

CERTIFIED HEALTH EDUCATION SPECIALIST (CHES) EXAM APPLICATION HANDBOOK



PLEASE READ THIS HANDBOOK BEFORE COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc.

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About NCHEC

The National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. (NCHEC), founded in 1988 as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, develops and administers national competency-based examinations to entry- and advanced-level health education specialists. Additionally, it is the charge of NCHEC to develop standards for professional preparation, and promote professional development through continuing education for health education professionals. Currently, there are over 13,500 health education specialists that hold the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) or Master Certified Health Education Specialist (MCHES) credential.

Mission:

The mission of NCHEC is to enhance the professional practice of Health Education by promoting and sustaining a credentialed body of Health Education Specialists. To meet this mission, NCHEC certifies health education specialists, promotes professional development, and strengthens professional preparation and practice.

Benefits of National Certification

NCHEC's voluntary professional certification program establishes a national standard for individual health education practitioners. It is based on the Seven Areas of Responsibility; a comprehensive set of Competencies and Sub-competencies that have been verified by a job practice analysis. It differs from state and local certifications and registries in that the requirements do not vary from one locale to another. National certification benefits practitioners and the public by:

- Establishes a national standard of practice for all health education specialists
- Attests to the individual health educator's knowledge and skills
- Assists employers in identifying qualified health education practitioners
- Develops a sense of pride and accomplishment among certified health education specialists
- Promotes continued professional development for health education specialists

Please read this handbook before completing the application.

The Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES®) examination is a competency-based tool used to measure possession, application and interpretation of knowledge in the Seven Areas of Responsibility for Health Education Specialists delineated by **A Competency-Based Framework for Health Education Specialists 2015**. The exam reflects the **entry-level Sub-competencies of these Areas of Responsibility**.

A CHES® is an individual that has:

1. Met required academic preparation qualifications
2. Successfully passed a competency-based examination administered by the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc.
3. Satisfies the continuing education requirement to maintain the national credential

Consisting of 165 multiple-choice questions (150 scored and 15 pilot tested), the CHES® examination is offered in paper-and-pencil format at college campuses throughout the United States. Candidates are allotted 3 hours to complete the examination. While there are

approximately 130 testing sites currently registered, any campus with a testing service is eligible to become a testing site.

Health Education Code of Ethics

NCHEC adheres to the Health Education Code of Ethics established by the Coalition of National Health Education Organizations (CNHEO). See <http://cnheo.org/ethics.html>

This policy serves as a central guide and reference for all Health Education Specialist in ensuring their day to day activities are in line with professional conduct and industry standards.

By applying for certification you are attesting to reviewing and abiding by the Health Education Code of Ethics.

Nondiscrimination

The National Commission for Health Education Credentialing does not discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, status as a veteran, or other legally protected status.

Disciplinary Policy

By applying for certification or recertification, Health Education Specialists recognize the authority of NCHEC to apply the Health Education Code of Ethics to those certified. If disciplinary actions are recommended as a result of an ethics investigation, the accused will be given full due process, including an appeal.

A Certified Health Education Specialist's (CHES) or Master Certified Health Education Specialist's (MCHES) certification may be suspended or revoked for reason(s) deemed appropriate by NCHEC including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Falsification of the certification application
2. Falsification of any information requested by NCHEC
3. Misrepresentation of certification status
4. Cheating (or reasonable evidence of intent to cheat) on the examination
5. The conviction or plea of guilty or plea of nolo contendere to a felony in a matter related to the practice of, or qualifications for, professional activity
6. Gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of professional services, or other unethical or unprofessional conduct based on demonstrable, verifiable, and serious violations of the Health Education Code of Ethics

Procedures

Complaints regarding possible ethics violations of a CHES/MCHES must be submitted in writing to the NCHEC Executive Director. The complaint must include the accuser's name and contact information. Individuals bringing complaints are not entitled to any relief or damages by virtue of this process, although they will receive notice of the actions taken.

1. Complaints will undergo an administrative review of documentation by the Disciplinary Committee of the NCHEC Board of Commissioners within 30 days of receipt by NCHEC to

determine if the alleged action falls within the scope of disciplinary policy and warrants investigation.

