

# Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists (AHSCP-CHS)



*\*Formerly the ASH Specialist Program, Inc.*

## HANDBOOK FOR CANDIDATES

### 2019 Testing Periods

#### Spring 2019

Application Deadline	April 5, 2019
Testing Period	May 4 – May 18, 2019

#### Fall 2019

Application Deadline	October 9, 2019
Testing Period	November 9 – November 23, 2019



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This handbook contains necessary information about the Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists. Please retain it for future reference. Candidates are responsible for reading these instructions carefully. This handbook is subject to change.

## WHAT IS THE AMERICAN HYPERTENSION SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION PROGRAM?

The American Hypertension Specialist Program (AHSCP) was formed in response to the growing recognition that the hypertension problem requires the coordinated effort of front-line health care providers and those physicians with documented expertise in managing hypertension. The *Clinical Hypertension Specialist* (CHS) designation was created for the specific purpose of identifying and recognizing physicians with expert skills and knowledge in the management of clinical hypertension and related disorders.

## DESIGNATION

The AHSCP designates *Clinical Hypertension Specialists* on the basis of: a) submission of an application which documents training and experience in hypertension and related areas, and b) passing the Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDIDATES FROM THE UNITED STATES & CANADA

By the application deadline, candidates must meet the following eligibility requirements:

1. Be a currently licensed physician in the United States or Canada.  
**[Submit a copy of current license with application]**
2. Be certified by a relevant primary board (American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) or equivalent) (e.g., Internal Medicine, Family Practice, Pediatrics, Obstetrics-Gynecology).  
**[Submit documentation with application]**
3. Meet at least ONE (1) of the following:
  - a. Certified by a relevant subspecialty board (ABMS or equivalent) (e.g., cardiovascular disease, nephrology, endocrinology).  
**[Submit documentation of specialty standing or training with application]**
  - OR**
  - b. Current enrollment in an accredited relevant fellowship program (e.g., cardiovascular disease, nephrology, endocrinology)  
**[Submit appropriate documentation with application]**
  - OR**
  - c. Demonstrate appropriate experience and practice activity in the management of complex hypertension problems (e.g., letter from Chief of Service or another recognized senior physician).  
**[Submit copy of letter or other documentation demonstrating experience and practice activity with application]**
4. **Complete Attestation of Current Appointment Form** by Chief of Department or Division.
5. Complete and file an Application for the Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists.
6. Pay the required fee.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDIDATES FROM COUNTRIES OTHER THAN THE UNITED STATES & CANADA

By the application deadline, candidates must meet the following eligibility requirements:

1. Be a currently licensed physician.  
**(Submit a copy of current license, in English, with application)**
2. Be certified by a relevant national or U.S. primary board (American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) or equivalent) (e.g., Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Obstetrics-Gynecology).  
**[Submit documentation with application]**
3. Meet at least ONE (1) of the following:
  - a. Certified by a relevant secondary national or U.S. subspecialty board (ABMS or equivalent) (e.g., cardiovascular disease, nephrology, endocrinology).  
**[Submit documentation of specialty standing or training with application]**

**OR**

  - b. Current enrollment in an accredited relevant national or U.S. fellowship program (e.g., cardiovascular disease, nephrology, endocrinology).  
**[Submit appropriate documentation with application]**

**OR**

  - c. Demonstrate appropriate experience and practice activity in the management of complex hypertension problems (e.g., letter from Chief of Service or another recognized senior physician).  
**[Submit copy of letter or other documentation demonstrating experience and practice activity with application]**
4. **Complete Attestation of Current Appointment Form** by Chief of Department or Division.
5. Complete and file an Application for the Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists.
6. Pay the required fee.

## EXAMINATION DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists was developed by the American Hypertension Specialist Certification Program with the assistance of the Professional Testing Corporation (PTC) [1350 Broadway – Suite 800, New York, New York 10018, (212) 356-0660]. The Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists is also administered for the AHSCP by PTC. Questions concerning the examination should be referred to PTC, at [ptcny@ptcny.com](mailto:ptcny@ptcny.com).

## ATTAINMENT OF DESIGNATION AND REDESIGNATION

Eligible candidates who pass the Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists are eligible to use the designation *Clinical Hypertension Specialist* (CHS) after their names and will receive certificates from the American Hypertension Specialist Certification Program. A registry of designated *Clinical Hypertension Specialists* will be maintained by AHSCP and may be reported in various publications.

The *Clinical Hypertension Specialist* designation is recognized for a period of 10 years at which time the candidate must retake and pass the current Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists or meet such alternative requirements as are in effect at that time in order to retain designation.

