

CERTIFICATION FAQ's – ASPHP 2017

- 1. What is the best path of certification for a new SPHM Facility Coordinator? I am involved in producing education materials, policies, planning and managing the SPHM program. Should I work toward a Certified Safe Patient Handling Associate (CSPHA) credential, or the more advanced level of Certified Safe Patient Handling Professional (CSPHP)?**

While the level of certification that applicants pursue is most-often an individual choice based on education and SPHM experience, applicants may want to consider short and long-term SPHM goals for themselves and their organization. If an organization is working towards Magnet certification, or an individual is striving for recognition as an SPHM expert, whatever certification level the applicant qualifies for at the present time may be the appropriate short-term option. Long-term, the Certified Safe Patient Handling Clinician (CSPHC) or the CSPHP may be the ultimate goal.

Applicants who would like to discuss their options with an experienced practitioner may do so easily through our Certification Mentor program: <http://www.asphp.org/certification/>

- 2. Can I apply for any level of certification at any time, or must I follow a specific order, such as CSPHA, CSPHC, and then CSPHP?**

An applicant may apply for any level of certification at any time – as long as the requirements for that level are met. Although many applicants begin by applying for the CSPHA, there is no requirement for achieving the CSPHA before applying for the CSPHC or CSPHP.

- 3. Can a RN apply for the Associate-level certification?**

Yes. Anyone that meets the requirements of a particular level of certification may apply for that level. There are a wide variety of SPHM practitioners, coordinators, etc. with varied backgrounds, practicing SPHM full and part-time! To meet the varied backgrounds and experience levels of SPHM practitioners, there are three levels of certification available.

- 4. I am a physical therapist with many years of experience as a senior loss control consultant servicing a variety of healthcare organizations. Is it best for me to apply for the CSPHC Certification?**

We cannot answer this question for you. As a short-term goal, we generally advise potential applicants to review the certification requirements and match the level that closely aligns with their current levels of education, experience and year(s) with SPHM-specific responsibilities. An SPHM Mentor may be consulted for additional advice: <http://www.asphp.org/certification/>

- 5. Can I use the years of experience that qualified me for one level of certification again on my application for a higher level of certification? For example, would the 2 years that qualified me for the CSPHA be able to be used to qualify me for the CSPHC or the CSPHP level?**

Yes, since there is no requirement to have one certification before achieving another level, an applicant's SPHM-specific work experience pre-CSPHA can be included on a CSPHC or CSPHP-level application.

NOTE: The final determination for credit for SPHM-specific experience resides with the Reviewers, who will examine the specific SPHM activities and roles listed on the application.

6. I am a Physical Therapy Assistant, and my time with SPHM is limited within my facility due to conflicts with treatment time. Is there another option outside of my facility to work within the SPHM profession?

For this question and similar questions – we advise applicants to request a Certification Mentor. This question is difficult to answer without knowing applicant’s current roles and responsibilities in their facility’s SPHM program and the level of certification the applicant desires to achieve.

7. What benefits are there regarding one level of certification over another? For the cost differences, what do you gain?

The ultimate value of certification at a specific level is up to the individual and the organization. Many organizations, for example Magnet hospitals, want to increase the number of certified staff and professional certifications. Many organizations include achievement of certifications in performance and advancement reviews. Some organizations will support applicants with funding for certification only if an examination is included in the process.

In addition to the portfolio requirements, the CSPHC and CSPHP certifications have required examinations. Certifications with examinations usually hold more significance, since the certification is an objective determination of the Certificant’s knowledge and skill-levels.

8. Does my work leading or attending our SPHM committee meetings/work, count towards my Professional Development (PD) hours?

They do not. As defined on the Certification webpage, normal “work duties” (for example: committee work/attendance, SPHM audits, equipment rounds) do not qualify for PD credit.

However these responsibilities/activities do qualify as “SPHM-SPECIFIC WORK EXPERIENCE” and applicants may use the number of years that they have performed these SPHM program responsibilities towards the required number of years for the level of certification being sought.

Please reference the definition and approved categories of PD at this link:

<http://www.asphp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Professional-Development-Categories-and-Permitted-Jul-2017.pdf>

9. If I teach a SPHM class one-hour each month, can I count that for twelve-hours of Professional Development (PD), per year?

No. Applicants may credit only each, unique hour of education or in-service training ONCE per year towards PD credit. Providing the same one-hour class or equipment training, twelve times a year, counts as one-hour of PD.

10. Must the Letters of Recommendation touch on all of the nine Core Competencies?

Each letter does not have to cover every one of the nine competencies. However, particularly for the CSPHC and CSPHP levels, letters should include detailed information attesting to the scope of the applicant’s SPHM knowledge and expertise, using these competencies as a guide. Writers should detail as many of these competencies that the applicant is practicing in their SPHM role.

One suggestion would be to ask each writer to highlight an applicant’s expertise in different areas.

The applicant’s other portfolio information should also provide the Reviewers with a clear understanding of the applicant’s competence in as many of the nine Core Competencies that the applicant is demonstrating.

