Certified Correctional Health Professional **Mental Health**

SPECIALTY CERTIFICATION FOR CORRECTIONAL MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

From the Premier National Certification Program for Professionals in Correctional Health Care

Candidate Handbook

CCHP Board of Trustees
1145 W. Diversey Pkwy.
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www.ncchc.org/CCHP-MH

A Program of the National Commission on Correctional Health Care

SPECIALTY CERTIFICATION FOR CORRECTIONAL MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Professional Recognition

Mental health professionals working in correctional settings operate in one of health care's most demanding environments. They provide effective, timely care to high-need, often high-acuity patients while navigating strict security protocols, crowded facilities, and complex legal and public health requirements. Meeting these challenges requires continual professional growth and specialized expertise.

Certification in correctional mental health formally recognizes practitioners who have pursued focused, ongoing professional development in this unique specialty. It validates your commitment to continuing competence, professional excellence, and the delivery of high-quality mental health care where it is needed most.

Purpose

The purpose of the CCHP-MH specialty examination is to assess a candidate's knowledge and application of nationally recognized standards and guidelines for correctional mental health care, including relevant legal principles, ethical obligations, and the professional role of mental health providers within the correctional environment.

Eligibility

All qualified mental health professionals, as defined by NCCHC's Standards for Mental Health Services in Correctional Facilities (2026), MH-A-02—including psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, psychiatric nurse practitioners, psychiatric nurses, and other professionals legally authorized by education, credentials, and experience to assess and treat patients' mental health needs—are eligible for CCHP-MH specialty certification.
Prior to submitting an application, applicants must have:

- Current CCHP certification
- Graduate level (master's and above) degree
- A current, active, full, and unrestricted license or registration from a State, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, a territory of the United States, or Canada.
- Equivalent of three years of full-time practice in a correctional environment

Application and Candidacy

Elements of the application:

- Copy of professional licensure or proof of license eligibility, e.g., copy of diploma, if license to practice is not required by law in your state
- Resume or CV
- Completed application and fee

For application deadlines for exams at conferences, see www.ncchc.org/CCHP/calendar.

Once the application, supporting materials and examination fee have been received and approved, applicants will receive acknowledgment of their candidacy to take the CCHP-MH exam.

Candidates must register before the registration deadline for the exam they wish to take. Incomplete applications will be kept on file for three months, after which time a new application and fees must be submitted. A candidate must take the exam within six months of the application approval date. Application fees are not refundable.

Exam Dates and Locations

Examinations are offered throughout the year, including at NCCHC's conferences and at partner sites and conferences, Prometric test centers across the country, and online. For a list of NCCHC exam dates and locations, visit www.ncchc.org/CCHP/calendar. For Prometric test centers or online exam information, visit www.ncchc.org/professional-certification/testing-options/.

Exam Registration and Admission

Candidates must register for the exam through NCCHC (live locations) or Prometric (test centers or online), confirming the date and location where they wish to take the exam.

NCCHC Conference and Partner Sites and Conferences: Upon registering, candidates will receive an admission notice with the address of the site. The admission notice and a valid state photo ID or driver's license are required to gain admission.

Prometric Test Centers/Online Exams: Please follow the instructions provided during exam registration.

ADA Compliance

The CCHP Board of Trustees makes every effort to ensure that test centers are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you require special accommodations, please submit a written request at least 90 days before the examination date.

The Examination

The proctored, written examination is composed of 80 to 100 multiple-choice, objective questions. Candidates are allowed two hours to complete the examination.

NCCHC Conference and Partner Sites and Conferences: Report to the exam site as instructed on the admission notice. Candidates arriving late may be admitted but will not be given additional time to complete the exam.

Prometric Test Centers: Report to the exam site as instructed by the test center and adhere to test center regulations.

No pagers, cell phones, alarms or similar devices may be operative during the exam. Personal digital assistants (PDAs) and other handheld computers also are prohibited. Any person using such devices will be dismissed from the test center and disqualified from the examination. No books, reference materials or study aids of any sort are allowed in the exam room.

Online Exams: NCCHC offers online exams with live remote proctors through Prometric. Take your exam from the comfort and safety of your home or office at a date and time that is convenient for you. Internet access, a laptop or PC and a web camera are required. There are additional requirements available at www.ncchc.org/online-exams. Prior to beginning the exam, candidates will need to complete a system test.

Exam Scoring and Reporting

Examination questions, answers and grading guidelines are developed by the CCHP Board of Trustees and CCHP-MH Subcommittee. The candidate should choose the single best answer to each item. There is no penalty for incorrect answers; it is to the candidate's advantage to answer each item even when uncertain of the correct response. No credit is given for items for which more than one response is selected.

