

State Guidelines for Employment Support Personnel Training Certificates and Certification

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Competencies, Certificates, and Credentials

Certificate

- Knowledge and skills needed to effectively perform job duties
- Skills and standards of practice

Certificate

- Usually at the conclusion of a training
- Evidence of participation or completed coursework

Certification

- Evidence of competency
- Examines skill/knowledge based on set benchmarks
- Not based on one specific training

ACRE Mission

- Improve quality of employment supports for people with disabilities by training provider staff
- Using competency-based training, ACRE promotes continuing education for professionals in order to raise the standard of employment supports nationally

www.acrededucators.org

ACRE... A Bit of History

- Late 1970's ACRE got its first start (Fred Menz & others)
- Original name: AECRP (Association of Educators of Community Rehab Providers). ACRE name came later
- Competencies work/discussions began in the late 1990s
- Developed ACRE Competencies using APSE competencies with input from APSE leadership
- ACRE employment competencies were broadened beyond supported employment (added assistive technology, etc.)
- ACRE developed a review process to evaluate curriculum against competencies. Approved curriculum could be used to offer training and award ACRE Certificates of Completion
- First ACRE Certificates awarded in 2005

Competency Initiatives

- APSE Competencies: developed and refined in 2012 (for CESP certification)
- 2005 competencies refined in 2013
- ACRE Curriculum Review Process refined in 2013: incorporated review protocol for online training
- ACRE Certificate Registry developed
- 2017: addition of the Basic Certificate with an Emphasis on Customized Employment

Recent ACRE Trends....

- Over 15,000 ACRE certificates issued to date
- Many states now require staff receive an ACRE Certificate
- Several states are incentivizing providers whose staff earn ACRE certificates (higher rates of pay)
- ACRE positioned to support and promote Employment First initiatives
- More providers are submitting curriculum for review vs. university or training organizations (train own staff = cost savings)

Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)

- Started in 1988
- 3,000+ members
- Only national organization with an exclusive focus on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities
- **What is Employment First?** Simply put, Employment First means real jobs for real wages. Employment in the general workforce should be the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities receiving assistance from publicly-funded systems.

Certified Employment Support Professional™ (CESP)

- The certification program falls under the oversight of the Employment Support Professional Certification Council (ESPCC), established by the APSE Board of Directors.
- The certification was developed for **employment support professionals (ESPs)** who assist individuals with significant disabilities to **obtain and maintain competitive employment in integrated workplaces**.
- *“The CESP credential is an important step in building the professional recognition of the work being done in the employment supports field, and the amazing skill set that is required to do it successfully.”* Kate Travis, CT.

CESP Credential, Cont.

- The CESP™ is accredited through the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).
- Eligibility requirements include **Education, Work Experience**, and **Code of Conduct** prerequisites to ensure that individuals certified have an acceptable level of knowledge and skill needed to provide employment supports at an entry level of competency.
- These professionals can include but are not limited to:
 - ▷ job coaches
 - ▷ job developers
 - ▷ transition employment specialists
 - ▷ school-to-work personnel

Here are the steps to apply...

- Apply at **APSE Apply** (www.apse.smapply.org) with all eligibility documentation and be reviewed for a \$40 non-refundable application fee
- Be deemed eligible to sit for the examination. You will receive instructions to schedule your examination within 30 days
- Pay \$159 per examination attempt when you schedule!
*You must wait at least 30 days between attempts.

Questions? Check our [FAQs](#) or email cesp@apse.org

Look for the magnifying glass on APSE websites for assistance!

State Guidelines for Employment Services Personnel Training Certificates or Certification

- The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for consideration in state agencies' decision-making about requiring employment support personnel to acquire certificates of training, or certification as Employment Support Professionals.
- The professional development expectations in states are often happening in a broader context of multiple systemic changes to promote the expansion of CIE.
- **Download Document (02/2020): State Guidelines for CESP and ACRE Competency Requirements. Link: <https://apse.org/apse-and-acre-state-guidelines/>**

Factors to Consider

- There are a few factors to consider, and decisions to be made, as state agencies review the requirements of employment training certificates or certification
- These include issues of scope, capacity, financial resources, timelines for implementation and more
- State Agencies responsible for providing employment supports for people with disabilities have begun to address the training and competency needs of employment support personnel

In some circumstances, challenges have been encountered:

When states have set a certificate or certification requirement without considering the training resources needed or the availability of such training statewide (both the capacity to deliver training, and the funding necessary to sustainably support delivery);

When the requirement timeline makes it difficult to deliver the needed training; when personnel selected for training are not clear on how this training relates to their job duties, or may not meet work experience requirements for certification; or,

When there is not a plan for continued training or mentorship.

