**CESP™ Certification Frequently Asked Questions**



**What is professional certification?**

ESPCC developed the Certified Employment Support Professional**™** (CESP**™**) certification program to set a standard of knowledge and distinguish employment support professionals who have shown they have the skill and competence to perform the requirements of the job.

According to the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE), the trade association for the professional certification industry, certification is the voluntary process by which a non-governmental entity grants a time–limited recognition and use of a credential to an individual after verifying that he or she has met predetermined and standardized criteria. It is the vehicle that a profession or occupation uses to differentiate among its members, using standards, sometimes developed through a consensus-driven process, based on existing legal and psychometric requirements.

In simpler terms, a certifying agency, ESPCC grants a credential to an individual who has demonstrated, by passing an exam, they have the knowledge and skill required to perform the job of an employment support professional.

### **How are certification and training programs different?**

Professional certification is different than a training or educational program. Training programs offer a certificate of attendance when an individual completes the coursework, but they do not give a credential. ESPCC used a nationally recognized process to define the roles and responsibilities of the employment support professional and awards a credential after the individual passes an exam to demonstrate their competence

Training programs focus on providing information and education to enable students to master the curriculum of a specific career field. Certification programs provide the third party, objective testing to validate that individuals take the national exam are competent to pass an examination on nationally accepted professional competency standards.

Training programs typically offer a *certificate of attendance* or *certificate of completion* when an individual completes the coursework, but they do not give a credential.   Training programs may require individuals to pass an exam on the training content but the exam is not based on national standardized competencies and is not administered by an independent professional organization as is required of nationally accredited certification programs. A training certificate demonstrates that at a single point in time the individual completed a course. It does not necessarily show that they have the skills and knowledge to perform all of the requirements of a particular job as demonstrated by nationally accredited certification examinations.

ESPCC recognizes that there are many valuable training programs that will prepare professionals to pass the ESPCC examination, however we do not endorse specific training programs.

### **How was the CESP™ exam developed?**

In January 2011, ESPCC launched a role delineation study (RDS) as the first step towards developing a national certification program.

A representative panel of nine subject matter experts (SMEs) developed the RDS to correspond to the job content elements that are related to effective entry-level ESP performance.  Established reference materials from the profession were used to identify 80 content elements grouped into content domains, sequenced in the order in which they are most typically performed.

Following a systematic and scientific process, the survey was created and then sent to employment professionals around the country.  Upon completion of the study, the data was collected and analyzed.  Means and standard deviations were computed for each of the content items.  Combining the criticality and frequency means for each of the six content domains resulted in the basis for the exam content outline.  The content outline was reviewed, revised (primarily by combining two of the domains for better balance), and finalized by a group of SMEs.

Following the approval of the content outline a diverse group of exam question writers were recruited and trained to submit questions for the exam. Questions were subsequently reviewed by additional SMEs before being assembled into an exam for a final quality check and review.

Following each administration of the exam, question statistics are calculated and reviewed along with candidate feedback to identify any concerns or areas for improvement.  Inappropriate questions are removed from grading. Following this quality assurance step exam grading is finalized and score reports are issued to candidates.

The ESPCC oversees a continual process of question writing, review and evaluation to ensure that exam content remains up-to-date, accurate, and consistent with the content outline.

### **Is there training for the CESP™ Examination?**

There is not a training program for the CESP**™** exam.  The CESP**™** exam tests the ability to apply the practical knowledge required to work in supported employment settings to fictional scenarios.  Any training program that enhances knowledge and experience that can generate positive employment outcomes will be beneficial for any candidate, although not necessary.

The ESPCC does not recommend or endorse any programs created with the intention to aid in exam preparation.

[**Preparing for CESP™ Exam**](http://www.apse.org/certified-employment-support-professional/exam-preparation/)

### **Is the CESP™ Certification only for APSE members?**

The CESP**™** certification is open to all employment professionals that meet the eligibility criteria.

### **What are the eligibility requirements to sit for the CESP™ Examination?**

Candidates for CESP**™** certification must meet all eligibility requirements in effect at the time of their application for certification.

Applicants for certification must meet all of the following requirements before they take the exam:

1. Education Requirement: High school diploma, GED or equivalent;
2. Experience Requirement: Each applicant must meet one of the following requirements:1 year of employment support professional (ESP) work experience, which may include up to a maximum of 3 months of internship or practicum time; or 9 months of ESP work experience with training component; and
3. Code of Conduct: Each applicant must agree to and sign the Code of Conduct included in the application

### **What is the CESP™ examination fee?**

The current exam fee is $159 per person.