## REVOCATION OF DESIGNATION

Designation will be revoked for violations of the policies of the Board of the AHSCP, including, but not limited to:

1. Falsification of an Application.
2. Revocation of any current license to practice medicine.
3. Misrepresentation of designation status.

The Board of the AHSCP shall make all decisions regarding revocation of designation.

## COMPLETION OF APPLICATION

The application for the Qualifying Examination must be submitted online.

- Read and follow the directions on the application and in this handbook. The application can be found on Professional Testing Corporation's website [www.ptcny.com/clients/ahscp](http://www.ptcny.com/clients/ahscp).
- The online application and appropriate fees for the examination must be received on or before the appropriate deadline listed in this handbook.

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Candidates MUST submit the following:

- Online Application
- Copy of current medical license
- Copy of primary care board certification
- Attestation form completed by division chair
- Appropriate fee enclosed or credit card payment section completed

**You must also provide ONE of the following:**

- Copy of subspecialty board certification
- OR**
- Documentation of current enrollment in a relevant, accredited fellowship program
- OR**
- Letter from Chief of Service or other recognized senior physician, on letterhead, verifying demonstration of appropriate experience and practice activity in the management of complex hypertension problems

## FEES

Please note: Fees are NOT refundable.

Application Fee for the Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists: **\$1,000.00**

Please note: The application fee listed above applies to those applicants taking the examination at computer testing centers in the U.S. and Canada. For applicants wishing to take the examination outside of the U.S. or in areas in Canada where computer testing is not available, an additional special test center fee of \$150.00 will apply.

MAKE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE IN U.S. DOLLARS ON A U.S. BANK TO:  
**PROFESSIONAL TESTING CORPORATION**

To pay by Visa, MasterCard, or American Express, complete the Credit Card Payment section of the Online Application.

## REFUNDS AND TRANSFER POLICY

There will be no refund of fees. **Please be advised: PSI does not have the authority to grant transfers or refunds. All requests must be made through PTC.**

Candidates unable to take the examination during their scheduled testing period may request a **ONE-TIME** transfer to the immediate next testing period. **There is a transfer fee of \$500.00.** After you have transferred once by paying the \$500.00 fee, you will need to pay the full examination fee in order to transfer a second time; so, ***please plan carefully.***

**Please note:** requests to transfer to a new testing period must be received within 1 month of your originally scheduled testing period.

Candidates wishing to transfer to a new testing period need to follow the steps below.

1. Go to <http://secure.ptcny.com/apply>.
2. Click “Start New Application.”
3. Choose AHSCP-CHS in the first drop down menu; then choose the new examination period in the second drop down menu and fill out the rest of the information on the page.
4. Fill out the application completely and upload your current medical license (the remainder of the required documentation is not needed).
5. In the “Comments” section, type a note saying your transferring from your original testing period (Month and Year) to the next testing period (Month and Year).
6. Click “Submit Application”.
7. PTC Support will send you an email letting you know your new application was approved and that you can log back into your application and pay the \$500.00 transfer fee.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING TRANSFERRING TO A NEW TESTING PERIOD**

- Call 212-356-0660 if you have any questions regarding the transferring process.
- If candidates are unable to attend the examination on the date for which they registered and elect not to transfer to another testing period, the application will be closed and all fees will be forfeited. There will be no refund of fees.
- The transfer fee is based on cost and is not punitive in nature. The transfer fee must be paid at the time the request for transfer is approved. The candidate is responsible for contacting PSI and canceling the original examination appointment, if one was made.
- Exams may only be transferred to a new testing period once; please plan carefully.
- Transferring your examination only refers to instances when a candidate is unable to take their exam during a testing period for which they have already applied. Candidates who did not pass their examination and are retaking the examination need to pay the full Examination Fee.
- If you need to reschedule within the same testing period please see “Changing Your Examination Appointment” on page 9.

**EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION**

The Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists is administered during an established testing period on a daily basis, Monday through Saturday, excluding holidays, at computer-based testing facilities managed by PSI, Inc. PSI has several hundred testing sites in the United States, as well as certain cities in Canada. Scheduling is done on a first-come, first-serve basis. To find a testing center near you visit: <http://www.ptcny.com/cbt/sites.htm> or call PSI at (833) 207-1288. Please note: Hours and days of availability vary at different centers. **You will not be able to schedule your examination appointment until you have received a Scheduling Authorization via email from notices@ptcny.com.**

**TESTING SOFTWARE DEMO**

A Tutorial and Testing Software Demonstration can be viewed online. Go to <http://www.ptcny.com/cbt/demo.htm>. This online Tutorial can give you an idea about the features of the testing software.