2. The accused will be notified in writing of complaint within 14 days after the administrative review. Further, in the absence of unusual circumstances, the accused will receive the original complaint and documentation including the name of the accuser.
3. The accused will be given an opportunity to formally and in writing admit to or refute the accusation in 30 days from letter date, thus assuring due process in the review.
4. The investigation may require procuring additional materials and interviews with relevant people.
5. If it is determined that there was a bona fide violation of ethics, the consequences can range from a letter of reprimand with warning, requiring the accused to complete an educational intervention on ethics, suspension, or revocation of the certification. Complainant and the certificant will be notified of the final decision of the Disciplinary Committee.
6. Every effort will be made to reach a decision in a timely manner; however, extended time may be needed to ensure full due process.
7. Actions taken do not constitute enforcement of the law, although referral to appropriate federal, state, or local government agencies may be made about the conduct of the certificant in appropriate situations.
8. NCHEC will publish suspensions and revocations on the website.

Application Screening and Eligibility

Screening of exam applications begins six months prior to the exam date. Applicants will receive an email notification of eligibility determination within four weeks after all required documents are received. **The application fee INCLUDES a \$100 nonrefundable processing fee that will be deducted from any refunds if the candidate is found ineligible or withdraws from the exam.**

CHES Exam Eligibility:

Eligibility to take the CHES examination is based exclusively on academic qualifications. An individual is eligible to take the examination if he/she has:

A bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree from an accredited institution of higher education; AND one of the following:

An official transcript (including course titles) that clearly shows a major in health education, e.g., Health Education, Community Health Education, Public Health Education, School Health Education, etc. Degree/major must explicitly be in a discipline of "Health Education."

OR

An official transcript that reflects at least 25 semester hours or 37 quarter hours of course work (with a grade "c" or better) with specific preparation addressing the Seven Areas of Responsibility and Competency for Health Education Specialists.

Applicants for the CHES exam will have at least 25 semester hours/37 quarter hours of coursework (with a grade of C or better) with specific preparation addressing the Seven Areas of Responsibilities and competencies for health educators. The following guidance is offered to applicants without an earned degree in health education seeking to qualify for the CHES exam based on the 25 hours of coursework requirement:

- A minimum of 12 semester hours/18 quarter hours must be from process courses that clearly align with the Seven Areas of Responsibility
- A maximum of 9 semester hours/14 quarter hours may be from topic-focused courses that include elements contained in the Seven Areas of Responsibility
- A maximum of 6 semester hours/8 quarter hours may be from other courses that include elements contained in the Seven Areas of Responsibility
 - Course descriptions and syllabi may be provided to determine if courses are eligible.

Exam applications, university transcripts, and any supporting documentation become the property of NCHEC. These items will not be returned to the exam applicant or forwarded to a third party

Prescreening Service (Optional)

This is a separate optional service offered to individuals and should **ONLY** be used if you are not sure you meet the requirements for the CHES exam. If you are found to be eligible the \$25 prescreen request fee will be deducted from the exam registration fee and an application and instructions will be mailed to you. If ineligible, course deficiencies will be identified and guidance will be provided. If you are interested in taking advantage of the prescreening service visit our Web site, www.nchec.org, to download the Prescreen Request Form or to submit an application online. You can also contact NCHEC to receive a form.

Prescreen Schedule:

April Cycle: **November 1 – February 1**

October Cycle: **May 1 – August 1**

Submitting Your Application

PRINT your name on the application **EXACTLY** as it should appear on the CHES certificate. It is your responsibility to notify NCHEC of any changes in name and/or address before taking the exam.

