

CERTIFICATION PROCESS HANDBOOK For CSACs and CSAC-As VIRGINIA BOARD OF COUNSELING

The DHP mission is to ensure safe and competent patient care by licensing health professionals, enforcing standards of practice, and providing information to health care practitioners and the public.

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NOTE: The information contained in this handbook is subject to change at any time.
All current information can be found at <http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/counseling>

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Please read and become familiar with the [Regulations Governing the Certification of Substance Abuse Counselors and Substance Abuse Counseling Assistants](#) prior to submitting your application.

The board primarily communicates through email.
Please ensure that you add the board’s email address (csac@dhp.virginia.gov) to your safe recipient list to ensure that you receive all email communication from board staff.

PROCESS TO BECOME A VIRGINIA CERTIFIED SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELOR

The information contained in this handbook represents the amended regulations changes effective 2/19/2020.

You must hold the Certified Substance Abuse Counselor (CSAC) credential in order to represent yourself as such in the Commonwealth of Virginia. There are two avenues to secure this credential:

1. Certification by Endorsement
 - a. This avenue may be applicable to those who hold a current substantially equivalent certification as a substance abuse counselor in another jurisdiction, or hold a national certification approved by the Board.
2. Certification by Examination
 - a. This avenue is for those who have never held a substance abuse counseling certification.

According to the Code of Virginia, a “certified substance abuse counselor” means a person certified by the Virginia Board of Counseling to practice in accordance with the provisions of the [Code of Virginia](#) §54.1-3507.1. This section of the Code defines the scope of practice for a CSAC and states that a CSAC shall be:

- Qualified to perform, *under appropriate supervision or direction*, the substance abuse treatment functions of:
 - screening;
 - intake;
 - orientation;
 - the administration of substance abuse assessment instruments;
 - recovery and relapse prevention planning;
 - substance abuse treatment;
 - case management;
 - substance abuse or dependence crisis intervention;
 - client education;
 - referral activities;
 - record keeping; and,
 - consultation with other professionals.
- A CSAC cannot practice independently, therefore **must** be clinically supervised or directed by:
 - A licensed substance abuse treatment practitioner (LSATP),
 - A mental health professional licensed by the Department of Health Professions, or,
 - If the CSAC is practicing in an exempt setting, he/she shall be supervised by:

- another person with substantially equivalent education, training, and experience; or,
- The CSAC shall be in compliance with the supervision requirements of a licensed facility.

HOW TO BECOME A CSAC IN VIRGINIA

There are several forms that you will need to complete and submit for consideration that are available on the Virginia Board of Counseling’s website (www.dhp.virginia.gov/counseling). The information provided in this handbook can be a valuable tool to use throughout the process.

OBTAINING VIRGINIA CSAC BY EXAMINATION

ANY PERSON PURSUING A CSAC CERTIFICATION BY EXAMINATION WILL NEED TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

- STEP 1. Complete the education and at least 120 of the didactic substance abuse training requirements.
- STEP 2. [Apply](#) for and receive Supervision Approval prior to obtaining supervised experience. Referred to as **Initial Registration of Supervision**.
- STEP 3. Complete the supervised experience.
- STEP 4. [Apply](#) for CSAC by Examination.
- STEP 5. Take and pass the examination offered through NAADAC.
- STEP 6. Receive CSAC credential.

STEP 1: EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

To achieve the credential of a CSAC, you must have:

- A Bachelor’s degree; and,
- **240 clock hours of didactic training in substance abuse education** from one of the following programs:
 - A regionally accredited college or university; or
 - Seminars or workshops from one of the approved providers and in the core content areas listed in 18VAC115-30-50.
 - **120 of the required 240 hours must be completed prior to registration of supervision.**

DIDACTIC TRAINING

The 240 hours of didactic training in substance abuse must include a **minimum of 16 clock hours** in **EACH** of the 13 areas listed below:

1. Dynamics of human behavior;
2. Signs and symptoms of substance abuse;
3. Counseling theories and techniques;
4. Continuum of care and case management skills;

5. Recovery process and relapse prevention models;
6. Professional orientation and ethics;
7. Pharmacology of abused substances;
8. Trauma and crisis intervention;
9. Co-occurring disorders;
10. Cultural competency;
11. Substance abuse counseling approaches and treatment planning;
12. Group counseling; and
13. Prevention, screening, and assessment of substance use and abuse.