**SCHEDULING YOUR EXAMINATION APPOINTMENT**

Once your application has been received and processed and your eligibility verified, you will be sent a notice from PTC confirming receipt of payment and acceptance of application. Within six weeks prior to the first day of the testing period, you will be sent a Scheduling Authorization via email from notices@ptcny.com. Please ensure you enter your correct email address on the application and add the notices@ptcny.com to your contacts. If you do not receive a Scheduling Authorization at least three weeks before the beginning of the testing period, contact the Professional Testing Corporation at (212) 356-0660.

The Scheduling Authorization will indicate how to schedule your examination appointment as well as the dates during which testing is available. Appointment times are first-come, first-serve, so schedule your appointment as soon as you receive your Scheduling Authorization in order to maximize your chance of testing at your preferred location and on your preferred date.

**You MUST present your current driver's license, passport, or U.S. military ID at the test center. Temporary, paper driver's licenses are not accepted. The name on your Scheduling Authorization must exactly match the name on your photo I.D.** PTC also recommends you bring a paper copy of your Scheduling Authorization and your PSI appointment confirmation with you to the testing center.

After you make your test appointment, PSI will send you a confirmation email with the date, time and location of your exam. Please check this confirmation carefully for the correct date, time and location. Contact PSI at (833) 207-1288 if you do not receive this email confirmation or if there is a mistake with your appointment.

- **It is your responsibility as the candidate to call PSI to schedule the examination appointment.**
- **It is highly recommended that you become familiar with the testing site.**
- **Arrival at the testing site at the appointed time is the responsibility of the candidate. Please plan for weather, traffic, parking, and any security requirements that are specific to the testing location. Late arrival may prevent you from testing.**

## INTERNATIONAL TESTING

Candidates outside of the United States and Canada must complete and submit the Request for Special Testing Center Form found on the [www.ptcny.com](http://www.ptcny.com) homepage. This form must be uploaded to your application no later than 8 weeks prior to the start of the chosen testing period. Fees for testing at an international computer test center (outside of the United States and Canada) are \$100.00 in addition to the examination fee. PTC will arrange a computer based examination at an international test center for you.

## SPECIAL NEEDS

AHSCP and PTC support the intent of and complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). PTC will take steps reasonably necessary to make certification accessible to persons with disabilities covered by the ADA. Special testing arrangements may be made upon receipt of the Application, examination fee, and a completed and signed Request for Special Needs Accommodations Form, available from [www.ptcny.com](http://www.ptcny.com) or by calling PTC at (212) 356-0660. This form must be uploaded with the online application at least EIGHT weeks before the testing period begins. Please use this form if you need to bring a service dog, medicine, food or beverages needed for a medical condition with you to the testing center.

**Only those requests made and received on the official Request for Special Needs Accommodations Form (found at [www.ptcny.com](http://www.ptcny.com)) will be reviewed. Letters from doctors and other healthcare professionals must be accompanied by the official Form and will not be accepted without the Form.**

Information supplied on the Request for Special Accommodations form will only be used to determine the need for special accommodations and will be kept confidential



## CHANGING YOUR EXAMINATION APPOINTMENT

If you need to cancel your examination appointment or reschedule to a different date within the two-week testing period you must contact PSI at (833) 207-1288 no later than noon, Eastern Standard Time, of the second business day PRIOR to your scheduled appointment.

PSI does not have the authority to authorize refunds or transfers to another testing period.

## RULES FOR THE EXAMINATION

1. All Electronic devices that can be used to record, transmit, receive, or play back audio, photographic, text, or video content, including but not limited to, cell phones, laptop computers, tablets, Bluetooth devices; wearable technology such as smart watches; MP3 players such as iPods; pagers, cameras and voice recorders are not permitted to be used and cannot be taken in the examination room.
2. No books, papers, or reference materials may be taken into or removed from the testing room.
3. Simple, nonprogrammable calculators are permitted with the exception of calculators as part of cellular phones, and other prohibited electronic devices. A calculator is also available on screen if needed.
4. No questions concerning content of the examination may be asked during the testing period. The candidate should read carefully the directions that are provided on screen at the beginning of the examination session.
5. Candidates are prohibited from leaving the testing room while their examination is in session, with the sole exception of going to the restroom.
6. Bulky clothing, such as sweatshirts (hoodies), jackets, coats and hats, except hats worn for religious reasons, may not be worn while taking the examination.
7. All watches and “Fitbit” type devices cannot be worn during the examination. It is suggested that these items are not brought to the test center.

