

A service of the Association of Clinical Documentation Improvement Specialists

# CCDS CERTIFIED CLINICAL DOCUMENTATION SPECIALIST CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

The standard of excellence for clinical documentation specialists  
by clinical documentation specialists

2012 REVISED CANDIDATE HANDBOOK



## About the Association of Clinical Documentation Improvement Specialists

The **Association of Clinical Documentation Improvement Specialists (ACDIS)** is a diverse community of professionals whose backgrounds include nursing, HIM/coding, case management, quality, and more. Members of **ACDIS** share the latest tested tips, tools, and strategies to implement successful CDI programs and achieve professional growth. **ACDIS'** mission is to bring CDI specialists together.

**ACDIS** offers its members a quarterly journal, quarterly conference calls, e-learning courses, news updates, a forms and tools library, a talk group, a job board, and discounts on selected products. Members can network with their colleagues and peers through member publications, working groups, local chapter meetings, and the option of attending the **ACDIS** annual conference.

75 Sylvan Street, Suite A-101  
Danvers, MA 01923  
Tel: 877/240-6586  
Fax: 800/738-1553  
E-mail: [customerservice@cdiassociation.com](mailto:customerservice@cdiassociation.com)  
Web site: [www.cdiassociation.com](http://www.cdiassociation.com)

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## Note to candidates

It is your responsibility to read and understand the contents of this handbook before applying for certification.

This handbook contains current information about the criteria and process for applying to be a **Certified Clinical Documentation Specialist (CCDS)**. Please refer to the contents of this handbook for any questions you may have regarding the certification program.

Additional information is available at the **ACDIS** Web site at [www.cdiassociation.com](http://www.cdiassociation.com). If you cannot find the information you require or have further questions, you may also contact:

Penny Richards  
**ACDIS** Member Services Specialist  
[prichards@cdiassociation.com](mailto:prichards@cdiassociation.com)

or call **ACDIS** Customer Service at 877/240-6586

## Mission statement

The mission of the CCDS credential is to elevate the professional standing of clinical documentation specialists. The program draws from experienced clinical documentation specialists in the field to establish criteria for competency in the broad and multidisciplinary bodies of knowledge clinical documentation specialists must possess. These include knowledge of healthcare and coding regulations; anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and pathophysiology; proficiency in medical record review; communication and physician query techniques; and data mining and reporting functions.

## Affiliation

Work on the CCDS credential began in 2008 as a service of **ACDIS** to answer the demand amongst its members for a nationally recognized mark of distinction and professionalism specific to clinical documentation specialists.

**ACDIS** appointed an advisory board to help develop the CCDS certification. The board's multidisciplinary membership comes from diverse backgrounds, including HIM/coding, nursing, case management, quality, and compliance.

The CCDS certification board currently includes the following members:

- **Deborah Biskner, MBA, RHIA, CCS, CCDS**, clinical documentation specialist, Port Huron Hospital, MI
- **Margi Brown, RHIA, CCS, CCS-P, CPC, CCDS**, independent consultant, Orlando, FL
- **Gary David, PhD**, associate professor, department of sociology, department of information design and corporate communication, Bentley University, Waltham, MA (public member)
- **Tamara Hicks, RN, BSN, CCS, CCDS**, manager, care coordination, North Carolina Baptist Hospital, Winston-Salem, NC
- **Fran Jurcak, RN, MSN, CCDS**, manager, Wellspring Partners, clinical documentation improvement division, Chicago, IL
- **Kathy Kerfoot, LPN, CPHQ, CCDS**, quality manager, St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, Enid, OK
- **Melissa Legere, RN, BSN, CCDS**, supervisor, clinical documentation, Wake Forest Baptist Health, Winston-Salem, NC
- **Mary Phelps, RHIA, CCS, CTR, CIC, CCDS**, senior associate, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, Charlotte, NC
- **Lynne Spryszak, RN, CPC-A, CCDS**, CDI education director, HCPro, Inc., Marblehead, MA

The following individuals previously served on the CCDS certification board:

- **Jill Brocker, RN, MSN, CCS, CCDS**, director of quality services, Indiana Heart Institute, Indianapolis, IN
- **Mary Beth Brown, RN, BSN, CCDS**, manager of clinical documentation improvement/utilization review, Moses Cone Health System, Greensboro, NC
- **Gloryanne Bryant, RHIA, RHIT, CCS, CCDS**, regional managing HIM director/NCAL revenue cycle, Kaiser Foundation Health Plan Inc. and Hospitals, Oakland, CA
- **Wanda Myers, RN, BSN, MA, CCDS**, clinical documentation specialist coordinator/coding and case mix analysis, Medstar, Washington Hospital Center, Washington, D.C.
- **Suzanne Rogers, RHIA, CCS, CPHQ, CCDS**, director, clinical data management, University of Texas Medical Branch

In addition, the following individuals assisted with initial content development and/or exam review:

- **Robert Gold, MD**, CEO, DCBA, Inc., Atlanta, GA
- **William Haik, MD**, director, DRG Review, Inc., Fort Walton Beach, FL
- **Colleen Stukenberg, MSN, RN, CMSRN, CCDS**, clinical documentation management professional, FHN Memorial Hospital, Freeport, IL

## Statement of nondiscrimination

The opportunity to become a CCDS is available to all eligible candidates who meet the exam prequalifications as identified in the handbook. **ACDIS** does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual preference, or disability.