Didactic Training in substance abuse education must be completed with one of the following programs:

- a. An regionally accredited university or college; or
- b. Seminars and workshops offered or approved by one of the following:
 - Federal, state, or local governmental agencies; public school systems; or licensed health facilities. (*This would include Community Service Boards*)
 - The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and its state affiliates.
 - The American Association of State Counseling Boards.
 - The American Counseling Association and its state and local affiliates.
 - The American Psychological Association and its state affiliates.
 - The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.
 - NAADAC and its state and local affiliates.
 - National Association of Social Workers.
 - National Board for Certified Counselors.
 - A national behavioral health organization or certification body recognized by the board.
 - Individuals or organizations that have been approved as continuing competency sponsors by the American Association of State Counseling Boards or a counseling board in another state.

PLEASE NOTE: Official school transcript(s) or certificates must be submitted to verify completion of a minimum of 240 hours of didactic training in substance abuse counseling education. Each certificate must show your name, course name, number of clock hours, date of training and the approved providers/programs name. Training not approved or affiliated with one of the approved providers will not be considered. (*One semester hour from a regionally accredited university can be considered for up to 15 clock hours. One quarter hour from a regionally accredited university can be considered for up to 10 clock hours.*)

What is the definition of clinical supervision? The ongoing process performed by a clinical supervisor who monitors the performance of the person supervised and provides regular, documented face-to-face consultation, guidance and education with respect to the clinical skills and competencies of the person supervised.

What does didactic mean? Teaching-learning methods which impart facts and information, usually in the form of one-way communication (includes directed readings and lectures).

EXPERIENCE PERFORMING SUBSTANCE ABUSE TASKS WITH CLIENTS

The required 160 hours of experience must include a *minimum* of 8 clock hours of experience **under supervision** with a qualified supervisor performing the following tasks with substance abuse clients:

- Screening clients to determine eligibility and appropriateness for admissions to a particular program;
- Intake of clients by performing the administrative and initial assessment tasks necessary for admission to a program;
- Orientation of new clients to program's rules, goals, procedures, services, costs, and the rights of the client;
- Assessment of client's strengths, weaknesses, problems, and needs for the development of a treatment plan;
- Treatment planning with the client to identify and rank problems to be addressed, establish goals, and agree on treatment processes;
- Counseling the client utilizing specialized skills in both individual and group approaches to achieve treatment goals and objectives;
- Case management activities that bring services, agencies, people, and resources together in a planned framework of action to achieve established goals;
- Crisis intervention responses to a client's needs during acute mental, emotional, or physical distress;
- Education of clients by providing information about drug abuse and available services and resources;
- Referral of clients in order to meet identified needs unable to be met by the counselor and assisting the client in effectively utilizing those resources.
- Reporting and charting information about the client's assessment, treatment plan, progress, discharge summaries, and other client-related data; and
- Consultation with other professionals to assure comprehensive quality care for the client.

PLEASE NOTE: Groups and classes attended by the applicant as a part of a therapy or treatment program will NOT be accepted as any part of the educational experience.

STEP 2: APPLY FOR AND GAIN RESIDENCY APPROVAL (INITIAL REGISTRATION OF SUPERVISION)

ALERT: You must apply for and gain board-approval of your supervised experience prior to counting hours toward certification.

Supervisor Requirements

To provide supervision to a CSAC *applicant*, the clinical supervisor must hold an active, unrestricted license or certification and must meet one of the following 3 categories:

1. Be a licensed substance abuse treatment practitioner (LSATP); or
2. Be a licensed professional counselor (LPC), licensed clinical psychologist (LCP), licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), licensed marriage & family therapist (LMFT), medical doctor, (MD) or registered nurse (RN) **with either:**
 - A Board recognized national certification in substance abuse counseling, such as the MAC, AADC or NCACII ; or,
 - A Virginia CSAC; or,
 - A minimum of one year of experience in substance abuse counseling and at least **100 hours of didactic training** covering:
 - Dynamics of human behavior;
 - Signs and symptoms of substance abuse;
 - Counseling theories and techniques;
 - Continuum of care and case management skills;
 - Recovery process and relapse prevention methods;
 - Professional orientation and ethics;
 - Pharmacology of abused substances;
 - Trauma and crisis intervention;
 - Co-occurring disorders;
 - Cultural competency;
 - Substance abuse counseling approaches and treatment planning;
 - Group counseling; and
 - Prevention, screening and assessment of substance use and abuse.
3. Be a Virginia CSAC who has:
 - 2 years' experience as a Virginia CSAC.

