IG and DM sections. It is the total raw score for IG and DM on the entire examination that determines whether you pass or fail the examination. Candidates must achieve total raw passing scores in both IG and DM to successfully complete the NCMHCE.

The total raw score is based on the nine scored simulations on your examination. The examination includes one unscored simulation that is being pretested for future examinations.

SCORES CANCELLED BY NBCC, CCE OR PEARSON VUE

NBCC, CCE and Pearson VUE are responsible for the validity and integrity of the scores they report. On occasion, occurrences such as computer malfunction or misconduct by a candidate may cause a score to be suspect. NBCC, CCE and Pearson VUE reserve the right to void or withhold examination results if, upon investigation, violation of their regulations is discovered.

IF YOU PASS THE EXAMINATION

Your scores will be forwarded to your state licensure board within 30 days. Candidates who pass the examination should follow their state board requirements for licensure.

IF YOU DO NOT PASS THE EXAMINATION

Should you fail the exam by two points or less, your exam is automatically hand scored for accuracy. Candidates may take the examination once every three months. You can reregister by submitting a new examination registration form with the appropriate fee. Please refer to the examination registration form for state-specific information.

APPEALS

Examinees may appeal NCMHCE score results. Appeals must be sent to appeal@cce-global.org within one week of the examination. CCE will confirm that the appeal was received within one business day. Appeals submitted by telephone or to other e-mail addresses will not be considered. Examinees should include their full legal name, NBCC/CCE number ID, Pearson ID, test date and testing center location. Appeals without proper identification information will not be considered.

APPEALABLE ISSUES

Candidates can appeal test results for the following: (a) test administration issues including but not limited to room temperature, distractions, improper seating, lighting, or...
technical issues with computer equipment or internet connection; (b) improper ADA accommodations; (c) registration and application errors; (d) proctoring errors; or (e) simulation items. Please note: Examinees must report test administration issues to the site administrator/proctor immediately. NBCC and its affiliates must confirm the documented issue in order to take any action on behalf of the examinee.

To appeal administration errors, examinees must provide detailed, clear and concise descriptions of the issue under appeal (e.g., room temperature as it reads on a thermostat, wording of error messages on the computer screen). Failure to provide adequate detail will significantly delay the investigation or may invalidate the appeal.

To appeal examination content, candidates must provide in writing the text of the simulation item in question and primary source data to support the appeal. Primary source data comes from the pool of knowledge generally acknowledged by counseling professionals (e.g., commonly referenced research or textbooks). Failure to provide sufficient information for identifying the item in question or lack of primary source data will invalidate the content appeal.

NONAPPEALABLE ISSUES

Examinees may not appeal (a) examination cut scores or the procedure for calculating cut scores, (b) the examination, (c) the content validity of the examination, or (d) failing scores due to the candidate improperly following examination instructions or instructions provided during the tutorial. Examinees may also submit comments about the examination content, which will be shared with subject matter experts who make up the NCMHCE Examination Committee.

FAILING TO REPORT FOR AN EXAMINATION

A candidate who fails to report for an examination forfeits the registration and all fees paid to take the examination. A completed registration form and examination fee are required to reregister for the examination.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information about candidates for testing and their examination results are considered confidential. Studies and reports concerning candidates will contain no personally identifiable information, unless authorized by the candidate.

SCORE VERIFICATION

Candidates may request a score verification for themselves or a third party by submitting a completed Score Verification Request form and payment. This form is available at www.cce-global.org.
SELECTED REFERENCES

NBCC does not endorse any particular study materials for the NCMHCE. The following references are presented as possible helpful options in preparing for the NCMHCE. NCMHCE performance enhancement is neither implied nor expressed.


NBCC has developed a preparation guide for the NCMHCE that includes a five-simulation sample examination with directions for scoring, explanations for each choice, latent image pen and additional references. This guide can be purchased for $44.95 at www.nbcc.org.
Computer-Based Testing Special Accommodations Request for State Licensure Candidates

Use this form if you are requesting special accommodations for the examination(s). All requests are reviewed individually and are subject to CCE approval.

Applicant’s Name: _____________________________________________________________

Candidates With Disabilities

Please identify briefly the nature of your disability. (Attach letterhead documentation with diagnosis and recommended accommodations from a qualifying professional.) Specify the special accommodations and/or arrangements you will need to complete the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE). Documentation may not be more than five years old.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

I certify that this information is correct. I have attached the required documentation.

Applicant’s Signature _______________________________ Date ________________

Candidates for Whom English Is a Second Language

I am requesting two additional hours of exam time and/or permission to bring a nonelectronic, word-to-word translation dictionary due to English as a second language (ESL). I have attached documentation from my graduate program showing that I received special accommodations due to ESL while in school.

Applicant’s Signature _______________________________ Date ________________

Note: If you studied in another language, we will verify the international degree equivalency evaluation you submitted as part of this application.

Request for International Exam Location (Only for active military personnel testing for state licensure.)

Please contact me to arrange for testing at an international location.

Applicant’s Signature _______________________________ Date ________________

Note: Cancellations of special exam accommodations must be made at least seven business days before the exam date.