Violation of any of the rules listed above may lead to forfeiture of fees, dismissal from testing room, and cancellation of your test scores.

## REPORT OF RESULTS

Candidates will be notified in writing by the American Hypertension Specialist Certification Program within four weeks of the close of the testing window whether they have passed or failed the examination. The total examination scores will be reported. Successful candidates will also receive certificates from AHSCP.

## REEXAMINATION

The Qualifying Examination for Clinical Hypertension Specialists may be taken as often as desired upon filing of a new Application and fee. There is no limit to the number of times the examination may be repeated.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

1. The American Hypertension Specialist Certification Program will release the individual test scores ONLY to the individual candidate.
2. Any questions concerning test results should be referred to the Professional Testing Corporation at (212) 356-0660.

**CONTENT OF EXAMINATION**

1. The Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists is a computer-based examination composed of 200 multiple-choice, objective questions with a total testing time of four (4) hours.
2. The content for the examination is described in the Content Outline below.
3. The questions for the examination are obtained from individuals with expertise in clinical hypertension and are reviewed for construction, accuracy, and appropriateness by the American Hypertension Specialist Certification Program.
4. The American Hypertension Specialist Certification Program prepares the examination with the advice and assistance of the Professional Testing Corporation.
5. The Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists will be weighted in approximately the following manner:

I.	Basic Science .....	15%
II.	Diagnostic Evaluation .....	10%
III.	Secondary Hypertension .....	20%
IV.	Treatment .....	35%
V.	Treatment Special Conditions.....	20%

**CONTENT OUTLINE**

- I. BASIC SCIENCE**
  - A. Physiology (Hemodynamics, Renin-Angiotensin-Aldosterone System, Sympathetic Nervous System)
  - B. Pathophysiology
  - C. Epidemiology (Risk, Prevalence, Importance of Systolic Hypertension, Control Rates)
  - D. Genetics
  - E. Pharmacology
  
- II. DIAGNOSTIC EVALUATION**
  - A. Blood Pressure Measurement/Monitoring
  - B. Blood Pressure Classification
  - C. Clinical Characteristics
  - D. Laboratory Testing
  - E. Target Organ Damage
  
- III. SECONDARY HYPERTENSION**
  - A. Renal Parenchymal Disease
  - B. Renovascular
  - C. Endocrine
  - D. Obstructive Sleep Apnea
  - E. Other Including Pharmacologic

**IV. TREATMENT**

- A. Prevention/Public Health Strategies
- B. Lifestyle Modification/Nonpharmacologic Treatment
- C. Clinical Trials
- D. Drug Therapy (Drugs, Combination Therapy, Targets, Approaches)
- E. Treatment Guidelines
- F. Barriers to Treatment and Control, Adherence

**V. TREATMENT: SPECIAL CONDITIONS**

- A. Hypertensive Crisis/Emergencies/Urgencies/Malignant Hypertension
- B. Resistant Hypertension
- C. Co-existing Renal Disease (Proteinuria, Diabetic Nephropathy, Renal Failure)
- D. Co-existing Heart Disease (Coronary Artery Disease, Myocardial Infarction, Congestive Heart Failure)
- E. Co-existing Vascular Disease (Aortic Aneurysm, Stroke)
- F. Lipids, Obesity, and Diabetes
- G. Hypertension in Pregnancy
- H. Orthostatic Hypotension
- I. Psychologic Disorders
- J. Children and Adolescents

## SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

In the following questions, choose the one best answer.

