

RAC-CTASM CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

Your Reference for Details on Achieving the Resident Assessment

Coordinator — Certified Advanced (RAC-CTA) Credential

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AANAC certifications and education are developed to serve as programs and references for long-term care. To the best of our knowledge, they reflect current federal regulations and practices. However, they cannot be considered absolute and universal. The information in these courses must be considered in light of the individual organization and state regulations.

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This handbook reflects the policies and procedures as of April 2019. All policies and procedures are subject to change. If you have any questions or require further information, visit www.AANAC.org or contact AANAC staff toll-free at (800) 768-1880.

Statement of nondiscrimination

The opportunity to earn the RAC-CTA credential is available to all candidates who meet the minimum criteria. AANAC does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual preference, or disability.

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AAPACN is accredited by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

Resident Assessment Coordinator–Certified Advanced (RAC-CTA) Candidate Handbook

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Welcome

Congratulations on taking the first step toward earning the Resident Assessment Coordinator–Certified Advanced (RAC-CTA) credential. The American Association of Nurse Assessment Coordination (AANAC) established the RAC-CT certification program in 1999 to promote the highest standards for clinical assessment and care planning in the long-term care profession. The RAC-CTA certification program, established in 2019, is designed to take your experience and knowledge to a higher level. Reviewing this handbook will help you to understand, as a RAC-CTA professional, what is needed to be better prepared for the challenging industry that you work in. RAC-CTA was created to provide more advanced information on principles of clinical reimbursement, Medicare program compliance and integrity, RAI/MDS program integrity, leadership, ethical practice, managing medical review, accurate ICD-10 diagnosis coding, advanced strategies for payment oversight, and improving your facility’s quality measurement in all CMS quality programs.

About AANAC

AANAC is a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to supporting long-term care professionals who provide quality care for nursing facility residents across the nation. AANAC has earned the reputation as the premier resource and network for long-term care professionals involved in the RAI/MDS process. Committed to the success of the entire interdisciplinary team, AANAC delivers accurate and timely information, educational opportunities, advocacy in legislation, and a peer community of support.

AANAC certification and education set the standard in the long-term care industry. The organization has been a trusted provider of MDS information since 1999 and has grown to be the go-to source in survey management, leadership, Medicare, and more. Whether you’re looking to earn AANAC’s respected certifications, or just want to brush up your knowledge by taking a course or two, AANAC keeps you up-to-date and makes the complexities of long-term care regulation easy to understand.

AANAC is accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Commission on Accreditation (ANCC).

How to use this Candidate Handbook

This handbook is intended to help you understand the policies and procedures for RAC-CTA certification and the steps required to earn and maintain your credential. This handbook is also intended to help you learn about RAC-CTA education. Once you decide to pursue the RAC-CTA credential, this Candidate Handbook will be a useful reference to you as you:

- Review the RAC-CTA Body of Knowledge
- Assess your knowledge and professional experience of the content
- Identify gaps in knowledge and develop a personal course of study
- Study, prepare for, and take the RAC-CTA examinations
- Maintain your credential through recertification

AANAC’s educational materials are reviewed and updated by a team of experts to ensure you receive the most up-to-date information related to this complex body of knowledge. No document can address the comprehensive list of potential questions, policy details, or future program changes. You are encouraged to use this handbook as a supplement to the program information listed on the [AANAC website](#), as well as information provided by AANAC staff, whom you can contact at (800) 768-1880.

Overview

What is the purpose of RAC-CTA certification and education?

The RAC-CTA program provides advanced principles of clinical reimbursement, Medicare program compliance and integrity, RAI/MDS program integrity, leadership, ethical practice, managing medical review, accurate ICD-10 diagnosis coding, advanced strategies for payment oversight, and improving a facility's quality measurement in all CMS quality programs. AANAC serves the public interest by developing, administering, and reviewing a certification process that reflects current standards of competent. Whereas the fundamental concept of the RAI/MDS process is to promote quality of care and quality of life for residents in skilled nursing facilities, the goal of RAC-CT certification and education is to establish that nurses have the knowledge and skills necessary to demonstrate competence in this area. By achieving the RAC-CTA certification, you will demonstrate an advanced insight in these areas.