If special accommodations are required for the examination, notify the program at 800/650-6787.

## Certified Clinical Documentation Specialist overview

The purpose of becoming a CCDS is to recognize that those who perform the role of a clinical documentation specialist possess a diverse set of concurrent medical record review skills, clinical knowledge, and knowledge of coding and reimbursement regulations under the Inpatient Prospective Payment System.

Because the CCDS credential was developed to recognize individuals with a proven ability to work as a clinical documentation specialist, candidates for the CCDS designation are required to have at least one year of experience in the profession. Additionally, candidates must have some college-level education (see "Certification eligibility requirements" below.) Successful candidates must achieve a passing score on the certification examination, which tests the candidate's ability to abide by documentation and coding regulations and apply his or her experience and knowledge to typical scenarios that clinical documentation specialists encounter in their profession.

The certification program is not designed to determine who shall serve as a clinical documentation specialist. That is the responsibility of the leadership team for each hospital. Instead, the goal is to establish a baseline of competency in professionals who serve as clinical documentation specialists, be they from nursing, HIM/coding, case management, quality, or other healthcare-related backgrounds.

The CCDS program is a service provided in conjunction with **ACDIS** specifically to help those professionals with baseline levels of education and experience as a clinical documentation specialist achieve a mark of distinction and professionalism. The required experience and education ensures that only clinical documentation specialists with proven ability to perform their functions can achieve this certification.

## Certification eligibility requirements

Candidates who wish to take the certification exam must meet all the general requirements (see below) and ONE of the following four prerequisites:

- **Route 1.** Minimum two years full-time (24 months or 3,900 hours) or equivalent experience as a concurrent documentation specialist **and** formal training (accredited, college-level course work) in human anatomy and/or physiology, medical terminology, and disease processes.
- **Route 2.** Minimum one year full-time (12 months or 1,950 hours) or equivalent experience as a concurrent documentation specialist **and** successful completion of a minimum of an Associate's degree (or equivalent [4 semesters/6 quarters]) in an approved college-level curriculum in a recognized allied health field as determined by the ACDIS certification board. A recognized allied health field for certification purposes includes human anatomy and/or physiology, medical terminology, and disease processes as part of its curriculum.
- **Route 3.** Minimum one year full-time (12 months or 1,950 hours) or equivalent experience as a concurrent documentation specialist **and** successful completion of a minimum of an Associate's degree (or equivalent [4 semesters/6 quarters]) **and** license or certification in a recognized allied health field, as determined by the ACDIS certification board. A recognized allied health field for certification purposes includes human anatomy and/or physiology, medical terminology, and disease processes as part of its curriculum.
- **Route 4.** Minimum one year full-time (12 months or 1,950 hours) or equivalent experience as a concurrent documentation specialist **and** successful completion of a baccalaureate degree or higher college-level curriculum **and** formal training (accredited, college-level course work) in human anatomy and/or physiology, medical terminology, and disease processes.

### General requirements

Candidates applying for the examination will be required to list their documentation specialist experience. Applications may be audited to verify work history.

- Once a candidate has accumulated the necessary hours these do not expire.
- All work experience must be met by the application deadline.
- At least one year of documentation specialist experience or equivalent is required.

### Allowable resources

Examination takers for the CCDS will be allowed to bring the following two books with them into the examination:

- *DRG Expert*, published by Ingenix
- One of the following standard drug reference guides:
  - Mosby's Nursing Drug Reference
  - Nurse's Pocket Drug Guide
  - Physicians' Desk Reference
  - PDR Nurse's Drug Handbook
  - Nursing Drug Handbook/Lippincott's

Books will be checked for additional pages or loose notes inserted or attached inside. These are not allowed to be brought into the testing room. Handwritten notes previously written in the margins of books are permitted, but candidates may not write in their books during the exam.