Considerations



- In the experience of these states to date, it has been important to consider training on CIE in the broader context of systemic reform
- It has been useful to identify funding sources for both training organizations and resources for training of staff members of provider agencies
- Some states have also set requirements for accreditation of provider agencies (e.g., CARF), in addition to staff certificates or certification
- It has been useful when states create this requirement in the context of coordinated delivery of training statewide

Questions to Consider

- What is the goal of requiring certificates or certification of related personnel?
- How can ACRE certificates or CESP credentials help meet this goal?
- Which state agencies should be involved or responsible for related professional development?
- What is the current, and needed commitment, to CIE, or the provider agencies whose staff will receive training?
- How does such training relate to the roles and responsibilities of the staff members who will participate?
- Is there potential for ongoing training, technical assistance and mentoring available to staff who receive initial employment supports training?

Questions to Consider, cont.

- **How many individuals will need training in the next few years, and on an ongoing basis in subsequent years?**
- **What training organizations are available to provide the needed training and ongoing support?**
- Who should pay the related training costs? State Agencies? Provider Agencies? Individuals? Or some combination?
- What incentives can be offered to support agencies whose staff are trained (e.g., higher reimbursement rates), or to individuals (e.g., higher pay)?
- Is it possible to develop or incorporate a data system to document training, costs, and CIE outcomes?
- Consider possible consequences (intended and unintended) of requiring certificates or certification to people with disabilities? To employment support personnel? To provider agencies?

Guidelines for State Agencies

- Establish goals for Professional Development of employment support personnel
- Decide on Professional Development expectations and requirements, including minimal standard requirement and any required ongoing professional development
- Develop interagency commitment and collaboration on ACRE/CESP requirements (e.g., VR/DD/MH/ED)
- Specify the personnel audiences in provider agencies for whom a national certificate will be required
- Assess the volume of training needed based on estimates of the number of individuals in the workforce in need of training

Guidelines for State Agencies, cont.

- Identify training and professional development organizations who can provide related training and assess their capacity to meet the professional development needs. Create a Registry of Training Organizations, with their capacity and availability
- Encourage Provider Agencies to recruit and hire employment support personnel with a preference for applicants listed in the ACRE Certificate Registry, or those who hold a CESP credential
- Promote continuing education of employment support personnel beyond initial ACRE/CESP, including further training on CIE, and mentoring
- Consider a mix of training methodologies, including online and in-person training

Guidelines for State Agencies, cont.

- Promote technical assistance to provider agencies that provide CIE supports
- Develop a financial plan of needed resources to provide training, including costs for Training Organizations and for individuals' cost to participate
- Discuss and possibly develop incentives for provider agencies and employment support personnel
- Establish a plan and timelines for professional development and for requiring ACRE or CESP statewide
- Investigate the possibility of a data system to document training, certification, and related outcomes

More Research is Needed

- Continued research is needed about the impact and effectiveness of professional development investment, including CIE outcomes, staff retention, and staff turnover.

Recommended Action Steps

- If you have your ACRE certificate or CESP certification and see it as a valuable credential, advocate for others in your organization and state to get this training and certification
- If you do not have your ACRE certificate or CESP certification and see it as a valuable credential, go to the ACRE and APSE websites to see how you can access this training and certification

Recommended Action Steps, cont.

- If your state requires employment staff to have an ACRE certificate or CESP certification, inform state agencies of these guidelines and advocate for state support and resources to obtain this training and certification
- If your state doesn't require employment staff to have an ACRE certificate or CESP certification and you see it as a valuable credential, inform state agencies of these guidelines and advocate for your state to require a certificate or certification and state support and resources to obtain this training and certification

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THANK YOU!

Any questions?