

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(About Becoming A Nursing Home Administrator)

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Revision Date 01/2013

Many prospective Nursing Home Administrators (NHA's) have questions about becoming a licensed NHA. Below are some frequently asked questions. If you do not find the answer to one of your questions, please feel free to e-mail the program at NHAP@cdph.ca.gov and we will respond with the answer.

How may I obtain a Nursing Home Administrator's License?

1. Achieve a passing score of at least 75% on both the State and National Nursing Home Administrator Examinations.
2. Pay an initial license fee established by the Nursing Home Administrator Program (NHAP).

How may I qualify for the Nursing Home Administrator Examination?

1. Must be at least 18 years of age, be a citizen of the United States or a legal resident, and have a reputable and responsible character.
2. A master's degree in nursing home administration or a related health administration field. The master's program must have included an internship/residency of at least 480 hours in a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) or an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF).
3. A baccalaureate degree and completion of an NHAP-approved Administrator-In-Training (AIT) Program of 1,000 hours.
4. Ten years of recent full-time work experience, a current license as a licensed registered nurse and completion of a Nursing Home Administrator Program-approved AIT Program of 1,000 hours. At least 5 years of the ten years of work experience must have been in a supervisory or director of nursing position.
5. Ten years of full-time work experience, in any department of an SNF, ICF or an Intermediate Care Facility Developmentally/Disabled with 60 semester units (or 90 quarter units) of college or university courses, and completion of an NHAP-approved Administrator-In-Training Program of 1,000 hours. At least five of the ten years of work experience must have been in a position of department manager.

Does a master's or baccalaureate degree have to be earned at any particular college or university?

The only academic degrees which meet AIT Program requirements are those that have been earned at a college or university recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or approved by the California State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Foreign transcripts must be evaluated and deemed equivalent by a recognized credential evaluation organization.

May I request a waiver to the required experience to participate in the AIT Program?

Generally, the eligibility requirements in regulations allow for no waivers to be granted for any reason. However, if the applicant and the preceptor provide compelling evidence that previous work experience of the applicant directly relates to NHA duties, the program may approve a waiver exception to a portion of the AIT Program requirement of 1,000 hours.

May I request a waiver to the required education to participate in the AIT Program?

An applicant may request a waiver of the required education only if the applicant is a member of a church or religious denomination, recognized by the Internal Revenue Services under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, that owns and operates a faith-based SNF in California, and whose teachings historically prohibit the acquisition of the formal education that would be otherwise required to participate in the AIT Program.

What is the Nursing Home Administrator Examination like?

There are two examinations, the national examination, which is administered by the National Association of Long Term Care Administrator Boards (NAB) and the state examination, which is administered by the California Nursing Home Administrator Program (NHAP).

The national examination is a three hour and forty-five minute exam and consists of 150 multiple choice questions covering the broad aspects of nursing home administration. The state examination is a two hour exam and consists of 100 multiple choice questions based on specific chapters of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 22, Division 5, and the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) located in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 42, Section 431.711, Part 483, Subparts B, D, and E. Division 5, Title 22, of the CCR governs SNF operations. OBRA regulations identify the requirements for State and long term care facilities.

When are the examinations given?

The national examination may be taken by the computer-based testing (CBT) method, and is available upon examination application approval. Additional information will be provided at the time of application.

The state examination is offered in a written format four times per year. For an updated schedule of dates and locations, contact the NHAP or visit NHAP's website at www.cdph.ca.gov.

What happens if I am successful in the examinations?

An applicant who passes both examinations with a score of 75% or higher will be notified that he or she is eligible for NHA licensure and will be instructed to submit the appropriate application and licensure fees to the NHAP.

What happens if I fail either examination?

An applicant who fails to pass either the state or national examination after three attempts shall be required to receive additional training as outlined by the NHAP from an AIT Program-approved preceptor, prior to participating in another examination.

If I am licensed in another state, may I become licensed in California?

Yes. If you are currently licensed as an administrator in another state, you may be able to qualify for the required examination(s) in California. To request further information regarding reciprocity, contact the NHAP at (916) 552-8780.

What is an administrator-in-training (AIT)?

An individual that has a desire to become an NHA and is willing to comply with the regulations set forth by the Federal Government and the State of California while being responsible for the day to day operations of an SNF.

How may I become an AIT?

1. Complete an AIT application.
2. Submit all required documentation.
3. Be cleared through a background check for convictions of any crimes.
4. Pay the appropriate fees established by NHAP.
5. Participate in the required training hours established by NHAP.

How long will it take before my AIT application is processed?

Approximately 30 days from the date received by the NHAP. However, if the package is not submitted to the NHAP office complete, the 30-day clock starts all over.

May I start my AIT Program before I receive an approval from the Nursing Home Administrator Program?

No, you must first receive written approval from the NHAP to begin the AIT Program. Any accumulated hours prior to the NHAP's written approval and start date will be void.

If I received my college degree from abroad, may I still qualify to become an AIT?

Yes, you must contact the International Education Research Foundation Inc. (IERF) to have your transcript credential evaluated. Make sure an unopened envelope of your evaluated transcript is mailed to you. Include your unopened transcript with your AIT application packet and submit the entire package to the NHAP. You may contact IERF at (310) 258-9451 (www.ierf.org), or the Academic and Professional International Evaluations, Inc. at (562) 594-6498.

As an AIT, may I be financially compensated during my 1,000-hour training program?

Compensation rates depend upon the arrangement between you, the preceptor and the nursing home facility.

What happens after my 1,000-hour training program is completed?

Your evaluation is forwarded to the NHAP and reviewed by the AIT coordinator. When approved, the coordinator will send a certificate of completion and provide the next state examination date and examination applications.

How may I acquire a preceptor to begin my training program?