PLEASE NOTE: *After February 19, 2021, supervisors must obtain professional training in supervision consisting of three credit hours or four quarter house in graduate-level coursework in supervision or at least 20 hours of continuing education in supervision offered by a provider approved under 18VAC115-30-50.*

Supervisor Responsibilities

The supervisor of a supervisee assumes full responsibility for the clinical activities of that supervisee specified within the supervisory contract for the duration of the residency. Additionally, on the [verification of supervision form](#), the supervisor must report the total hours of supervised experience and must evaluate the supervisee's competency. Supervision by any individual whose relationship to the resident compromises the objectivity of the supervisor is prohibited. If supervision terminates, the supervisor or the supervisee should complete the Termination of Supervision form (available on the Board website) for their records.

Gaining Board Approval for Supervised Experience or “Registering Supervision”

Once you have identified a supervisor and a worksite, submit the Registration of Supervision application, along with the fee (in the form of a check or money order, payable to the *Treasurer of Virginia*), to the Board for approval. Specifically, submit the following:

- [Initial Registration of Supervision application](#)

- Please NOTE, this application contains an ethics portion.
 - If you answered “yes” to any of the ethics questions, you must submit a statement regarding the circumstances and any court documents, employment records, etc. Please refer to [Guidance Document 115-2](#).
 - If you answered “yes” for a criminal conviction, we must have court documentation. If the conviction is not available with the courts, you may provide a criminal history check from the Virginia State Police. Please refer to [Guidance Document 115-2](#).
- \$65 Fee payable by check or money order to the “Treasure of Virginia”
- Official Bachelor’s or post-baccalaureate transcript with conferral date
 - Faxes and photocopies will NOT be accepted.
 - Transcripts must be mailed with your application packet or received directly from the university by secured electronic methods such as eSCRIPT-SAFE or Parchment.
- Didactic Training Form: All applicants are required to complete a **minimum of 120 hours** of didactic education as required by subsection B of 18VAC115-30-50 prior to the beginning of supervised experience in order to be counted toward certification.
 - In addition to your didactic training form, you must provide a copy of your official transcript or certificates for review.
- Out-of-state license verification (only applicable, if you hold or have held a license, certification or registration as a mental health or health professional in another state)
- Supervisory Contract agreement (An example of a [Supervisory Contract](#) can be found on our website)
- Name change documentation (if applicable)
- Verification of your supervisor’s qualifications

We strongly encourage you to verify that your packet is complete and includes all required forms. A completed application packet provides the best opportunity to avoid delays in approving your information. You should make every effort to mail this information in one complete packet to our board office for consideration.

NOTE: Original signatures are required on all forms and applications. Copies and digital signatures will not be accepted.

AFTER YOUR APPLICATION HAS BEEN RECEIVED:

- When your packet is received, it is date stamped and your check is processed.
- An administrative review is completed on your file to ensure it is complete.
- Within 7-10 business days, you are notified of any deficiencies found in your application.
- Upon receipt of corrections and/or additional required documentation your file then receives another administrative review. This process continues until it appears that your file is complete.
- Once your file is complete, it may take up to 30 days for your application to be reviewed.
- If you are approved as a supervisee for CSAC certification, you and your supervisor will be emailed an approval letter.

NOTE: Incomplete applications will be kept active for one year from the date of payment. If your application is not completed in the one year timeframe, you will be required to re-apply by submitting

a new application.

If your application is complete but does not appear to meet the minimum requirements, you will be notified by email. If your application does not meet the minimum requirements, you will be sent an email and will be given the opportunity to request an Informal Conference with the Board if you feel that you meet the minimum requirements as outlined in the regulations. Requesting an Informal Conference is a lengthy process and can take from several months to a year to schedule. Please review Guidance Document 115-3: [Credential Appeals FAQ's](#) for more information on the Informal Conference process.

IMPORTANT SUPERVISION NOTICES! Once you are approved as a supervisee, your supervisor is responsible for your substance abuse counseling activities at the location indicated on your supervisory contract.

During the supervised experience, supervisees must use their names and the title “supervisee” in all written communications. Clients must be informed in writing of the supervisee’s status and the supervisor’s name, professional address, and phone number.

