

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

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Webinar Objectives

- Understand helpful approaches to analyzing multiple-choice questions in support of successful question answering;
- Be familiar with examination preparation materials available for study;
- Understand the relationship between certification/licensure, ethics and scopes-of-practice; and
- Be familiar with typical topic domain areas for study in preparation for licensure/certification examinations.

Question and Answer session at the end of the program.

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

- When you have participated in a webinar, or participate in a study course, it would be **unethical for the provider to offer any participant a guarantee** that having studied with them assures a passing grade on an examination.
- Of course, participation in this webinar is no different, offering you help and support but no guarantees.

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

- **History** of the evolution of credentials in the substance use disorders field.
- www.williamwhitepapers.com

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

- Individuals that worked in the support of alcoholics and addicts were most often recovering from the same difficulties themselves
- The professionalization of the field evolved in the 1970's.

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

In **1979** the Certification Reciprocity Consortium/Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse, Inc. (CRC/AODA) formalized their relationship and entered into the process of certifying counselors through state member organizations

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

Tasks became better defined following **The work of Birch and Davis** in 1984, from which the NIAAA published the *Development of Model Professional Standards for Counselor Credentialing*.

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

The IC&RC did another Role Delineation Study in 1991 (job analysis), and with The Addiction Technology Transfer Centers, create *the Addiction Counseling Competencies* which resulted in TAP 21.

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

TAP 21 is based on three characteristics of competency, knowledge, skills and attitudes, (KSA's), which are made up of four Transdisciplinary Foundations that are the building blocks necessary for practice in all disciplines.

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

The Transdisciplinary Foundations are:

- *Understanding Addiction*
- *Treatment Knowledge*
- *Application to Practice*
- *Professional Readiness*

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

These resulted in **8 practice dimensions** each containing the competencies that the addiction counselor should attain to master each practice dimension.

They are....:

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

- 1) Clinical Evaluation
- 2) Treatment Planning
- 3) Referral
- 4) Client, Family, and Community Education
- 5) Documentation
- 6) Service Coordination
- 7) Professional and Ethical Responsibilities
- 8) Counseling

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

I will talk about how
to access the
TIPs and **TAPs**
later in this session.

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

Now, having a better definition regarding what a counselor needed to know to ethically practice in this profession, **methods of measuring these knowledge's and skills evolved**, such as case reviews, orals boards and written testing, and better structure and goals for formal courses of study, practica and internships.

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

Credentialing organizations continue to have to be assured that they can legally defend a test or other requirements based upon an up-to-date job analysis that helps to establish test validity.

Test validity is the way in which a test developer ensures that the competency to be inferred from a test is really measured by the test questions asked.

A test is valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure!

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

Credentialing organizations turned to professionals to help develop and create valid tests.

They generated methods of randomizing questions on the tests, oversaw the writing of “items,” which are the test questions, monitored security of the tests and administered them to the public.

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

- A profession monitors itself.
- Creation of validation was performed by those in the profession considered qualified to do so.
- The metrics experts consulted with them to assure ethical and effective tests and measures were produced.
- Guidelines for qualification were established, in the beginning with one credential to the present when there are multiple credentials available supporting various scopes of practice.

Expectations of Certification/ Licensure Testing

Codes of Ethics are examples
of **standards** related to how
we practice.

Testing measures whether the
applicant is aware of and
understands the ethics of their
particular practice.

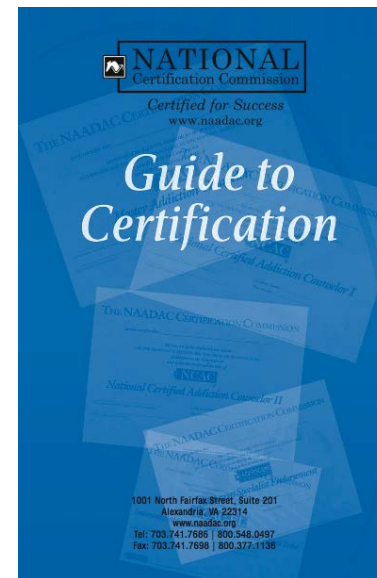


Expectations of Certification/ Licensure Testing

The National Certification Commission (NCC) provides a [Guide to Certification](#), which can be accessed at the NAADAC website (www.naadac.org) under the *certification* tab.