### About the certification examination

To become a CCDS, a candidate must pass the examination. This examination is offered once annually via paper-and-pencil at the **ACDIS** annual conference. The CCDS examination is also offered by computer at approximately 170 AMP Assessment Centers located throughout the United States. There are no application deadlines, and a candidate who meets eligibility requirements may submit an application and fee at any time. The examination is administered by appointment only Monday through Saturday at 9:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Candidates are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. The examination is not offered on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Labor Day
- Veterans' Day
- Christmas Eve Day
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Eve Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Good Friday
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Columbus Day
- Thanksgiving (and the following Friday)

## Examination fee

The fee for the certification application process and examination is \$295. If a candidate is a member of **ACDIS**, the application fee is reduced to \$255. Payment may be made by credit card, personal check, or money order for the total amount, payable to HCPro, Inc. All fees are non-refundable.

## Management and examination services

The Association of Clinical Documentation Improvement Specialists contracts with Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc., (AMP) to provide management and examination services. AMP provides administrative support for the certification process, including examination development, validation, and administration. AMP carefully adheres to industry standards for development of practice-related, criterion-referenced examinations to assess competency.

AMP offers a full range of services, including practice analyses and development of examination specifications, psychometric guidance to committees of content experts during examination question writing, development of content, valid examination instruments, publishing, examination administration, scoring, and reporting examination results.

Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc.

18000 West 105th Street

Olathe, KS 66061-7543

Tel: 913/895-4600

Fax: 913/895-4650

E-mail: [info@goAMP.com](mailto:info@goAMP.com)

Web site: [www.goAMP.com](http://www.goAMP.com)

**ACDIS** maintains records, handles finances, and processes examination applications, certification materials, and requests for continuing education approvals.

## Assessment Center locations

AMP Assessment Centers are typically located in H&R Block offices. A current list of Assessment Centers can be viewed at [www.goAMP.com](http://www.goAMP.com). Specific address information will be provided when a candidate schedules an examination appointment.

## Applying for the examination

There are two ways to apply for the CCDS examination. All candidates may review the application process on the **ACDIS** Web site at [www.cdiassociation.com](http://www.cdiassociation.com). Click on the Certification link on the left-hand navigation bar.

**1. Online application:** The candidate may complete the application online by visiting [www.cdiassociation.com](http://www.cdiassociation.com) and selecting the Certification button on the left-hand navigation bar. The computer screens will guide the candidate through the process. After the application information and payment have been submitted, the applicant will be contacted by AMP to schedule an examination.

**2. Paper application and scheduling:** Candidates who do not want to apply online may complete the application process by fax or mail by following these steps (candidates may also call 800/650-6787 for assistance with the application):

- Download and complete the application (PDF document), which is available online at [www.cdiassociation.com](http://www.cdiassociation.com) by clicking the Certification link on the left-hand navigation bar. Print the application and handwrite your responses. Please be sure to complete all required fields.
- Pay the application fee by providing complete credit card information, selecting “Bill me,” or enclosing a personal check or money order (see “Examination fee” under the “About the certification examination” section above for specific guidelines).
- Submit the application by mail, fax, or e-mail, using the contact information provided.  
Mail: HCPro, Inc.  
75 Sylvan Street, Suite A-101  
Danvers, MA 01923  
Fax: 800/738-1553  
E-mail: [application@cdiassociation.com](mailto:application@cdiassociation.com)

**ACDIS** and HCPro will process the paper application and will send a confirmation notice including a Web site address and toll-free telephone number to contact AMP to schedule an examination appointment. To request special accommodations, please complete the **Request for Special Examination Accommodations** form, and contact AMP at 888/519-9901.

## Scheduling an examination appointment

After you have registered for the examination and received notification of your eligibility by e-mail and/or letter, you may schedule the examination by one of the following methods:

1. **Schedule online:** Schedule a testing appointment online at any time by using AMP's Online Application/Scheduling service at [www.goAMP.com](http://www.goAMP.com). To use this service follow these steps:
  - Go to [www.goAMP.com](http://www.goAMP.com) and select "Candidates".
  - Follow the simple step-by-step instructions to choose your examination program and register for the examination.
  
2. **Schedule by phone:** Call AMP toll-free at 888/519-9901 to schedule an examination appointment from 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. (Central Time) Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Fridays, and 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays.

When you contact AMP to schedule an appointment, please be prepared to confirm a date and location for testing and to provide your name and Social Security number. Note: Your Social Security number is required for unique identification. All individuals are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. Refer to the following chart.

If you call AMP by 3:00 p.m. Central time on	Depending on availability, your examination may be scheduled beginning
Monday	Wednesday
Tuesday	Thursday
Wednesday	Friday/Saturday
Thursday	Monday
Friday	Tuesday

You will be notified of the time to report to the assessment center; please make a note of it since you will not receive an admission letter. Unscheduled candidates (walk-ins) will not be admitted to the assessment center.

## Special arrangements for candidates with disabilities

AMP is interested in ensuring that no individual with a disability is deprived of the opportunity to take the examination solely by reason of that disability. AMP will provide reasonable accommodations for candidates with disabilities.