Adding or Changing Registration of Supervision

A new [application](#), documentation, supervisory contract and \$30.00 fee must be submitted for approval for any change in supervision (i.e. supervisor add/change). Changing or adding a worksite does not require an application or fee if your supervisor was previously approved. However, you must have a current supervisory contract in place that identifies that you are working at each worksite where you are providing substance abuse counseling services.

Please note that a change to previously approved supervision (currently active) does not require an additional education review. However, the requested change still requires a formal administrative review and processing that can take 15 days.

Termination of Supervision

If supervision terminates, you should submit a [Termination of Supervision form](#) (which can be found on the Board website) to the Board. Your supervisor should also complete the CSAC Verification of Supervision form at the end of your experience. The supervisee must keep this form in their records until they are ready to apply for certification. This CSAC Verification of Supervision form is a necessary piece of your application and serves as documentation of the completed supervision and supervised experience hours.

STEP 3: COMPLETE THE SUPERVISED RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

Prior to submitting the CSAC by examination application, you must have completed the following:

- 2,000 hours of supervised experience in the practice of clinical substance abuse counseling services to include:

- One to four hours per 40 hours of work experience under supervision between the supervisor and the supervisee for a total of 100 hours.
 - Group supervision hours are equivalent to individual supervision hours, but are limited to 50 of the required 100 hours.
- The supervised experience must be completed in no less than 12 months and no more than 60 months.
 - Supervisees who began a supervised experience before February 19, 2020 must complete the supervised experience by February 19, 2025.
- 160 hours of experience performing the following tasks with substance abuse clients. Each of the following tasks must be performed for a least eight hours under supervision as verified by the supervisor.
 - Screening clients to determine eligibility and appropriateness for admission to a particular program;
 - Intake of clients by performing the administrative and initial assessment tasks necessary for admission to a program;
 - Orientation of new clients to program's rules, goals, procedures, services, costs and the rights of the client;
 - Assessment of client's strengths, weaknesses, problems, and needs for the development of a treatment plan;
 - Treatment planning with the client to identify and rank problems to be addressed, establish goals, and agree on treatment processes;
 - Counseling the client utilizing specialized skills in both individual and group approaches to achieve treatment goals and objectives;
 - Case management activities which bring services, agencies, people and resources together in a planned framework of action to achieve established goals;
 - Crisis intervention responses to clients' needs during acute mental, emotional or physical distress;
 - Education of clients by providing information about drug abuse and available services and resources;
 - Referral of clients in order to meet identified needs unable to be met by the counselor and assisting the client in effectively utilizing those resources;
 - Reporting and charting information about the client's treatment, progress, and other client related data; and
 - Consultation with other professionals to assure comprehensive quality care for the client.

What is substance abuse counseling? Applying a counseling process, treatment strategies and rehabilitative services to help an individual to understand his substance use, abuse or dependency; and change his drug-taking behavior so that it does not interfere with effective

physical, psychological, social or vocational functioning.

STEP 4: SUMBIT APPLICATION FOR LICENSURE BY EXAMINATION

Once supervised experience has been completed and you have met the remaining 240 clock hours of didactic substance abuse education, you will need to submit all required application materials and documentation with a check or money order, made payable to the *Treasurer of Virginia*, in the amount of \$115 for the application processing and initial certification fee. Once this application is approved, you may sit for the examination and obtain certification. Specifically, at this stage, submit the following:

- [Application for certified substance abuse counselor \(CSAC\)](#) by examination which must have an original signature.
 - Please NOTE, this application contains an ethics portion.
 - If you answered “yes” to any of the ethics questions, you must submit a statement regarding the circumstances and any court documents, employment records, etc. Please refer to [Guidance Document 115-2](#).
 - If you answered “yes” for a criminal conviction, we must have court documentation. If the conviction is not available with the courts, you may provide a criminal history check from the Virginia State Police. Please refer to [Guidance Document 115-2](#).
- \$115.00 fee paid by check or money order, made payable to the “Treasurer of Virginia”.
- Verification of Supervision form to be submitted by each of your supervisors to attest to you completing 100 hours of supervision, 2,000 hours of experience in the practice of clinical substance abuse and 160 hours of experimental tasks.
- Didactic Training for verifying the completion of 240 hours of substance abuse counseling education training.
 - Official transcripts or certificates must be submitted to verify completion of a minimum of 240 hours of didactic training in substance abuse counseling by a provider listed in the regulations.
- Official Bachelor’s or post-baccalaureate transcript with conferral date (if not previously approved to begin your supervised experience)
 - Faxes and photocopies will NOT be accepted.
 - Transcripts must be mailed with your application packet or received directly from the university by secured electronic methods such as eSCRIPT-SAFE or Parchment.
 - A duplicate transcript is not required if you were previously approved for registration of supervision in Virginia.
- Out-of-State Licensure/Certification Verification, if applicable.
- Out-of-State Supervisor Licensure/Certification Verification, if applicable.
- Unless your supervisor was pre-approved, a LPC, LCP, LCSW, LMFT, MD and RN supervisor must provide evidence that they possess either a board-recognized national certification in substance abuse counseling obtained by standards substantially equivalent, hold a VA CSAC certification, or have a minimum of one-year experience in substance