Your application should include:

- Completed application form
- **Official transcript** reflecting school name(s), degree(s), date(s) awarded and all completed coursework (application cannot be processed without a transcript). If sent separately, transcripts should be submitted no later than 30 days after application submission and prior to the final deadline or you will be subject to increased exam fees.
- Overseas transcripts **MUST** be translated into American credits through a transcript translation service before submitting your application for review.
- **Application fee** (The application fee **INCLUDES** a \$100 non-refundable processing fee if the candidate is found ineligible or withdraws from the exam)
- **Advisor Letter – This document is only needed if you are currently a student.** The letter would need to be on school letterhead and contain your name, projected graduation date, degree program and that you are currently a full time student.
- Falsification of any documentation may result in suspension or revocation of the credential or denial of eligibility for future exams.

Exam applications, University Transcripts and any supporting documentation become the property of NCHEC. These Items will not be returned to the exam applicant or forwarded to a third party.

We recommend sending applications via Certified Mail, Federal Express, Second-Day Mail or completing online.

Incomplete applications will not be processed until all necessary information is received including payment. Exam fees are nonrefundable. NCHEC is not responsible for missing information, such as transcripts sent separately. All documentation must be submitted by final deadline. Delays may result in an automatic transfer to the next exam date with an additional \$100 transfer fee. Please be sure to include all items at the time of application.

Online Application:

Individuals may complete their application online and mail or fax official transcripts by the final deadline. Applicants can then track the processing status and update contact information by logging onto our Web site.

To apply online, access the Web site at www.nchec.org and follow the step-by step instructions for completing the application process. After your application is submitted, mail or fax your official transcripts to NCHEC as soon as possible to continue the review process and determine eligibility. At any time, you have the ability to log on to NCHEC's Web site and view your status.

Please only use one method to apply: online or mail to avoid duplicate applications.

Application Fees & Deadlines

April CHES Exam (postmarked on or before)	Nonstudent Fee	*Student Fee
1st Registration Deadline: 11/1 thru 12/1	\$240	\$210
2nd Registration Deadline: 12/2 thru 1/2	\$250	\$210
3rd Registration Deadline: 1/3 thru 2/1	\$280	\$210
Final (Late) Registration: 2/2 thru 3/1	\$330	\$265

Fee includes a \$100 nonrefundable processing fee if found ineligible or withdrawal from the exam

*Student fee is used if you are currently taking or enrolled in 9 or more semester credits (12 or more quarter hours) at the time you apply for the exam. (Graduate or Undergraduate)

*Student rates also apply with documentation of your full time status as defined by your institution.

Appeal of Denial of Eligibility:

Filing the Appeal

1. An appeal will only be considered if postmarked, emailed or faxed within thirty (30) calendar days following the email date in which the Appellant was notified of the adverse decision.

2. NCHEC strongly suggests appeals be sent by certified mail or overnight courier service (such as FedEx) with return receipt requested. Appeals by facsimile or email are accepted.

3. A fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25) must be paid and is not refundable if the appeal is denied.
4. An appeal must be submitted in writing (preferably typewritten) to the NCHEC Executive Director who will, in turn, submit it to the appropriate NCHEC decision making body. The appeal must contain the original notification from NCHEC showing the date of the adverse decision.
5. The appeal should identify the adverse decision being appealed and explicitly state the reasons for the appeal. The appeal shall set forth any new or additional information to be considered. To expedite the appeal process, applicants are encouraged to include course descriptions, syllabi and any other pertinent information about specific courses in which the major emphasis was health education. Support documents provided by applicants will become property of NCHEC and not be returned to appellants.
6. The only additional information that may be submitted after the initial filing is that which is requested by the appropriate NCHEC decision making body.

Please see the attached link for the full appeal policy <http://www.nchec.org/ches-exam-eligibility>

90-Day Eligibility: This is offered to students scheduled to graduate within 90 days of an exam date. Written verification from a faculty advisor assuring the student will complete all degree requirements and an official transcript showing a minimum of 25 semester-hours relating to the Areas of Responsibility for Health Educators needs to be submitted. **Test scores will not be released until proof of graduation is received with an official transcript showing degree conferred or a copy of your diploma.**

Requests for Testing Accommodations

In accordance with Americans with Disability Act (ADA), NCHEC will strive to ensure that no individual with a disability is deprived of the opportunity to take the examination solely by reason of that disability. A candidate who has a disability may request accommodations and arrangements to take the examination. Such requests must be in writing and accompany the application. Verification of disability and statement of assistance needed must be included. Documentation by a competent individual (e.g. physician) of specific disability must be submitted with the application and completed form. All requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and are subject to approval. Test center personnel will be prepared to handle approved accommodations.