1. Wheelchair access is available at all established assessment centers. Candidates must advise AMP at the time of registration that wheelchair access is necessary.
2. Candidates with visual, sensory, or physical disabilities that would prevent them from taking the examination under standard conditions may request special accommodations and arrangements. Please inform AMP of your need for special accommodations by completing the **Request for Special Examination Accommodations** form, and contacting AMP at 888/519-9901.

## Telecommunication devices for the deaf

AMP is equipped with Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD) to assist deaf and hearing-impaired candidates. TDD calling is available 8:30 a.m.—5 p.m. (Central Time) Monday through Friday at 913/895-4637. This TDD phone option is for individuals equipped with compatible TDD machinery.

## Examination and appointment changes

Candidates may reschedule their appointment for a future date **on one occasion per examination fee paid**. Candidates that desire to change their appointments must call AMP at 888/519-9901 at least two business days prior to the examination. Candidates that wish to change their appointments within two days of the examination will not be refunded their examination fee and will be required to pay the entire examination fee for any future examinations.

## Missed appointments/cancellations

A candidate will forfeit the examination registration and all fees paid under the following circumstances:

- The candidate wishes to reschedule an examination but fails to contact AMP at least two business days prior to the scheduled testing session.
- The candidate wishes to reschedule a second time.
- The candidate appears more than 15 minutes late for an examination.
- The candidate fails to report for an examination appointment.

## Inclement weather/power failure/other emergency

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen emergencies on the day of an examination, AMP will determine whether circumstances warrant the cancellation, and subsequent rescheduling, of an examination. Candidates may contact AMP's weather hotline at 800/380-5416 (24 hours/day) prior to the examination to determine if AMP has been advised that any assessment centers are closed. Every attempt is made to administer the examination as scheduled; however, should an examination be canceled at an assessment center, all scheduled candidates will receive notification following the examination regarding rescheduling or reapplication procedures.

## Cancellations

Candidates who fail to arrive at the assessment center on the date and time they are scheduled for examination will not be refunded any portion of their examination fees and must reregister; examination fees may not be transferred to another appointment. Candidates arriving more than 15 minutes late for an appointment will not be admitted, will forfeit their examination fee, and must reregister.

A candidate's application is valid for one year, during which the candidate must schedule an appointment to test on the computer and take the examination. A candidate who fails to schedule an appointment within the one-year eligibility period forfeits the application and all fees paid to take the examination. A complete application and examination fee are required to reapply for examination. A candidate is allowed to take only the examination for which application is made and a confirmation notice is received. Unscheduled candidates (walk-ins) are not eligible to take the exam.

## Examination content

The examination is based upon seven major content areas. Each of the content areas is briefly described and followed by an outline of the topics included in the area. In addition, the number of examination questions devoted to each major content area is noted. The examination is composed of 120 multiple-choice questions (100 scored questions, 20 pretest questions). Performance on the pretest questions does not affect your score. The pretest questions are not identified.

Each question on the examination is categorized by a cognitive level that a candidate would likely use to respond. These categories are:

- **Recall:** The ability to recall or recognize specific information.
- **Application:** The ability to comprehend, relate, or apply knowledge to new or changing situations.
- **Analysis:** The ability to analyze and synthesize information, determine solutions, and/or evaluate the usefulness of a solution.

The test is designed to contain approximately 25% recall questions, 45% application questions, and 30% analysis questions.

## Examination content outline

The CCDS exam will cover the following core competencies:

### **I. Healthcare regulations, reimbursement, and documentation requirements related to the Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS): 15 items**

(Recall: 12, Application: 3, Analysis: 0)

- a. Demonstrate a knowledge of Medicare Severity DRGs (MS-DRGs) and how they differ from CMS-DRGs.
- b. Demonstrate an understanding of the responsibilities of medical and clinical staff for documentation necessary for appropriate IPPS reimbursement.
- c. Explain how documentation affects IPPS diagnosis and procedure reimbursement.
- d. Define a complication/comorbidity (CC) under the MS-DRG system.
- e. Define a major complication/comorbidity (MCC) under the MS-DRG system.
- f. Explain how CMS selects certain diagnoses as a CC or MCC.
- g. Identify quality measures under the IPPS.
- h. Demonstrate how CDI specialists can assist with the collection of quality measures under the IPPS.
- i. Explain how documentation affects IPPS quality measures reimbursement.
- j. Define case-mix index and its relevance to CDI programs.
- k. Determine how a hospital's individual case-mix index is calculated.
- l. Define when and how the IPPS is updated each year.
- m. Explain the goals and findings of the Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) program.
- n. Recognize potential RAC risks.