- abuse counseling and at least 100 hours of didactic training.
- You must provide a current report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Practitioner Data Bank. An online self-query can be processed at <https://www.npdb.hrsa.gov/ext/selfquery/SQHome.jsp>.

What information will be required if I have a criminal conviction? The Board requires that you submit a certified copy of all conviction orders (obtained from the courthouse of record); evidence that all court ordered requirements were met (i.e., letter from the probation officer if on supervised probation, paid fines and restitution, etc.); a letter from the applicant explaining the factual circumstances leading to the criminal offense(s); and letters from employers concerning work performance (specifically from Counseling-related employers, if possible).

STEP 5. TAKE AND PASS THE EXAMINATION

Once staff has approved your application for CSAC examination, you will receive an email from the Board advising you that you have been approved to take the NCAC-I exam towards CSAC certification in Virginia. The examination is administered through the National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals (NCC AP) with the Association for Addiction Professionals (NAADAC). The examination is given on demand and testing sites are located in all major cities across the United States. The cost for the examination is \$150.00 per test.

If an applicant fails to achieve a passing score within two years of board approval to sit for the examination, the applicant must reapply according to the regulations in effect at that time.

The Board will receive your test scores within approximately 2-4 weeks after your testing date. Should you fail the examination, you may take the next examination again following a 90-day waiting period.

SPECIAL EXAMINATION ACCOMODATIONS

NCC AP allows accommodations for any special needs you may have for taking your certification examination. You will need to visit their website at nccap@naadac.org for more information regarding the requirements for accommodation approval.

STEP 6: RECIEVE CSAC CREDENTIAL

Once you are approved as a CSAC, you will be mailed a permanent hard copy certification and a wall certificate within 7 to 10 days. You will be required to renew your certificate on or before June 30th of each year and complete 10 hours of continuing education for each annual license renewal.

Attestation of completion of continuing education is not required for the first renewal following initial certification in Virginia.

PROCESS FOR OBTAINING CSAC BY ENDORSEMENT

Virginia does not have reciprocity with any state. The endorsement application process is for those who hold a substance abuse certification or license which is substantially equivalent in another jurisdiction, or hold a board-approved national certification.

PREREQUISITES FOR CSAC BY ENDORSEMENT:

To [apply](#) for a CSAC by endorsement, you must have one of the following:

1. License or certification as a substance abuse counselor in another jurisdiction in good standing obtained by standards substantially equivalent to what's required to obtain a Virginia CSAC by examination; or,
2. Current national certification in good standing from one of the following:
 - a. The National Certified Addiction Counselor Level II (NCAC II) accreditation from the (NCC AP)/NAADAC;
 - b. The Master Addiction Counselor (MAC) accreditation from the (NCC AP)/NAADAC; or,
 - c. The Advanced Alcohol & Drug Counselor (AADC) accreditation from the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC).
 - d. The Master Addictions Counselor (MAC) accreditation from the National Board of Certified Counselors, (NBCC).

APPLYING FOR CSAC BY ENDORSEMENT:

If you have met the prerequisites for CSAC by endorsement, then you can [apply](#) for your Virginia CSAC by submitting the complete CSAC application by endorsement packet to the Board of Counseling. Once approved, you will receive your Virginia CSAC certification.