If you are currently working in an SNF or ICF, inquire with the licensed administrator if AIT opportunities are available. If not, you may email or send a written request to the NHAP for a current list of preceptors. If you are willing to relocate, you may wish to apply to a corporate headquarters, rather than to a local administrator. The trade associations (to which most SNF belong) will, upon request, furnish you with a list of multi-facility corporations and foundations.

What is a preceptor?

A preceptor is a licensed nursing home administrator who has been authorized to provide training to an AIT based on his or her attendance of a preceptor training course provided by the NHAP. The approval shall be effective for a period of three years, after which the preceptor will be required to renew his or her preceptor status.

How may I qualify to become a preceptor?

1. Must have a current and active California NHA license.
2. Have served a minimum of 2 years as the designated administrator of a California licensed SNF or a minimum of 4 years as the designated assistant administrator of a California licensed SNF.
3. Must not be on probation or have any disciplinary actions pending.
4. The facility or facilities that an administrator is responsible for must be free of any AA class citations or major deficiencies within the last five (5) years and may not have three (3) or more A class citations in a calendar year within the last five (5) years.

How do I register for a preceptor training class?

Complete the preceptor training application form and submit it with the appropriate non-refundable fees. Preceptor training application forms are available from the NHAP upon request or the NHAP website (www.cdph.ca.gov).

Why do I have to re-certify my preceptor certificate?

Pursuant to the Health and Safety Code Section 1416.57(a) preceptor certificates are active for a period of three years after which time the preceptor is required to renew his or her preceptor status by attending another preceptor training course provided by The Nursing Home Administrator Program.

What is continuing education (CE)?

Continuing education is any course of study offered by an educational institution, professional society, or organization for the purpose of providing continuing education for NHA's.

How many hours of credit may I receive as a licensed NHA?

An NHA must complete 40 hours of the NHAP or NAB approved continuing education (CE) courses, of which 10 hours shall be in the area of patient care or aging. NHA's must complete courses offered by the NHAP or NAB approved providers during each two-year renewal period.

How many CE hours may I claim for being a preceptor?

The maximum number of hours a preceptor can claim for precepting an AIT is 20 hours.

How is credit for course work allocated?

Students attending an NHAP or NAB approved course will receive one hour of credit for each class hour attended. Fifteen (15) classroom hours of credit will be awarded for each semester unit and ten (10) hours of credit for each quarter unit for university and/or college courses submitted for Program approval. One hour of credit will be allocated to NHA's for each hour completed as an instructor of an NHAP approved course, not exceeding sixteen (16) hours for each two year renewal period.

How may I become an NHAP CE provider?

Applicants must complete the appropriate application and pay the current fee. CE provider applications are available from the NHAP or NHA website (www.cdph.ca.gov).

Is there a CE provider list available?

Yes, an NHA must send a written request to the NHAP along with a check or money order for \$15 for a current CE provider list.

I am an NHA. May I request a course approval for a course I attended that was not approved by the NHAP or NAB?

Yes, an NHA must provide complete and accurate information on a form approved by the NHAP and include a check or money order of \$15 for each CE course within 30 days following the first class session.

I am an NHAP approved provider. Does this mean that any courses I teach are automatically approved?

No, provider approvals do not include course approvals. The providers must request the NHAP's approval for each course being offered for CE credit.

How much does the Nursing Home Administrator Program charge to process provider requests for course approvals?

The NHAP's current fee for provider request for course approvals is \$15.00.

Are home study and internet courses approved?

Yes, you may send a written request to the Program, along with a check for \$15.00, for a current list of approved home study and internet providers.

Once I obtain a license, how do I find a job as a Nursing Home Administrator?

You may apply for a job at any SNF or ICF in California. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of local nursing homes may be found in the yellow pages of telephone directories. In addition, a directory of all the health facilities in California may be examined at district offices of the California Department of Public Health. The directory is available at many libraries as well.

Is every nursing home in California required to have a licensed administrator?

Only SNF's and ICF's require a licensed NHA. However, there are other types of facilities that may opt to utilize a licensed nursing home administrator rather than another type of professional, which, by law, may oversee operations of the facility. Please note that some facilities that are generally thought of as SNF's may actually be Residential Care Facilities (RCF's). These facilities require an administrator certified by the Department of Social Services, and Community Care Licensing.

Are there more licensed Nursing Home Administrators in California than there are licensed nursing homes?

Currently, there are approximately 2,600 licensed administrators and about 1,400 licensed nursing homes. However, this does not mean that 1,200 of the licensed NHA's are unemployed. Many licensed administrators have advanced to higher positions in healthcare corporations or other organizations. Some administrators work as consultants and others are employed in other capacities, such as Director of Nursing or Assistant Administrator. Other individuals possessing an NHA license may be living/working in another state, retired, or working in other career fields while maintaining their license.

Where may I find additional information regarding long term care and nursing home administration?

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, 2519 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 2008 - Telephone: (202) 783-2242 – Fax: (202) 783-2255 – Website: www.aahsa.org

American College of Health Care Administrators, 300 N. Lee Street, Ste. #301, Alexandria, VA 22314 – Telephone: (703) 739-7900 – Fax: (703) 739-7901 – Website: www.achca.org

American Health Care Association, 1201 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005 – Telephone: (202) 842-4444 – Fax: (202) 842-3860 – Website: www.ahca.org

Assisted Living Federation of America, 11200 Waples Mill Road, Ste. #150, Fairfax, VA 22030
Telephone: (703) 691-8100 – Fax: (703) 691-8106 – Website: www.alfa.org

National Associate of Long Term Care Administrator Boards, 1444 I Street, NW, Suite #700, Washington, DC 20005 – Telephone: (202) 712-9040 – Fax: (202) 216-9646 – Website: www.nabweb.org