### **2. Anatomy and physiology, pathophysiology, pharmacology, and medical terminology: 20 items** (Recall: 0, Application: 10, Analysis: 10)

- a. Explain the clinical indicators and query opportunities related to each Major Diagnostic Category (MDC).
  - i. MDC 4 - respiratory (e.g., pneumonia, ventilator days, COPD).
  - ii. MDC 5 - circulatory systems (e.g., types of heart failure).
  - iii. MDC 8 - musculoskeletal (e.g., debridement).
  - iv. MDC 10 - endocrine (e.g., malnutrition, diabetes, dehydration, debridement).
  - v. MDC 11 - kidney and urinary tract (e.g., renal failure).
  - vi. MDC 18 - infectious and parasitic diseases (e.g., sepsis).

- vii. MDC 19 - mental diseases and disorders (e.g., dementia, retardation)
- viii. MDC 25 - HIV infections (e.g., kaposi's sarcoma, PCP).
- b. Explain the difference between a TIA vs. a CVA
- c. Recognize pharmaceuticals commonly used for specific diseases.
- d. Explain which diagnoses the following drugs (and/or their generic equivalents) are commonly used to treat:
  - i. Lasix.
  - ii. Bumex.
  - iii. Levaquin.
  - iv. Rocephin.
  - v. Zosyn.
  - vi. Clindamycin.

**3. Medical record documentation: 20 items** (Recall: 5, Application: 10, Analysis: 5)

- a. Explain query opportunities to clarify the etiology of symptoms
- b. Demonstrate ability to interpret medication administration record to look for query opportunities.
- c. Demonstrate ability to interpret laboratory results to look for query opportunities.
- d. Demonstrate ability to interpret radiology results to look for query opportunities.
- e. Demonstrate ability to analyze emergency department documentation for admitting diagnoses.
- f. Recognize standard medical abbreviations used by physicians.
- g. Demonstrate an ability to construct open-ended non-leading written queries.
- h. Demonstrate an ability to construct open-ended non-leading verbal (i.e., oral) queries.
- i. Recognize opportunities to improve documentation of palliative care.
- j. Demonstrate appropriate places in the medical record from which diagnoses can be assigned.
- k. Explain which types of physician documentation (i.e., RN, PA, NP) can be used to assign diagnoses.
- l. Differentiate compliant and non-compliant queries.
- m. Explain query opportunities inherent in a patient with a history of congestive heart failure.
- n. Maintain current knowledge of the AHIMA practice brief, *Managing an Effective Query Process*

- 4. Healthcare facility CDI program analysis: 15 items** (Recall: 6, Application: 6, Analysis: 3)
- a. Demonstrate the ability to analyze an Excel spreadsheet and evaluate a CDI program's trends.
  - b. Demonstrate the ability to create forecasting data to predict the direction of a CDI program.
  - c. Identify differing methodologies for evaluating documentation program standards (e.g., CC/MCC capture, severity of illness, risk of mortality).
  - d. Identify methods for measuring physician performance related to documentation.
  - e. Demonstrate basic computer and software skills (e.g., basic Excel spreadsheet functions).
  - f. Demonstrate an ability to identify and apply specific hospital financial data in order to measure effectiveness.
  - g. Identify performance standards used to evaluate individual CDI specialists' performance.
  - h. Demonstrate an ability to track and trend data to measure hospital performance over time.
  - i. Demonstrate an ability to track and trend data to measure department-specific performance over time.
  - j. Explain how physician documentation affects publicly accessible Web sites and data (e.g., Leapfrog, HealthGrades).
  - k. Demonstrate an ability to track and trend data to measure individual physician performance over time.
- 5. Communication skills: 10 items** (Recall: 3, Application: 5, Analysis: 2)
- a. Identify methods for creating physician education forms and tools.
  - b. Demonstrate the ability to produce basic educational presentations specific for departments/services, including physicians, nurse practitioners, and administration.
  - c. Demonstrate the ability to communicate with physicians in an effective, non-confrontational manner.
  - d. Describe the roles and responsibilities of a documentation specialist.
  - e. Describe the roles and responsibilities of a coder working in conjunction with a CDI program.
  - f. Demonstrate the ability to write a compliant physician query.
  - g. Demonstrate the ability to reconcile discrepancies between working DRG assignments assigned by CDI staff and final, coded DRGs.
  - h. Identify situations in which verbal, personal communication with physicians is more favorable than written communication.

**6. ICD-9-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting** (Recall: 5, Application: 5, Analysis: 2)

- a. Explain when ICD-9-CM guidelines are updated and where to obtain official information.
- b. Describe situations in which queries are not appropriate (i.e., diagnosis was not evaluated/treated/monitored).
- c. Explain the role of *Coding Clinic for ICD-9-CM* for formulating queries.
- d. Define the principles of principal diagnosis assignment.
- e. Define the principles of secondary diagnosis assignment.
- f. Explain how to assign a correct diagnosis when two or more diagnoses are coequal to admission.
- g. Define how discharge dispositions and the location to which the patient is transferred affects payment.
- h. Define which conditions are considered hospital-acquired conditions by CMS.
- i. Define basics of present on admission indicator assignment.
- j. Define how present on admission status impacts payment.
- k. Explain *Coding Clinic for ICD-9-CM* guidelines for assignment of ICD-9-CM sepsis codes.
- l. Explain how to assign a working DRG when a patient has multiple diagnoses in play.