11. I do not work with, or know, any CSPHPs. Is there an alternative for the requirement for the CSPHC certification, that I obtain a letter of recommendation from a CSPHP?

Yes, there is an alternative, if an applicant does not have a working relationship with a CSPHP. An applicant may obtain a letter from a Senior Leader in their organization, who can attest to and describe the applicant's SPHM knowledge and responsibilities within the organization.

The key, for all letters of recommendation, is for the writer to provide specific details about the applicant's SPHM expertise, using the subject areas of the nine Core Competencies as the basis for explaining the applicant's SPHM competence. All nine areas do not need to be included in the letters, but at least several different competencies need to be documented for CSPHC and CSPHP level applicants.

12. What should I do to prepare for the CSPHC or CSPHP examination?

There are two resources on the ASPHP's Certification webpage:

1 – SPHM References: <http://www.asphp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Certification-Examination-Preparation-Oct-2017.pdf>

2 – A ten-question sample examination: http://www.asphp.org/wpcontent/uploads/2011/05/ASPHP-Certification-Practice-Exam_FINAL-Format.pdf

Both the CSPHC and CSPHP level applicants are expected to have SPHM knowledge & experience in most of the subject areas of the nine Core Competencies (link: <http://www.asphp.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Core-Competences-Required-of-a-Safe-Patient-Handling-Professional1.pdf>)

These are the subjects areas covered in the written examination. While both examinations include questions on all of these topics, the CSPHC focuses more on the "bedside" competencies, as listed in the CSPHC requirements and on the CSPHC application: clinical knowledge & experience, training deployment, unit-specific customization, team leadership, risk analysis & control.

13. Is the CSPHP exam more difficult to take? More questions?

The CSPHP examination contains 75 questions; the CSPHC examination includes 50 questions. Both exams include questions on all of the nine core competency subjects. However, the CSPHC examination is weighted more heavily on the five subject areas described as expected CSPHC capabilities: clinical knowledge & experience, training deployment, unit-specific customization, team leadership and risk analysis & control.

14. Do you take the examination at home? Is it timed?

The examination is a timed, 2-hour examination. Once begun, the test must be finished within this time-frame, with no breaks. The applicant determines the e-mail address used to open the link for the examination.

The applicant receives the examination score immediately upon completion and will know whether they have passed or not passed. The applicant will not know which answer(s) they answered correctly or incorrectly.

15. Is it possible to take the exam as a personal test of SPHM strengths and weaknesses, for our own knowledge and further education?

Not at this time. The examination questions need to be secure so that they remain private for those taking the examination. There is a practice examination posted on the ASPHP website that applicants may take to help determine knowledge gaps. Link to practice exam:

http://www.asphp.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/ASPHP-Certification-Practice-Exam_FINAL-Format.pdf

16. My employer is still working on our job description. Would it be possible for a CV to be enough for my application portfolio?

Yes, in lieu of a job description, both a CV and a detailed description of an applicant's roles and responsibilities in their organization's SPHM program should be included. On the applications, there are identified check-boxes for general experience and SPHM-specific experience that need to be completed. There is extra space for an applicant to insert additional clarifying information on the last page of the application. Your letter-writers should also detail your specific SPHM role(s).

17. Most of my SPHM Work-Products are collaborative; working with the SPHM team. Would they qualify?

Please contact the ASPHP for a mentor to discuss this question.

18. What if you have the required professional experience but are about six- months shy of the two-years of required SPHM specific work experience - do you have to wait for the full two-years?

Yes, the full-time period is required before an applicant may submit their portfolio for review. An equivalency of two-years of full-time SPHM experience is required for the CSPHP. However, part-time SPHM experience is taken into account. For example, if you work four-years with 50% SPHM dedicated time, this would be the equivalent to two-years of full-time SPHM experience.

19. Questions about the Education requirements:

Would I be eliminated from applying for the CSPHP because I only have an Associate's degree?

I have an Associate's degree in Physical Therapy/PTA with 30 years of experience. Would I be exempt from the CSPHP because of my degree?

At this time, applicants for the CSPHP level must hold a current RN license, or have a bachelor's or graduate degree in an SPHM-related field.

20. What is the cost of annual membership for the Association of Safe Patient Handling Professionals (ASPHP)?

The annual cost of membership is \$135.

21. What is the benefit of being certified if you are already an SPHM coordinator?

There is value to both an individual and the organization, from SPHM certification. For an individual, there is personal distinction of achieving a recognized level of experience and education. Becoming certified in SPHM provides validity to what the applicant is doing on a daily basis for SPHM. An organization with certified individuals recognizes that these individuals are certified as specialists or "experts" in their field, and that they have achieved this certification through a rigorous process,

including passing a written examination for the CSPHC and CSPHP levels. The CSPHP is recognized by Magnet, VA and OSHA.

Early data indicates organizations with SPHM certified individuals leading their program have lower workers' compensation claims costs compared to organizations without certified personnel. This data is available in an AON Healthcare SPHM White Paper, and is cited in the ASPHP certification brochure: <http://www.asphp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ASPHCertBrochure.pdf>