- [Application](#) for CSAC by Endorsement
 - Please NOTE, this application contains an ethics portion.
 - If you answered “yes” to any of the ethics questions, you must submit a statement regarding the circumstances and any court documents, employment records, etc. Please refer to [Guidance Document 115-2](#).
 - If you answered “yes” for a criminal conviction, we must have court documentation. If the conviction is not available with the courts, you may provide a criminal history check from the Virginia State Police. Please refer to [Guidance Document 115-2](#).
- \$115 Fee payable by check or money order to the “Treasure of Virginia”
- Out-of-state license verification
- Verification of a passing score on an examination in the jurisdiction in which licensure or certification was obtained or on the NCACI or higher examination administered by NAADAC. Your exam scores must be sent directly to the Board from the examination provider. If you took a state constructed exam, your scores will need to be provided directly from the licensing state.
- You must provide a current report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Practitioner Data Bank. An online self-query can be processed at <https://www.npdb.hrsa.gov/ext/selfquery/SQHome.jsp>.
- Verification of Education/Experience by submitting one of the following:

- Provide verification of an active, unrestricted licensure or certification as a substance abuse counselor in another jurisdiction obtained by standards substantially equivalent to the education and experience requirements set forth in 18VAC115-30-50 and 18VAC115-30-60 as verified directly from the out-of-state licensing agency; or,
- Provide a copy of the regulations in effect at the time of initial licensure or certification that verifies that your license or certification was obtained by standards substantially equivalent to the education and experience requirements set forth in 18VAC115-30-50 and 18VAC115-30-60; or,
- Provide verification, by submitting a copy of the certification, from one of the following:
 - The National Certified Addiction Counselor Level II (NCAC II) accreditation from the National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals (NCC AP)/NAADAC, the Association of Addiction Professionals; or
 - The Master Addiction Counselor (MAC) accreditation from the NCC AP/NAADAC, the Association of Addition Professionals; or
 - The Advanced Alcohol & Drug Counselor (AADC) accreditation from the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC); or
 - The Master Addictions Counselor (MAC) accreditation from the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC).

What information will be required if I have a criminal conviction? The Board requires that you submit a certified copy of all conviction orders (obtained from the courthouse of record); evidence that all court ordered requirements were met (i.e., letter from the probation officer if on supervised probation, paid fines and restitution, etc.); a letter from the applicant explaining the factual circumstances leading to the criminal offense(s); and letters from employers concerning work performance (specifically from Counseling-related employers, if possible).

Receive CSAC Certification

Once you are approved as a CSAC, you will be mailed a permanent hard copy certification and a wall certificate within 7 to 10 days. You will be required to renew your certificate on or before June 30th of each year and complete 10 hours of continuing education for each annual license renewal.

Attestation of completion of continuing education is not required for the first renewal following initial certification in Virginia.

GROUNDS TO DENY AN APPLICATION:

Grounds to deny a license may be found in Regulation 18VAC115-20-140 of the board's [Regulations Governing the Practice of Professional Counseling](#). If grounds exist to deny an application for licensure, your application will not be approved by board staff, and you will be so notified and offered an opportunity to meet with a Special Conference Committee of the board to determine if the license should be denied, issued, or issued conditionally.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

THE APPLICATION/REGISTRATION PROCESS IS NOT A SHORT PROCESS. THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TAKES VARIES FOR EVERY APPLICANT. THE MORE COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION IS UPON RECEIPT, THE SMOOTHER THE PROCESS WILL GO. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT TO FOLLOW ALL DIRECTIONS AND COMPLETE ALL FORMS IN THEIR ENTIRETY.

ALL FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE, NON-TRANSFERABLE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Pending applications/registrations and fees are valid for one (1) year from the date of receipt. If your application/registration is not approved within one (1) year, a new application/registration and fee will be required.

PROCESS TO BECOME A VIRGINIA CERTIFIED SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELOR ASSISTANT (CSAC-A)

The information contained in this handbook represents the amended regulations changes effective 2/19/2020.

You must hold the Certified Substance Abuse Counselor Assistant (CSAC-A) credential in order to represent yourself as such in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The only avenue to secure this credential is to apply by examination.

According to the Code of Virginia, a “certified substance abuse counselor assistant” means a person certified by the Virginia Board of Counseling to practice in accordance with the provisions of the [Code of Virginia](#) §54.1-3507.2. This section of the Code defines the scope of practice for a CSAC-A and states that a CSAC-A shall be:

- Qualified to perform, **under appropriate supervision or direction**, the substance abuse treatment functions of:
 - orientation;
 - implementation of substance abuse treatment plans;
 - case management;
 - substance abuse or dependence crisis intervention;
 - record keeping; and,
 - consultation with other professionals.
- Supervised or directed either by:
 - A Licensed Substance Abuse Treatment Practitioner (LSATP),
 - Any other mental health professional licensed by the Department of Health Professions,
 - A CSAC, or,
 - If the CSAC-A is practicing in an exempt setting, he/she shall be supervised by:
 - another person with substantially equivalent education, training, and experience, or,
 - the CSAC-A shall be in compliance with the supervision requirements of a licensed facility.