What are the benefits of certification?

Upon completion of the 10 RAC-CTA courses, and after passing the associated exams with a score of 80% or better, you will be allowed to use the initials RAC-CTA (in addition to RAC-CT) to designate your status. This designation indicates you have met a nationally recognized standard of advanced expertise in MDS 3.0 assessments. RAC-CT is a service mark of AANAC.

Both individuals and employers can benefit from an individual's receiving RAC-CTA certification.

<p>Individual professional benefits can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verification by an independent organization of your advanced mastery of the knowledge required to perform your job well• Professional growth and development• Enhanced job opportunities	<p>Organizational benefits can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased productivity, as the RAI/MDS process is properly implemented• Less training time needed to educate employees on the complex Medicare regulations and procedures• Accurate billing, leading to full receipt of Medicare funds for services provided
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Who is eligible to take the exams?

AANAC encourages members of the interdisciplinary team with extensive experience in the RAI/MDS process to seek RAC-CTA certification: RNs, LPNs, LVNs, nurse assessment coordinators, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, social workers, health information professionals, dietitians, and administrators. **You must be RAC-CT certified to qualify to take the RAC-CTA exams.**

Criteria to maintain RAC-CTA certification: These are separate certifications as they each have a Body of Knowledge. RAC-CT must be maintained as well as RAC-CTA.

How do I register for certification and education?

To purchase RAC-CTA exams and education in the format most beneficial to you, visit the [AANAC website](#).

How much does certification, recertification and education cost?

The RAC-CTA program consists of 10 educational courses, offered in formats to support various learning styles. The RAC-CTA Recertification program consists of 1 course. Pricing information is provided on the [AANAC website](#).

Getting Ready for the Exams

RAC-CTA Body of Knowledge

AANAC undertook a rigorous process with numerous experts in the profession to determine the domains and tasks within the RAC-CTA Body of Knowledge, in terms of both criticality and importance.

The 10 RAC-CTA examinations, and associated education, are designed for long-term care professionals with extensive experience in the RAI/MDS process who hold the RAC-CT certification. Candidates who complete all 10 courses earn 30.4 hours of continuing education credit. Candidates who attend the three-day workshop earn 22.5 hours of education credit. The number of continuing education credits for the recertification course are to be determined.

- Domain 1 – Original Part A Program Requirements in a Skilled Nursing Facility for the Advanced Medicare Specialist (Online course CE: 1.0 hours)
 - Course Objectives:
 - Define the four parts of the original Medicare benefit, eligibility, and enrollment requirements
 - Delineate the technical requirements for Medicare SNF coverage
 - Describe the physician certification and recertification requirements for SNF services
 - Demonstrate the ability to recognize skilled nursing and skilled rehabilitation services and the daily skilled need
- Domain 2 – Documentation Requirements in a Skilled Nursing Facility for the Advanced Medicare Specialist (Online course CE: 1.75 hours)
 - Course Objectives:
 - Explain the most common problems with SNF documentation upon medical review
 - Describe technical problems with submitted records
 - Review qualitative documentation errors in nursing and therapy charting
 - Discuss critical thinking in the documentation process
 - Examine and discuss strengths and weaknesses in examples of SNF documentation