**7. Professionalism, ethics, and compliance: 8 items** (Recall: 2, Application: 4, Analysis: 2)

- a. Maintain confidentiality of the medical record and other information relevant to the practice of CDI.
- b. Identify initiatives that ensure DRG compliance.
- c. Identify areas of potential upcoding as identified by the Office of Inspector General (OIG).
- d. Define upcoding and its negative effect on documentation and reimbursement.
- e. Demonstrate what constitutes a leading query to the physician.
- f. Explain the proper goals and objectives of a clinical documentation program beyond reimbursement.

## CCDS sample exam questions

**Sample question 1:** Which of the following medications is commonly prescribed to stimulate appetite in patients with neoplasm or HIV-related cachexia?

- A. Meridia®
- B. Namenda®
- C. Megace®
- D. Synthroid®

**Answer: C**

**Sample question 2:** When there is conflicting clinical documentation in the medical record, clarification must be provided by the

- A. physician assistant.
- B. consulting physician.
- C. attending physician.
- D. emergency physician.

**Answer: C**

**Sample question 3:** Which of the following is considered a major complication/comorbidity (MCC)?

- A. chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- B. bacteremia
- C. congestive systolic heart failure
- D. severe protein-calorie malnutrition

**Answer: D**

**Sample question 4:** A patient was admitted with shortness of breath, swelling in the lower extremities, severe weakness, elevated BNP of 1,000, and EF=25%. The patient's history and physical includes history of heart failure. The echocardiogram report states left ventricular dysfunction. Which of the following should the clinical documentation specialist consider when querying the practitioner for the appropriate documentation?

- A. combined diastolic and systolic heart failure
- B. congestive systolic heart failure
- C. acute and chronic systolic heart failure
- D. acute and chronic diastolic heart failure

**Answer: C**

**Sample question 5:** Various methods exist for measuring how well physicians participate in CDI programs. Which of the following metrics indicates a lack of physician engagement?

- A. number of queries generated
- B. number of non-responses
- C. number of “agree” responses
- D. number of “disagree” responses

**Answer: B**

**Sample question 6:** It is important for the clinical documentation specialist to discuss a concurrent query with the physician when

- 1. only part of the query is answered.
- 2. there is conflicting documentation.
- 3. the physician documents a probable diagnosis.
- 4. the physician refuses to acknowledge or respond to the query.

- A. 1, 2, and 3 only
- B. 1, 2, and 4 only
- C. 1, 3, and 4 only
- D. 2, 3, and 4 only

**Answer: B**

**Sample question 7:** Which of the following is an example of a hospital-acquired condition (HAC)?

- A. Fat embolism
- B. Kidney disease
- C. Pneumonia
- D. Fractured ulna

**Answer: D**

**Sample question 8:** A patient is admitted with abdominal pain, and the history and physical indicates a diagnosis of colon cancer. On day two, the physician documents acute renal failure in the progress notes and the patient receives IV fluids. The discharge summary lists abdominal pain due to metastatic colon cancer and acute renal failure. The principal diagnosis would be:

- A. Acute Kidney injury
- B. Acute renal failure
- C. Abdominal pain
- D. Metastatic neoplasm of the colon

**Answer: D**

**Sample question 9:** Aplastic anemia is a condition that:

- A. Is hereditary and can only be sequenced as the principal diagnosis
- B. Is defined as bone marrow failure causing a reduction in white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets
- C. Is chronic and easily treated
- D. Qualifies as a comorbid condition (CC)

**Answer: B**

**Sample question 10:** If the documentation indicates that the patient was admitted with fever, shortness of breath, chest pain, and nonproductive cough, and the chest x-ray confirms a pleural effusion, which type of effusion is most suspicious for this patient?

- A. Malignant
- B. Transudative
- C. Exudative
- D. Serosanguinous

**Answer: C**

## On the day of your examination

On the day of your examination appointment, report to the Assessment Center no later than your scheduled time. Once you enter the H&R Block office, look for the signs indicating AMP Assessment Center Check-In. **A candidate who arrives more than 15 minutes after the scheduled examination time will not be admitted.**

To gain admission to the Assessment Center, a candidate needs to present two forms of identification, one with a current photograph. Both forms of identification must be current and include the candidate's current name and signature. The candidate will also be required to sign a roster for verification of identity. Acceptable forms of photo identification include:

- Current driver's license with photograph
- Current state identification card with photograph
- Current passport
- Current military identification card with photograph

Employment ID cards, student ID cards, and any type of temporary identification are not acceptable. Candidates are prohibited from misrepresenting their identities or falsifying information to obtain admission to the Assessment Center. **You must have proper identification to gain admission into the Assessment Center.**

After your identification has been confirmed, you will be directed to a testing carrel. You will be prompted on-screen to enter your Social Security number. Your photograph will be taken and it will remain on-screen throughout your examination session. This photograph will also print on your score report.