The Code of Ethics has been recently updated and rewritten by NAADAC, and the applicant should refer to that document instead of the version in this Guide. (www.naadac.org)

There are multiple Codes of Ethics that should be reviewed.





Expectations of Certification/ Licensure Testing

- **Scopes of Practice** relate to those areas within which a clinician may ethically provide services.
- **Certificates and licenses** often cover broad areas of a clinician's knowledge and skills.
- **Endorsement certificates** may specify additional areas related to general practice, within which they are authorized to practice.

Example: A substance use disorder clinician having assessed that a client has experienced sexual abuse in their childhood would need to refer the person to someone that is skilled in this area, if they are not.



Expectations of Certification/ Licensure Testing

- The **purpose of credentialing** is to standardize the quality of addiction prevention, intervention, treatment and continuing care services.
- This is accomplished via **standardized testing**, which sets benchmarks for professionals and monitors the abilities of those who treat addictions.



Expectations of Certification/ Licensure Testing

Standardized Testing

- Each individual counselor must provide **formal indicators** of their current knowledge and competence.
- These standards are required at both state and national levels depending on the scope of practice.
- They also set forth requirements that require professionals to participate in **continuing education** to stay up-to-date with new treatment information for the sake of their clients.



Expectations of Certification/ Licensure Testing

Credentials provide assistance (**Identify Competency**) to employers, health care providers, educators, government entities, labor unions, other practitioners and the public to identify the of quality counselors who have met the national competency standards.

Expectations of Certification/ Licensure Testing

- Even though you have studied over an extended period of time it is necessary to review, immediately before your test date.
- Even though you have been working as a substance use disorders counselor you must review before you take the test.



Strategies for Successful Test Taking

One cannot defend a failing grade on a credentialing exam with the argument that you “once” knew that information.

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

You can't rely on
something not being on
the test just because it is
new data.

Multiple-Choice Questions

Questions contained in examinations of this nature are almost always in a **multiple-choice format.**

Multiple-Choice Questions

- It is the presenter's belief that time spent **studying the make-up of multiple-choice questions** (MCQ's) has a significant payback when the exam is taken.
- A segment of a college class that I teach includes an analysis of the questions, and then actually writing a number of questions.

Multiple-Choice Questions

A breakdown of the “ITEMS”:

Item = the entire multiple choice question

Stem = the first, sentence-like portion of the multiple choice question:

1) *A body of water, which contains salt, is the...*

Multiple-Choice Questions

Alternates or options = all of the possible multiple-choice responses:

- a. Ocean*
- b. Mississippi River*
- c. Mount Everest*
- d. Yellowstone Geyser*

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1) *A body of water, which contains salt, is the...*
- a. Ocean*
 - b. Mississippi River*
 - c. Mount Everest*
 - d. Yellowstone Geyser*

The “**Keyed Response**” is the correct answer = A

Multiple-Choice Questions

- **Distracter or foil** = the wrong answers.
- Written to closely resemble the keyed response, therefore distracting or foiling students who are good at guessing.
- **Distracters are plausible but incorrect answers** to the question.

1) *A body of water, which contains salt, is the...*

- a. *Ocean,*
- b. *Mississippi River,*
- c. *Mount Everest,*
- d. *Yellowstone geyser*

In this question = **b, c and d**

Multiple-Choice Questions

- All answers should follow logically from the stem.
- A poorly written MCQ may have grammatical errors within the question or the answers.
- One of the answers (c) to the example doesn't quite fit...
- This choice may be ruled out immediately, even without any sense of what the correct answer might be.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- There is generally a “throw away answer.”
- The test taker can generally identify which one this is and disqualify it immediately.
- In my question answer “d” is not a “body of water.”
- The answer “c” at least has water involved.

1) *A body of water, which contains salt, is the...*

- a. *Ocean,*
- b. *Mississippi River,*
- b. *Mount Everest,*
- c. *Yellowstone geyser*

Multiple-Choice Questions

- The successful answer should be the most accurate **(best)** answer.
- There may be two “right” answers, but one of them is “best.”
- It might be argued that if one is close to the mouth of the Mississippi River saltwater will be found in the river.
- This is true, but “ocean” is without a doubt the “best” answer.