- Describe supportive documentation by other members of the interdisciplinary team
- Domain 3 – ICD-10-CM Coding in a Skilled Nursing Facility for the Advanced Medicare Specialist (Online course CE: 1.25 hours)
 - Course Objectives:
 - Explain ICD-10-CM coding conventions, general guidelines, and chapter-specific guidelines relevant to the long-term care setting
 - Accurately assign ICD-10-CM codes
 - Understand documentation required for ICD-10-CM assignment
 - Demonstrate appropriate assignment of admission and principal diagnoses in the medical record
 - Indicate proper use of ICD-10-CM in section I of the MDS, including how ICD-10-CM affects RUG scores
 - Understand the use of ICD-10-CM on bills and avoid denials
 - Show how accurate ICD-10-CM coding affects exclusions and covariates in Quality Measure reporting for long-term care
- Domain 4 – Managing Patient-Driven Payment Model in a Skilled Nursing Facility for the Advanced Medicare Specialist (Online course CE: 1.75 hours)
 - Course Objectives:
 - Describe the methodology and philosophy of the SNF PPS and the general framework of the PDPM
 - Understand the six components of PDPM
 - Calculate the daily per diem under PDPM
 - Explain the changes to the PPS assessment schedule
 - Delineate administrative presumption of skilled level of care
 - Identify the connection between the MDS and PDPM
 - Recognize the ongoing monitoring and oversight of therapy provisions by CMS
 - Prepare for the transition to PDPM
- Domain 5 – Beneficiary Notices in a Skilled Nursing Facility for the Advanced Medicare Specialist (Online course CE: 1.0 hours)
 - Course Objectives:
 - Identify the required beneficiary notices for Medicare Part A
 - Describe the timely delivery of the SNFABN
 - Explain the expedited determination process
 - Understand the provider responsibility of Part C (Medicare Advantage plans) beneficiary notices
 - Demonstrate knowledge of the beneficiary notices for Medicare Part B in a SNF
 - Audit the beneficiary notice process for compliance
 - Understand survey deficiencies related to beneficiary notices

- Domain 6 – Consolidated Billing in a Skilled Nursing Facility for the Advanced Medicare Specialist (Online course CE: 1.25 hours)
 - Course Objectives:
 - Understand the Medicare claims processing system
 - Describe the form locators pertaining to a SNF
 - Ensure “clean claim” submission and timely payment
 - Understand the basics of consolidated billing
 - Apply the SNF responsibilities to consolidated billing
 - Identify the five major categories for SNF consolidated billing
 - Navigate the annual update files
 - Employ strategies for controlling costs under consolidated billing

- Domain 7 – Medicare Part B Therapy in a Skilled Nursing Facility for the Advanced Medicare Specialist (Online course CE: 0.75 hours)
 - Course Objectives:
 - Examine and discuss the requirements for qualified therapy under Medicare Part B
 - Explain the requirements for therapy documentation under Medicare Part B
 - Describe the basics of Part B therapy billing and how it differs from Part A
 - Detail the basics of the Part B therapy review process
 - Discuss how Part B therapy affects resident outcomes

- Domain 8 – Medical Reviews and Oversight in a Skilled Nursing Facility for the Advanced Medicare Specialist (Online course CE: 0.75 hours)
 - Course Objectives:
 - Describe the Medicare claim review process, including types of review, overpayment risk areas, and possible outcomes
 - Discuss Additional Development Requests and best practices for responding, to reduce error rates
 - Understand provider appeal rights and the Medicare appeals process
 - Explain operational strategies to improve claim compliance and preparedness for success under Medicare medical review

- Domain 9 – Federal Quality Initiatives in a Skilled Nursing Facility for the Advanced Medicare Specialist (Online course CE: 0.75 hours)
 - Course Objectives:
 - Identify the role of the Medicare specialist in overseeing and managing the facility’s Nursing Home Quality Initiatives
 - Describe the process for gathering and implementing improvement strategies for SNF Quality Reporting Program (QRP) measures
 - Detail the process for gathering and implementing strategies for improving readmission rates and SNF Value-Based Purchasing (VBP) publicly reported scores

- Domain 10 – Leadership and Management of Clinical Reimbursement in a Skilled Nursing Facility for the Advanced Medicare Specialist (Online course CE: 1.75 hours)
 - Course Objectives:
 - Describe the leadership role of the Medicare specialist
 - Detail the various systems that the Medicare specialist must monitor for accuracy

- Understand the skill requirements needed when hiring for open nurse assessment coordinator (NAC) positions
- Identify the various areas of training and education needed to onboard new and experienced NACs
- Describe care coordination components
- Detail how the MDS impacts survey outcomes and describe operational strategies needed for survey compliance
- Describe CMS payment initiatives and their impact on the NAC role

What is the format of the exams?