The tests are graded electronically. Candidates will receive the results by email within two weeks. Only a pass or fail will be reported to the candidate. A list of passing candidates may be published; no reference is made to candidates who defer taking the examination or do not attain a passing score.

Rescheduling and Reexamination

Candidates must make and confirm all cancellations/changes through the website or direct contact with the entity registered with (NCCHC or Prometric). Candidates cancelling or rescheduling less than 5 days before the exam date are responsible for the full reregistration fee. Prometric imposes reduced fees 5-29 days before the scheduled exam date and no fee for 30 days or more.

Candidates who do not attain a passing score on their first attempt may retake the exam two additional times within one year of the application approval date.

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Content Outline

Exam questions are written by experienced qualified correctional mental health professionals and reviewed by professionals who have attained CCHP and CCHP-MH certification. They are reviewed for construction, accuracy and appropriateness by the CCHP Board of Trustees and a committee of subject matter experts. The content of the examination is described in the content outline on the following pages. The major content areas are weighted (reflected in the percentages) according to the established test plan.

This content outline identifies the knowledge areas covered on the examination. Each knowledge area includes, but is not limited to, the study topics listed below for adult and adolescent populations.

For details about study materials, see www.ncchc.org/CCHP-MH-study-materials.

Content Outline Details

This outline covers the CCHP-MH exam effective April 1, 2026, based on the 2026 NCCHC *Standards for Mental Health Services in Correctional Facilities* and other reference materials.

I. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION (10%-15%)

- Access to Care
- Responsible Mental Health Authority and Designated Mental Health Staff
- Clinical Autonomy
- Administrative Meetings and Reports
- Policies and Procedures
- Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Program
- Confidentiality and Privacy of Care
- Health Records
- Procedure in the Event of a Death
- Grievance Process for Mental Health Care Complaints

II. HEALTH PROMOTION, SAFETY, AND DISEASE PREVENTION (10%-15%)

- Healthy Lifestyle Promotion
- Infection Prevention and Control
- Suicide Prevention and Intervention
- Communication on Patients' Mental Health Needs
- Patient Safety
- Staff Safety

III. PERSONNEL AND TRAINING (7%-12%)

- Credentials
- Clinical Peer Review and Competency Assessment
- Mental Health
- Staff Professional Development
- Mental Health Training for Custody Staff
- Medication Administration Training
- Incarcerated Workers in Mental Health Services
- Mental Health Staffing
- Mental Health Liaison
- Orientation for Mental Health Staff

IV. ANCILLARY HEALTH CARE SERVICES (5%-10%)

- Pharmaceutical Operations
- Medication Administration Services
- Clinic Space, Equipment, and Supplies
- On-Site Diagnostic Services
- Emergency Services and Response Plan
- Inpatient Psychiatric Care and Specialty Care

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V. PATIENT CARE AND TREATMENT (15%-20%)

- Information on Mental Health Services
- Mental Health Receiving Screening
- Transfer Screening
- Initial Mental Health Screening and Evaluation
- Nonemergent Mental Health Care Requests and Services
- Continuity, Coordination, and Quality of Mental Health Care During Incarceration
- Discharge Planning

VI. SPECIALIZED PATIENT SERVICES (15%-20%)

- Treatment Plans
- Mental Health Services and Programs
- Services for Substance Use Disorder
- Response to Sexual Assault and Abuse
- Care of the Pregnant and Postpartum Patient
- Mental Health Residential Units
- Behavioral Consultation

VII. MEDICAL-LEGAL ISSUES (10%-15%)

- Restraint and Seclusion
- Restrictive Housing
- Emergency Psychotropic Medication
- Therapeutic Relationship, Forensic Information, and Disciplinary Actions
- Informed Consent and Right to Refuse
- Medical and Other Research
- Executions
- Seminal Legal Cases, Legal Principles

VIII. CURRENT TRENDS IN TREATMENT AND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE (5%-10%)

- Published peer-reviewed journal articles with the latest (within the past five years) research in evidence-based practice in the areas identified in the content outline

RECOMMENDED STUDY MATERIALS

NCCHC Standards for Mental Health Services in Correctional Facilities
Exam Resource Guide (legal cases)
NCCHC Standards for Health Services in Juvenile Detention and Confinement Facilities
NCCHC Standards for Health Services in Jails/Prisons
NCCHC Position Statements, Tools and Guidance
Published Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

The Certified Correctional Health Professional (CCHP) program is sponsored by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care.

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