Those requiring an alternate test date due to religious restriction need to provide a letter from a religious leader documenting that need.

All requests must be received by application final deadline.

CHES Exam Scoring & Background:

The format of the CHES exam will be similar to the MCHES exam. Applicants will have three hours to complete 165 multiple choice questions (150 scored, 15 pilot-tested). The CHES exam will be given at the same times and places as the MCHES exam; however, 15 of the items are used as pilot items and do not contribute to the final score on each exam. Examinees are informed that there are pilot items on the exam, however, the candidate is not told which items are being piloted and which items are being scored.

Preparing for the Examination

NCHEC publishes study materials to help you prepare for the exam. Materials available for purchase are *The Health Education Specialist: A Companion Guide for Professional Excellence (7th Edition)* and *A Competency-Based Framework for Health Education Specialists - 2015*. See the enclosed publication

order form for details. You may want to contact the nearest college or university with a health education department or visit our Web site at www.nchec.org to determine if there is a CHES exam review session offered near you. It is important to remember that the exam is national in scope. You are encouraged to keep your resources broad and use your own text books as well as others. The study guide should not be your sole source of information.

CHES® Exam Blueprint

Below is the CHES® examination blueprint based on the Health Education Specialist Practice Analysis (HESPA) 2015 and the percentages of questions by the Seven Areas of Responsibility.

Area of Responsibility of Health Education Specialists	% of Questions on MCHES® Exam
Assess Needs, Resources, and Capacity for Health Education/Promotion	15%
Plan Health Education/Promotion	18%
Implement Health Education/Promotion	25%
Conduct Evaluation and Research Related to Health Ed/Promotion	9%
Administer and Manage Health Education/Promotion	12%
Serve as a Health Education/Promotion Resource Person	9%
Communicate, Promote and Advocate for Health and the Profession of Health Ed/Promotion	12%

Changes to Your Application

It is the applicants' responsibility to notify NCHEC of any changes in address or contact information.

Address changes can be made by visiting our Web site, www.nchec.org, and logging on with your username and password or by contacting the NCHEC office via fax or e-mail.

Test Site Relocations: Changes to your test site choice must be made in writing no later than **30 days** prior to the exam date.

Disclaimer: Every effort will be made to schedule a candidate to his/her first test site choice. In the event a minimum required number of candidates does not register for a given test site, NCHEC reserves the right to assign the second test site choice.

Admission Tickets

Approximately two weeks before the exam, you will be emailed an admission ticket showing test date, time, site location/address, room number and map/directions (if available). You will need to print this ticket and take along to the exam location. If you do not receive an admission ticket, or if the information on the ticket is incorrect, please notify NCHEC immediately at (888) 624-3248.

Examination Administration

The exam period is 8:30a.m.-11:30a.m., however, you are expected to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the start time for registration. Once the exam period begins, **NO ONE** will be admitted to the testing room. You will have three hours to complete the exam. Candidates approved for testing accommodation, with proper documentation, will be allowed up to six hours for completion.

What to bring on the Examination Day

1. Printed admission ticket
2. Photo identification (i.e., driver's license, employee/student ID card, passport). If a photo ID is not available, two (2) pieces of valid identification bearing your signature must be presented. SOCIAL SECURITY cards are NOT acceptable
3. Several sharpened No. 2 pencils. Pencils **will not** be supplied.

Not permitted in the Testing Room: books, papers, calculators, reference material, food including beverages, **cell phones**, electronic and smart devices, smoking or visitors.

Security

No part of the exam may be copied or reproduced in part or in whole by any means what-so-ever, including memorization. Candidates may not solicit questions or discuss items that were on previous exams with other NCHEC candidates or individuals who hold the CHES credential. Candidates are required to sign an affirmation and agreement statement on the application. Violation of the affirmation and agreement may result in suspension or revocation of the CHES credential from those who have earned it or suspension or denial of eligibility for future exams.