All exams are completed online, accessed through your AANAClassroom account on the [AANAC website](#). Each exam is in an objective, multiple-choice question format. The questions are designed to test your recall of specific knowledge, as well as your ability to analyze and apply that knowledge to example situations. The number of questions on the final exam varies per course. It is not a timed test. The questions test knowledge of the domains and tasks in the RAC-CTA Body of Knowledge. The domain emphasis reflects the percentage of questions that come from each domain. You will be asked to select the correct or best answer from a selection of four options. Only one answer is correct for every question.

How do I prepare for the exams?

Content for examinations is not obtained from any one particular source. The RAC-CTA Body of Knowledge should be a guideline for study preparation. The educational materials from the online curriculum, as well as live workshops, provide a basis of knowledge for exam preparation. You should also utilize current journals, textbooks, source documents like the [MDS 3.0 RAI User's Manual](#), and other reference material related to the subjects listed in the Body of Knowledge as supplemental preparatory materials for the exam.

After reviewing the Body of Knowledge, you can plan your exam preparation based on your level of general understanding and working knowledge of the subject areas. For example, because of daily use at your current job, you may have a good understanding and working knowledge of some of the domain areas—these areas may need only a quick review as you prepare for the test. For areas with which you are less familiar, you may decide you need more in-depth study or training before completing the exam(s); you can allocate your study time appropriately.

You should also consider what percentage of the test questions will cover each major content area; this information is listed as the domain emphasis percentage in the Body of Knowledge section of this handbook. By focusing your studies, you can spend extra time as needed to thoroughly understand the most significant sources of content area on the exam.

How are reasonable accommodations made?

If you require reasonable accommodations to complete the exams for the program, please contact AANAC at (800) 768-1880, or by email at education@AANAC.org.

Taking the Exams

What are the requirements during the exams?

AANAC assigns you a user name and password as a key control in monitoring and verifying user identity in the AANAClassroom area of the [AANAC website](#). This log-in information helps ensure that each user's information is available only to the authorized user. As a user of AANAClassroom, it is important that you do not share this user name and password with anyone. You should be the only one to access and complete your course materials and exams in your AANAClassroom account.

The learning modules come with review points and an exam. You are encouraged to utilize these reviews as learning tools before attempting the exam. You may complete the review points as many times as you like before taking the exam. When you are comfortable with the test format and computer-testing process, you may begin the exam.

Once you begin the exam, you may complete it either in one sitting or in sections. It is an open-book format, so you may use reference materials when you take the exam. However, you cannot seek assistance from other individuals while completing the exam. The exam is offered on an honor-system basis that assumes you will act in good faith to ensure your performance is an accurate representation of your own personal knowledge and skills related to the subject matter.

AANAC does not tolerate cheating or any breach of academic or professional ethics that may compromise the security or integrity of its exams. All incidents of reported cheating will be investigated. Discussing content found on exams is strictly prohibited; any such posts on AANACConnect community discussion boards will be removed. Anyone found compromising the security of the exams by attempting to copy, record, or distribute questions in any manner will be permanently excluded from the certification process.

How much time do I have to take an exam and course?

- **Online exam and course** – When you enroll in an online exam and course, you will complete material through your AANAClassroom account. The exam itself is not timed, and you do not have to complete it in one sitting. You have 90-days from the time that you click open a course to complete the exam. Downloading the PDF does not start the 90-day countdown.
- **Workshop and online exam** – If you attended a live workshop, you will take the exams separately through your AANAClassroom account. The exam itself is not timed, and you do not have to complete it in one sitting. You have 90-days from the time that you click open a course to complete the exam. Downloading the PDF does not start the 90-day countdown.