### **What if I do not pass the exam?**

Candidates who fail the exam may re-test at any future exam site. A new application and examination fee must be submitted for each exam attempt.

### **When will I find out my score?**

Test scoring and processing takes approximately 6-8 weeks.  After scores have been reported, candidates will receive a results letter and score report.  Results are sent via US Mail and are not released electronically or over the phone. Candidates are encouraged to report ANY change to contact information including email address, mailing address and phone number.    New CESP**™** certificants will receive their certificate 3-4 weeks after results notification.

### **How do I maintain my CESP™ certification?**

CESP**™** certificants must renew their certification every 3 years by completing 36 CE credits and paying the recertification fee.

[**CESP™ Recertification**](http://www.apse.org/certified-employment-support-professional/recertification/)

### **What if my recertification lapses and I want to renew it?**

Recertification is mandatory for all CESP**™** holders. If certification is not renewed it will expire on the last day of the month 3 years after the certification was last earned. Individuals whose certification has expired or been suspended or revoked may not represent him/herself as a CESP**™** holder and may not use the credential until he/she receives official notice that the recertification requirements have been satisfied or that certification status has been reinstated.

If certification has been expired for 30 days or less, an individual may reinstate his/her certification by meeting all of the recertification requirements, submitting a complete recertification application, and paying the recertification fee. If the application is approved, the individual’s expiration date for the reinstated credential will be the same as if the certification had been renewed on time.

If certification has been expired for more than 30 days, an individual must reapply for certification, meet all eligibility requirements in effect at the time of re-application, and pass the examination.

## CESP****™**** Certification Webinar

**National APSE is pleased to offer an informative webinar on the first national certification program for Employment Support professionals! Please join Certification Director, Aaron Wiseman, on September 10, 2015 at 2pm Eastern to learn more about the CESP™ Certification.**

[**CESP™ Certification Webinar Registration**](https://apse.webex.com/apse/onstage/g.php?MTID=e7ac7a6efa16447f8ba4e33dcd109fbd8)

If you have additional questions, please contact Aaron Robbins Wiseman, CESP**™** Certification Director at aaron@apse.org or call APSE National at 301-279-0060.



**Preparing for CESP™ Exam**

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**Exam Description**

The CESP**™** exam is a multiple-choice exam administered during an allotted time of three hours.  The CESP**™** exam is a scenario based exam based on the skills and information an employment support professional use every day.  The test presents fictional situations similar to those typically encountered by employment specialists.  Test takers must select the most appropriate and effective strategy for the scenario.  The exam assesses the candidate’s ability to **apply** knowledge to context rather than their ability to memorize facts.

**Content Outline-What Does the CESP™ Exam Cover?**

The exam is based on the results of a national Role Delineation Study.  Subject matter experts were polled on the basic skills and knowledge they believe to be an essential foundation to work in this field.  The detailed content outline is comprised of the results of the study. Candidates should carefully review the content outline, as they prepare for the exam. Test questions are taken from the following 5 core areas identified by the study as crucial for ability to work as a supported employment specialist in the percentages indicated.

1. Application of Core Values and Principles to Practice & Legislation and Funding (13 to 17%)
2. Individualized Assessment and Employment / Career Planning (23-29%)
3. Community Research and Job Development (19-25%)
4. Workplace and Related Supports (27-33%)
5. Ongoing Support (6-8%)

[**CESP™ Certification Handbook**](http://www.apse.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CESP-Certification-Handbook.pdf)

**Study Guide**

The ESPCC does not recommend or endorse a study guide or test preparation program.  The CESP**™**examination was designed to test the application of knowledge and skills one uses in their role as an employment professional. Any coursework or training that contributes to professional development would be beneficial, but not necessary, while preparing to take the exam.

**Exam Day Instructions**

**On the day of the exam, you will be required to bring a photo ID so that we can verify your identity. There is no admission to the examination without proper identification  Arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the exam starting time.**

You will have a total of 3 hours to take the exam (excluding check in time).  You may check out when you are done and leave the exam early if you desire.  If you come late, we will permit you to enter the exam but you will not be granted any extra time to complete your exam session.

A proctor will escort you to and from the restroom. Do not bring any notebooks or other reference materials to the exam session. You will not need to bring any materials or supplies. You may bring a soda, water and limited snacks to the exam.   Do not bring snacks or drinks that are noisy so these do not distract other test takers.  You will also be asked to silence all electronic devices in the exam room.

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