Examination Grievance

Any complaints regarding testing conditions or irregularities must be submitted in writing within two weeks after the examination date. We value constructive feedback to help us provide a comfortable exam environment.

Examination Results

Exam results will be mailed approximately eight weeks after the exam date. No scores or pass/fail information will be given by phone, e-mail or fax. **NOTE:** Candidates who applied under the 90-Day option will not receive exam pass/fail information until proof of graduation is received by NCHEC.

Rescoring Your Test Results

In the event you wish to have the results rescored, this service is available through Prometric. The results would be hand-scored at a charge of **\$75** to you. Written request must be received at the NCHEC office within **60 days** upon receipt of exam results.

Retaking the Exam: If you do not pass the exam, you may take the next scheduled exam at a reduced fee of \$150. This reduced fee is only valid for the next scheduled exam date. To exercise this option, you must submit an exam registration form by the final exam deadline. It is the decision of the candidate regarding the number of times to retest. Remediation after multiple unsuccessful attempts is highly encouraged.

Rescheduling the Examination

Withdrawal: This option is available and intended to be used if you are not anticipating taking the exam in the future. Candidate will be refunded the exam fee minus a **\$100 nonrefundable processing fee**. This request is required to be submitted in writing no later than **30 days prior** to the exam date. If notification is not received within 30 days prior to the exam date, candidates will automatically be considered a “no-show” as outlined below. **Refunds are only available the exam cycle in which you originally applied.**

Deferral: This option is available for candidates who wish to reschedule to the next exam date and will be charged a **\$100** deferral fee. This request is required to be submitted in writing no later than 30 days prior to the exam date. If notification is not received within 30 days prior to the exam date, candidates will automatically be considered a “no-show” as outlined below.

No-Show: If you do not take the exam on the scheduled date you are considered a No-Show and will be charged a **\$150 rescheduling fee to register for the next exam. This reduced fee is only valid for the next scheduled exam date.** NCHEC will be sending registration instructions for the next scheduled exam approximately 30 days after the exam date. Unexpected circumstances will be considered and fee waiver requests will be reviewed.

Transfer: Incomplete applications will automatically transfer to the next exam date along with an additional **\$100** transfer fee. Exam fees are nonrefundable for incomplete applications.

CHES Certification

By passing the exam, you become a **Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES)** and earn the honor of using this credential. Each CHES will receive a certificate suitable for framing. A wallet-sized identification card is available to print through your online account. Hard copy upon request. If you applied under the 90-Day option you must submit proof of graduation before you can become certified and receive your exam results.

Acceptable Use of Credential

After receiving official notification of passing the CHES® examination, the designation (CHES®) may be used only as long as certification remains valid and in good standing. Certified individuals must comply with all re-certification requirements to maintain use of the respective credential and its associated acronym. Certified individuals may not make misleading, deceptive, or confusing statements regarding their certification status. If an individual allows their certification to fall into lapsed/expired status, he or she must immediately discontinue use of the associated acronym and is prohibited from stating or implying certification is current.

Maintaining the Certification

The CHES certification is valid for a period of five years. All CHES must **renew** their credential annually, and **recertify** every fifth year. Renewal requires paying the annual renewal fee. Recertification requires accruing a total of 75 continuing education contact hours by the end of the fifth year. It is recommended that CHES accumulate a minimum of 15 hours each year. A Renewal/Recertification Policies and Procedures booklet is available on our website.

Application Checklist

For CHES non-student applicants:

- Transcript showing a minimum of a bachelor's degree with either a specific health education major OR with 25 credits specific to the Health Education Areas of Responsibility.**
- Application Form**
- Application Fee**

For CHES student applicants:

- Transcript showing a minimum of a bachelor's degree with either a specific health education major OR with 25 credits specific to the Health Education Areas of Responsibility.**
- Application form**
- Application fee**
- Advisor letter**

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Revisions: 3/15; 7/15; 10/15; 9/16, 4/17, 10/17, 1/18