- 
1. A 42-year-old man, seen for a check-up, has blood pressure of 135/85 mm Hg, with a body mass index of 29, and no symptoms. He reports occasional exercise and consumption of 4-5 beers per week. The exam and usual tests are normal. Which of the following lifestyle interventions is the best strategy for management?
1. Weight loss
  2. Stress management
  3. Decreased alcohol intake
  4. Dietary supplementation with potassium
- 
2. An overweight 55-year-old man with type II diabetes mellitus has blood pressures 145-150/90-95 mm Hg. His fasting glucose level is 138 mg/dL and his hemoglobin A1C level is 7.8%. He has normal renal function and 1+ proteinuria. He stopped smoking one year ago. Which antihypertensive drug should be started?
1. Ramipril
  2. Verapamil
  3. Metoprolol
  4. Amlodipine
- 
3. A 24-year-old woman is seen for recent headaches with a blood pressure of 190/120 mm Hg. Two years ago her pressure was normal. The examination is normal except for narrowed retinal arteries and a systolic-diastolic upper abdominal bruit. Urinalysis is normal, serum creatinine is 0.9 mg/dL, Na 139, K 3.6, Cl 102,  $\text{HCO}_3$  26. Which of the following tests is indicated?
1. Renal artery imaging
  2. 24-hour urine free cortisol
  3. Urine metanephrine excretion
  4. Serum thyroid hormone and TSH levels
- 
4. Laboratory studies in a 45-year-old man with an average blood pressure of 165/110 mm Hg while receiving no antihypertensive therapy are as follows: Serum sodium 144 mEq/L, potassium 3.1 mEq/L,  $\text{HCO}_3$  32, glucose 110 mg/dL and creatinine 1.1 mg/dL. Which one of the following test results obtained after 7 days on a high sodium diet supports the suspected diagnosis of primary aldosteronism?
1. Plasma renin activity = 2.5 ng/mL/hr
  2. Urinary potassium excretion = 20 mEq/L
  3. Plasma aldosterone / plasma renin activity ratio = 8.0
  4. Urinary aldosterone excretion = 30 micrograms/24 hours

CORRECT ANSWERS TO SAMPLE  
QUESTIONS

1. 1; 2. 1; 3. 1; 4. 4

## ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND STUDY OPTIONS

Assessment tools and study options for preparing to take the Clinical Hypertension Specialist Examination include the following:

- “2018 Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists” – Handbook for Candidates – see sections entitled (1) Content Outline, and (2) Sample Examination Questions.
- The Practice Examination for the Hypertension Specialist Examination, a 60-question computerized test simulating the actual examination. The practice examination covers the five content areas of the examination. For more information, go to [www.ptcny.com](http://www.ptcny.com).
- Refer to the "Suggested Study Topics for the Hypertension Specialist Certification Exam" at <http://www.ahscp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CHS-Study-Guide.pdf>. This Study Topics document is an outline of current clinical hypertension literature, and consists of (a) hypertension textbooks (b) links to clinical practice guidelines and statements, and (c) a list of significant randomized clinical trials that serve as the basis for current practice recommendations.

## ONLINE PRACTICE TEST FOR SPECIALISTS IN CLINICAL HYPERTENSION

**WHAT IS IT:** A practice test consisting of 60 questions with a testing time of 2 hours taken over the Internet

**WHY TAKE IT:** To experience taking a computerized exam, to review an example of the type of content included in the Certification Examination for Hypertension Specialists, and to learn more about question format, style, and level of difficulty

**SCORE REPORT:** After completing the online practice test, you will receive an instant score report showing test performance in each of the content areas. The score report does not provide correct answers or indicate which questions were answered correctly and incorrectly. Once the practice test is scored, you cannot return to the test to review the questions

**NOTE:** The online practice test is an optional tool candidates may use as they prepare for the certification examination. While the practice test may help candidates identify areas of strengths and weakness, it should not be used as the only means to determine candidate preparedness or readiness to test. Since the practice test is NOT intended to be a study guide nor the sole source of preparation for the actual certification examination, candidates are NOT provided with the answer key, rationales for each question, nor notification of which specific items were answered correctly or incorrectly.

Though the specific questions that are on the practice test will not appear on the actual certification examination, it allows candidates to become familiar with the style of questions that may be asked. The instant score report received after practice test submission shows overall test performance as well as performance in each of the content areas. Candidates may find this information useful in determining future study needs. Once the practice test is scored, candidates cannot return to the test to review the questions. Performance on the practice test does not guarantee similar performance on the actual certification examination.

The PTC Online Testing System does not demonstrate the testing software used during the certification examinations. Those who purchase the online practice test should be aware that they will use a different testing platform when they take certification examinations at designated proctored testing centers.

The practice test is not a requirement for certification eligibility nor does it contribute in any way to success on the certification examination. There are many ways candidates should prepare for the certification examination. Candidates should use a variety of resources and consider their own education and experiences. Review the content outline and reference materials listed in the handbook for additional exam-related information.

**CONTENT INCLUDED**

- I. Basic Science
- II. Diagnostic Evaluation
- III. Secondary Hypertension
- IV. Treatment
- V. Treatment Special Conditions

**FEE:** \$195 by credit card

**APPLY:** Go to [www.ptcny.com](http://www.ptcny.com) and select Online Practice Test for Specialists in Clinical Hypertension

**FURTHER INFO:** Visit [www.ptcny.com](http://www.ptcny.com) or call Professional Testing Corporation at 212-356-0660