## Rules for the examination

1. Other than the previously specified books (*DRG Expert* by Ingenix and one of the above standard drug reference guides), you may not take any papers, dictionaries, other reference materials or personal items (e.g., purses, briefcases, coats) into the Assessment Center; you must leave all personal items at home or in your automobile. AMP will not be responsible for loss or damage to personal items.
2. No guests, visitors, or family members are allowed in the examination room or reception areas.
3. You will be provided with scratch paper to use during the examination, which must be returned to the supervisor at the completion of the examination, or you will not receive a score report. No documents or notes of any kind may be removed from the examination room. All computer screens, questions, paper, and written materials are the property of ACDIS and AMP and may not be reproduced in any form.
4. No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination.
5. Eating, drinking, or smoking will not be permitted in the Assessment Center.
6. You may take a break whenever you wish, but you will not be allowed additional time to make up for time lost during breaks.
7. The supervisor may dismiss a candidate from the examination for any of the following reasons:
  - The candidate's admission to the examination is unauthorized
  - The candidate creates a disturbance, is abusive, or is otherwise uncooperative
  - The candidate gives or receives help or is suspected of doing so
  - The candidate is observed with or uses electronic communications equipment such as pagers, cellular phones, or personal digital assistants (PDAs)
  - The candidate attempts to record examination questions or make notes
  - The candidate attempts to take the examination for someone else
  - The candidate is observed with notes.
8. No electronic devices other than calculators are permitted in the Assessment Center, including telephones or signaling devices such as pagers and alarms. In addition, PDAs and other hand-held computers are prohibited.

Violation of any of the above provisions results in dismissal from the examination session. The candidate's score on the examination is voided and examination fees are not refunded. All violations are reported to the CCDS examination board.

## **Security**

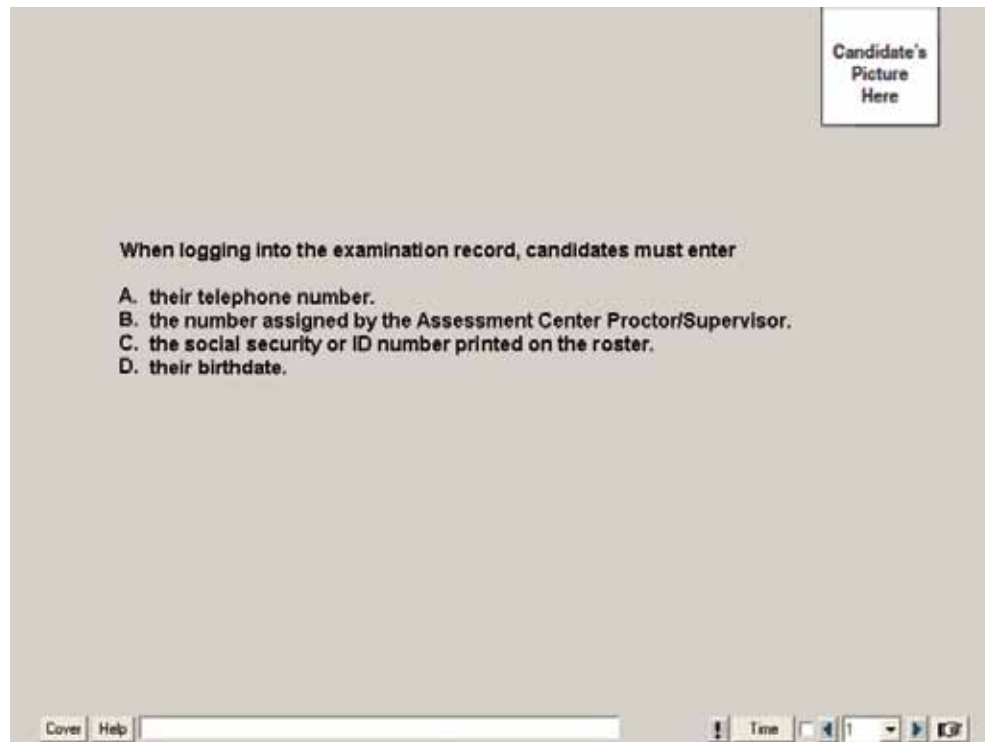
ACDIS and AMP maintain examination administration and security standards that are designed to ensure that all candidates are provided the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The Assessment Center is continuously monitored by audio and video surveillance equipment for security purposes.