Strategies for Successful Test Taking

- ✓ Examinations are timed
- ✓ Do not plan to use your telephone or PDA
- ✓ Wear a Watch

Multiple-Choice Questions

There are many myths regarding the “best” way to choose correct answers.

The only truly accurate one is to “know your information.”

Multiple-Choice Questions

- ✓ Make sure that you have answered all the questions.

Multiple-Choice Questions

Understand the question!

If there is one most important task when taking a multiple-choice test, and that is to “*really*” understand the question.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- Even though everyone has taken multiple choice question tests, a good idea is to **take more**.
- I encourage in a general sense participating in a study group while you are readying yourself for a test.

Examination Preparation Materials

- Several credentialing organizations and independent authors have developed **publications and approaches for test preparation.**
- I will review one such example, and encourage applicants to seek out multiple avenues of study as they prepare for the testing segments of their licensing or certification process.

Examination Preparation Materials

- The applicant will find independent study courses, training manuals and continuing education (CEU) opportunities in preparation for successfully passing an examination. Choose the ones that are published by organizations which have been in the credentialing arena for the long term.

Examination Preparation Materials

As you seek out your study materials in preparation for your examination, you will quickly note that there is a vast abundance of materials, much of which are **free**.

Examination Preparation Materials

- All of the **TAPS** and **TIPS** are available from the Federal Government in either a paper copy, or electronically.
- In the back of **TAP 21** there is an excellent list of Internet Resources for those wanting to follow-up on the competencies, knowledge, skills and attitudes discussed in the TAP.

Examination Preparation Materials

Most credentialing organizations also provide, generally via their web-site, a small publication that outlines both their application process, but also a [bibliography](#) of materials upon which their examinations are based.

Examination Preparation Materials

- **I ask my students an essential question:** How do you know what you know? It's a very difficult question to answer.
- One way "to know" is to ask yourself, "have I actually performed all of the functions in these domains."

Examination Preparation Materials

- Testing's purpose is to sort out those that really do "know" from those that really "don't."
- Its helpful to closely review the domains and relate them to the old "what, where, when, how" questioning.
- This will make the data come alive for you in a form that is easier to remember.
- And of course you need to study all of it, and then study all of it again.

Examination Preparation Materials

The National Certification Commission (NCC) has developed a manualized approach entitled:

Basics of Addiction Counseling: Desk Reference and Study Guide, Tenth Edition



Examination Preparation Materials

The *Basics* contains 400 pages of **addiction information split into 3 separate manuals**, focused on meeting the educational needs of addiction counselors and other helping professionals.

Examination Preparation Materials

- Module I: Pharmacology of Psychoactive Substance Use, Abuse and Dependence
- Module II: Addiction Counseling Theories, Practices and Skills
- Module III: Ethical and Professional Issues in Addiction Counseling

Examination Preparation Materials

- Enhance your learning by ordering the **Independent Study Exam** that supplements each module of *The Basics*.
- Successful completion of these exams earn up to 42 CEs (between 12 and 16 CEs per exam)
- Help prepare for key concentration areas found on state and national certification exams.





Study Courses

- An **Ethics Independent Study Course** is available which provides counselors with an understanding of NAADAC's Code of Ethics coupled with an examination to test that knowledge.
- This independent study course earns 9 contact hours and satisfies the Ethics requirement for the NCAC I, NCAC II and MAC certifications.

Types of Credentials

The credentials may vary from state to state, but generally there are two broad categories.

A certificate is often the product of a membership organization (association) or states.

Types of Credentials

- The **impact of the certification** stems from what limitations it places upon practice, and what the response is to infractions of those limitations.
- Certificates are generally held in “rules” meaning they are not regulated by statutes (laws).

Types of Credentials

- **Licenses** generally define scope of practice, but are enforced at a higher level such as in state law, and there are clearly defined legal penalties for non-compliance.
- Misdemeanors, limitation of practice, fitness for duty monitoring or license suspension are frequently described when a license is a legal document.

Types of Credentials

Because different states have different certification and licensure requirements **national credentials are the product of independent providers**, such as the National Certification Commission (NCC), and others.

Types of Credentials

- National certification products are recognized by states, unions, military entities, etc.
- Because there are several available, a state may specify which one they will accept for services provided in their state.