Exam attempts – You have two attempts to pass each exam with a score of 80% or better. If you do not pass after two attempts, you are required to purchase that course again. If you do not pass after four attempts, you must wait one year before taking the exam again. In the case of an extenuating circumstance, you can submit a formal, written appeal to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AANAC Education department at education@AANAC.org.

After the Test

How is my information kept confidential?

Information about candidates and their examination results is confidential. AANAC carefully protects your data from loss, misuse, unauthorized access or disclosure, alteration, or destruction. Within the company, data is stored in password-controlled servers with limited access. Your personal information is never shared outside the company without your permission, unless required by law to comply with a current judicial proceeding, court order, or legal process. If AANAC is required by law to release your confidential information, you will be notified by email, unless prohibited by law.

How are the exams scored?

The RAC-CTA exams, as well as RAC-CTA courses and workshops, set an advanced level of knowledge that can reasonably be expected of long-term care professionals involved in the RAI/MDS process. Your performance on the exams will be measured against this predetermined standard to assess your competency in these subject matters. Your performance will not be measured against other candidates taking the certification exams; your individual performance will determine whether you meet the knowledge standards required to pass.

What information will I receive about my score?

Once you have completed the examination, you will be presented with the percentage of questions correctly answered. Based on the percentage, your exam results will indicate “pass” or “fail.” You must achieve a score of 80% or better to pass the exam.

You will not see the correct answers to missed questions on the exam results. To protect the confidentiality of the exam content, and to maintain the value and integrity of the certification, AANAC does provide task level feedback. The exam is intended to measure proficiency in the subject and to determine whether an individual has the knowledge necessary for certification.

When will I receive my score?

The exams are self-scoring and provide immediate feedback. Upon completion of the exam, your computer screen will display the percentage of correctly answered questions and indicate “pass” or “fail.” You may access this pass or fail information at a later date by logging into your AANACClassroom account and clicking on My Transcript.

Once you have passed all 10 exams, you may begin using the initials RAC-CT, RAC-CTA to designate your status as a certified Resident Assessment Coordinator-Certified Advanced. Credentials are awarded for a two-year period.

Can I retake an exam(s) if I don't pass?

You have two attempts to pass an exam with a score of 80% or better. If you do not pass after two attempts, you are required to purchase that course again. If you do not pass after four attempts, you must wait one year before taking the exam again.

In the case of an extenuating circumstance, you may submit a formal, written appeal to AANAC to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AANAC Education Department at education@AANAC.org.

About the appeals provision

AANAC works diligently to provide top-quality course materials and exams using a standardized process of question development and validation. AANAC also affords candidates a high level of flexibility in completing the exam. Due to these policies and procedures, an appeal will be heard only in the case of an extenuating circumstance. In this case, you may submit a formal, written appeal to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AANAC Education Department at education@AANAC.org.

Recertification: Certification Maintenance

When do I need to recertify?

The RAC-CTA certification is valid for two years from your certification completion date. Your credential expires at the end of the month in which you completed your exam requirements. You will have a one-month grace period beyond your certification expiration date to complete the recertification requirements.

Due to regular updates to the curriculum, you are encouraged to begin your recertification no sooner than six months before your certification expiration.

What are the recertification requirements?

To maintain your RAC-CTA certification, you must recertify every two years. To recertify you must take and pass one recertification exam and course. Alternatively, you can complete the 10-course RAC-CTA program again.

Each recertification exam requires a passing score of 80% or better.

Purchasing recertification courses does not extend the expiration date of your credential. The expiration date for your credential remains the same, regardless of when your course materials expire.

How much does RAC-CTA recertification and education cost?

All pricing can be found online at the above link.

What if I let my certification lapse?

If you do not complete the recertification requirements within the one-month grace period of your certification expiration date, you will no longer be entitled to use the RAC-CTA credential. If you miss your grace period, you must take and pass the 10 required exams and courses for the RAC-CTA program.

In the case of an extenuating circumstance, you can submit a formal, written appeal to AANAC to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AANAC Education Department at education@AANAC.org.



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