HOW TO BECOME A CSAC-A IN VIRGINIA

There are several forms that you will need to complete and submit for consideration that are available on the Virginia Board of Counseling’s website (www.dhp.virginia.gov/counseling). The information provided in this handbook can be a valuable tool to use throughout the process.

OBTAINING VIRGINIA CSAC-A BY EXAMINATION

ANY PERSON PURSUING A CSAC-A BY EXAMINATION WILL NEED TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

- STEP 1. Complete the education requirements.
- STEP 2. Take and pass the examination.
- STEP 3. Receive CSAC-A credential.

STEP 1: Education Requirements

To obtain the CSAC-A credential you must have:

1. A high school diploma or general educational development (GED) certificate, or a post-secondary degree; and,
2. **120 clock hours of didactic training in substance abuse education** from one of the following programs:
 - i. a regionally accredited college or university; or
 - ii. seminars and workshops that meet the requirement in 18VAC115-30-62.
3. **180 hours of experience performing substance abuse tasks with clients** under supervision.

DIDACTIC TRAINING

The 120 hours of didactic training in substance abuse counseling must include a **minimum of 8 clock hours** in each of the following 13 areas:

1. Dynamics of human behavior;
2. Signs and symptoms of substance abuse;
3. Counseling theories and techniques;
4. Continuum of care and case management skills;
5. Recovery process and relapse prevention models;
6. Professional orientation and ethics;
7. Cultural competency;
8. Trauma and crisis intervention;
9. Pharmacology of abused substances
10. Co-occurring disorders;
11. Substance abuse counseling approaches and treatment planning;
12. Group counseling; and
13. Prevention, screening, and assessment of substance use and abuse.

Didactic Training in substance abuse education must be completed with one of the following programs:

- a) An regionally accredited university or college; or
- b) Seminars and workshops offered or approved by one of the following:

- Federal, state, or local governmental agencies; public school systems; or licensed health facilities. (*This would include Community Service Boards*)
- The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and its state affiliates.
- The American Association of State Counseling Boards.
- The American Counseling Association and its state and local affiliates.
- The American Psychological Association and its state affiliates.
- The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.
- NAADAC and its state and local affiliates.
- National Association of Social Workers.
- National Board for Certified Counselors.
- A national behavioral health organization or certification body recognized by the board.
- Individuals or organizations that have been approved as continuing competency sponsors by the American Association of State Counseling Boards or a counseling board in another state.

PLEASE NOTE: Official school transcript(s) or certificates must be submitted to verify completion of a minimum of 120 hours of didactic training in substance abuse counseling. Each certificate must show your name, course name, number of clock hours, date of training and the approved providers/programs name. Training not approved or affiliated with one of the approved providers will not be considered.

What does didactic mean? Teaching-learning methods which impart facts and information, usually in the form of one-way communication (includes directed readings and lectures).

EXPERIENCE PERFORMING SUBSTANCE ABUSE TASKS WITH CLIENTS

The required 180 hours of experience must include a ***minimum*** of 8 clock hours of experience **under supervision** with a qualified supervisor performing the following tasks with substance abuse clients:

1. Screening clients and gathering information used in making the determination for the need for additional professional assistance;
2. Intake of clients by performing the administrative tasks necessary for admission to a program;
3. Orientation of new clients to program's rules, goals, procedures, services, costs and the rights of the client;
4. Assisting the client in identifying and ranking problems to be addressed, establish goals, and agree on treatment processes;
5. Implementation of a substance abuse treatment plan as directed by the supervisor;
6. Implementation of case management activities that bring services, agencies, people, and resources together in a planned framework of action to achieve established goals;
7. Assistance in identifying appropriate crisis intervention responses to client's needs during acute mental, emotional, or physical distress;
8. Education of clients by providing information about drug abuse and available services

- and resources;
9. Facilitating the client’s utilization of available support systems and community resources to meet needs identified in clinical valuation or treatment planning;
 10. Reporting and charting information about client’s treatment, progress, and other client-related data; and,
 11. Consultation with other professionals to assure comprehensive quality of care for the client.

Groups and classes attended as a part of a therapy or treatment program will not be accepted as any part of the educational experience.