Types of Credentials

- An additional level of credentialing is an **endorsement**.
- When a clinician possesses a certificate or license it would be unethical for that individual to provide certain services that are not within the scope of their credential.



Entry Level Credential

Recently there has been the addition of an **entry-level credential**, which in some states ‘qualifies’ someone to work with little experience, perhaps some education, and under clinical supervision with an experienced individual.

There are different names: **Recovery Support Worker, Addiction Counseling Intern**, etc.



Practice Examinations

- There are practice examinations available.
- In addition to 'testing' whether you can pass the test, it will generally inform you within domain area you are weak so you may seek more knowledge or experience in those areas.
- The National Certification Commission (NCC) offers a PRACTICE exam for a nominal fee, which is available for this purpose. (www.naadac.org)
- There are also BASIC tests that states that have adopted this test for their entry-level credential.

NCC Testing Domains

	NCAC I	NCAC II	MAC
Number of Questions	250	250	200
Pharmacology	30%	25%	35%
Counseling Practice	40%	25%	30%
Theoretical Base of Counseling	15%	25%	0%
Professional Issues	15%	25%	35%

Brochures Available

As an example of your first steps toward credentialing, I will use the NCC's Basic level certification.

In this instance, a brochure has been produced by NCC and the Professional Testing Corporation (PTC), their testing consultants, which clearly spells out the process.

<http://ptcnyc.com/clients/NCC/index.html>



Test Sponsorship

Explains who is providing the credential:

The certification program is sponsored
by the NAADAC Certification
Commission (NCC).

Test Administration

Explains who is administering the credential:

The NCC Basic Level Examination is administered for the NCC by the Professional Testing Corporation (PTC).

Eligibility Requirements

Clearly spells out eligibility requirements:

Candidates for the NCC Basic Level Examination must meet the following eligibility requirements.

Training and Education

- Ethics (6 hours)
- Documentation (6 hours)
- Community/family education (6 hours)
- Counseling (20 hours)
- Screening and intake (6 hours)
- Identification of co-occurring disorders (6 hours)
- Service coordination (6 hours)
- Referral (6 hours)
- Treatment planning (6 hours)
- Clinical evaluation (10 hours)
- HIV/AIDS training (6 hours)
- Cultural training (6 hours)
- Pharmacology (10 hours)

General TIPS

- There is nothing as successful as success.
- Seek out peers that have already gone through the process and learn as much as you can from them.
- It is appropriate to utilize a portion of your clinical supervision in preparation for the examination.

General TIPS

Know thyself!

Know if you struggle with test taking situations, and even when you know the data you often do poorly. Seek out new ways to relax in stressful situations, visualize the process over and over. If possible, go and see the actual room that you will be taking the test in.

In other words, rule
out as many
unknowns as possible.



Thank You for Participating!

Please feel free to ask questions!



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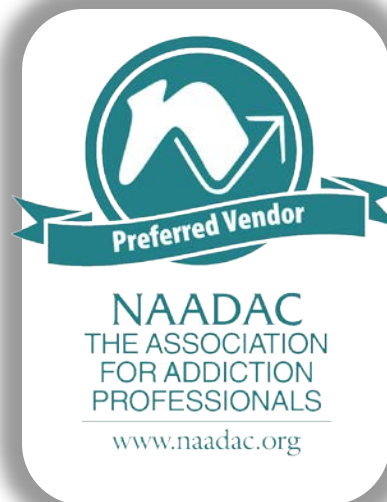
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- October 13, 2011 - *Conflict Resolution for Clients and Professionals*
- November 17, 2011 - *What's Next in Your Career? Workforce Initiatives*
- December 15, 2011 - *Clinical Supervision: Keys to Success*

Register at: www.naadac.org/education or www.myaccucare.com/webinars



Archived Webinars

- *Alcohol SBIRT: Integrating Evidence-based Practice Into Your Practice*
- *Medication Assisted Recovery: What Every Addiction Professional Needs to Know*
- *Build Your Business With the Department of Transportation Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) Qualification*
- *Working with NAADAC to Express Your Professional Identity*
- *Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)*
- *Medicaid Expansion 2014 and Preparing to Bill for Medicaid*
- *Understanding NAADAC's Code of Ethics*
- *Staying Informed: Trends in the Addiction Profession*
- *Co-occurring Disorders*

Archived webinars located at: www.naadac.org/education or
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