Supervisor Requirements

The [Code of Virginia](#) states that in order to provide supervision to a CSAC-A ***applicant***, the supervisor must be a licensed substance abuse treatment practitioner (LSATP), or any other mental health professional licensed by the Department (such as a LPC, LMFT, LCP or LCSW), or by a certified substance abuse counselor (CSAC).

STEP 2: APPLY FOR CSAC-A BY EXAMINATION

Once you have meet the 120 hours of clock hours of didactic substance abuse training and completed the 180 hours of experience under supervision, submit all required application materials and documentation with your check or money order, payable to the *Treasurer of Virginia*, in the amount of \$115 for the application fee. Once this application is approved, you may sit for the examination and obtain certification. Specifically, at this stage, submit the following:

- Application [form](#) by examination which must be signed
 - Please NOTE, this application contains an ethics portion.
 - If you answered “yes” to any of the ethics questions, you must submit a statement regarding the circumstances and any court documents, employment records, etc. Please refer to [Guidance Document 115-2](#).
 - If you answered “yes” for a criminal conviction, we must have court documentation. If the conviction is not available with the courts, you may provide a criminal history check from the Virginia State Police. Please refer to [Guidance Document 115-2](#).
- \$115 fee payable by check or money order to the “Treasure of Virginia”
- Didactic training required for certification form documenting the completion of 120 hours of substance abuse counseling education training
 - Official transcripts or certificates must be submitted to verify completion of a minimum of 120 hours of didactic training in substance abuse counseling by an approved provider listed in the regulations.
- Verification of experience form signed by your supervisor attesting to completion of 180 hours of experience in a practicum, internship or under supervision performing specific tasks with substance abuse clients while under supervision.
- Official high school transcript, general education development (GED) certificate, or a post-secondary degree transcript.

- Faxes and photocopies will NOT be accepted.
- Name change documentation (if applicable)
- Out-of-state license verification (only applicable, if you hold or have held a license, certification or registration as a mental health or health professional in another state)
- You must provide a current report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Practitioner Data Bank. An online self-query can be processed at <https://www.npdb.hrsa.gov/ext/selfquery/SQHome.jsp>.

What information will be required if I have a criminal conviction? The Board requires that you submit a certified copy of all conviction orders (obtained from the courthouse of record); evidence that all court ordered requirements were met (i.e., letter from the probation officer if on supervised probation, paid fines and restitution, etc.); a letter from the applicant explaining the factual circumstances leading to the criminal offense(s); and letters from employers concerning work performance (specifically from Counseling-related employers, if possible).

Once your education, didactic training, and experience is reviewed and approved, the exam will be emailed to you. The Board requires that you take and pass the Virginia State Constructed CSAC-A exam. The CSAC-A exam is an open book test. You are encouraged to reference the [Regulations Governing the Certification of Substance Abuse Counselors and Substance Abuse Counseling Assistants](#) when answering the questions. Once you complete the exam, you should mail, fax or email your examination to the Board office for processing.

You are able to take the CSAC-A examination multiple times; however if the applicant fails to achieve a passing score within two years of board approval to sit for the examination, the applicant must reapply according to the regulations in effect at that time. Once you pass the exam, you will receive your CSAC-A certification.

STEP 3: RECIEVE CSAC-A CREDENTIAL

Once your examination is graded and reviewed by the Board, you will be sent an email regarding certification. Certifications and wall certificates are mailed 7 to 10 days after your CSAC-A application is approved.

GROUND TO DENY AN APPLICATION:

Grounds to deny a license may be found in Regulation 18VAC115-20-140 of the board's [Regulations Governing the Practice of Professional Counseling](#). If grounds exist to deny an application for licensure, your application will not be approved by board staff, and you will be so notified and offered an opportunity to meet with a Special Conference Committee of the board to determine if the license should be denied, issued, or issued conditionally.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

THE APPLICATION/REGISTRATION PROCESS IS NOT A SHORT PROCESS. THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TAKES VARIES FOR EVERY APPLICANT. THE MORE COMPLETE

YOUR APPLICATION IS UPON RECEIPT, THE SMOOTHER THE PROCESS WILL GO. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT TO FOLLOW ALL DIRECTIONS AND COMPLETE ALL FORMS IN THEIR ENTIRETY.

ALL FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE, NON-TRANSFERABLE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Pending applications/registrations and fees are valid for one (1) year from the date of receipt. If your application/registration is not approved within one (1) year, a new application/registration and fee will be required.