## **Practice examination**

Prior to attempting the timed examination, you will be given the opportunity to practice taking an examination on computer. The time you use for this practice examination is not counted as part of your examination time. When you are comfortable with the computer testing process, you may quit the practice session and begin the timed examination.

## Timed examination

Following the practice examination, you will begin the timed examination. Before beginning, instructions for taking the examination are provided on-screen. The examination contains 120 questions. Three hours are allotted to complete the examination. The following is a sample of what the computer screen will look like when candidates are attempting the examination:



The computer monitors the time you spend on the examination. The examination will terminate if you exceed the time limit. You may click on the "Time" button in the lower right portion of the screen or press the TIME key to monitor your time. A digital clock indicates the time remaining for you to complete the examination. The time feature may also be turned off during the examination.

Only one examination question is presented at a time. The question number appears in the lower right portion of the screen. The entire examination question appears onscreen (i.e., stem and four options labeled: A, B, C, and D). **Indicate your choice by either entering the letter of the option you think is correct (A, B, C, or D) or clicking on the option using the mouse.** To change your answer, enter a different option by pressing the A, B, C, or D key or clicking on the option using the mouse. You may change your answer as many times as you wish during the examination time limit.

To move to the next question, click on the forward arrow (>) in the lower right portion of the screen or press the NEXT key. This action will move you forward through the examination question by question. If you wish to review any questions, click the backward arrow (<) or use the left arrow key to move backward through the examination.

A question may be left unanswered for return later in the examination session. Questions may also be bookmarked for later review by clicking in the blank square to the right of the Time button. Click on the hand icon or press the NEXT key to advance to the next unanswered or bookmarked question on the examination. To identify all unanswered and bookmarked questions, repeatedly click on the hand icon or press the NEXT key. When the examination is completed, the number of questions answered is reported.

If not all questions have been answered and there is time remaining, return to the examination and answer those questions. Be sure to answer each question before ending the examination. **There is no penalty for guessing.**

Online comments may be entered for any question by clicking on the button displaying an exclamation point (!) to the left of the Time button. This opens a dialog box where comments may be entered. Comments will be reviewed, but individual responses will not be provided.

## Failing to report for an examination

A candidate who fails to report for an examination forfeits the application and all fees paid to take the examination. A completed application and examination fee are required to reapply for examination.

## Following the examination

After completing the examination, candidates are asked to complete a short evaluation of their examination experience. Then, candidates are instructed to report to the examination proctor to receive their score report. Scores are reported in written form only, in person or by U.S. mail. Scores are not reported over the telephone, by electronic mail, or by facsimile.

Your score report will indicate “pass” or “fail.” Additional detail is provided in the form of raw scores by major content category. A raw score is the number of questions you answered correctly. Your pass/fail status is determined by your raw score. Even though the examination consists of 120 questions, your score is based on 100 questions; 20 questions are pretest questions.

The methodology used to set the minimum passing score is the Angoff method, in which expert judges estimate the passing probability of each examination question. These ratings are averaged to determine the minimum passing score (i.e., the number of correctly answered questions required to pass the examination).

### If you pass the examination

If you pass the examination, you are allowed to use the designation CCDS. Passing candidates will receive a certificate by the end of the month following the examination month.

### If you do not pass the examination

If you do not pass the examination, you may schedule a reexamination appointment within one year of your application date by submitting a new application form (see “Applying for the examination” on p. 11 of the handbook). Repeat candidate fees (\$295.00, or \$255.00 for **ACDIS** members) apply each time the examination is repeated. There is a waiting period of ninety (90) days between examination attempts. In the case of extenuating circumstances, candidates may petition **ACDIS**.

### Appeals

Because the performance of each question on the examination that is included in the final score has been pretested, there are no appeal procedures to challenge individual examination questions, answers, or a failing score. The CCDS Certification Program will always apply the same passing score (“cut score”) and the same answer key to all candidates taking the same form of the exam.

Appeals may be made on the following grounds:

- Candidate eligibility
- Revocation of the CCDS credential
- Inappropriate examination administration procedures or environmental testing conditions severe enough to cause a major disruption of the examination process

All appeals must be submitted in writing to **ACDIS**, attention Certified Clinical Documentation Specialist Program, at 75 Sylvan Street, Suite A-101, Danvers, MA 01923, or by e-mail to [bmurphy@cdiassociation.com](mailto:bmurphy@cdiassociation.com). The candidate or certificant must explain in detail the following:

- 1) The nature of the request and the specific facts and circumstances supporting the request
- 2) All reasons why the action or decision should be changed or modified. The candidate or certificant must also provide accurate copies of all supporting documents.

Eligibility and revocation appeals must be received within thirty (30) days of the initial action. Appeals for alleged inappropriate administration procedures or severe adverse environmental testing conditions must be received within sixty (60) days of the release of examination results.

The CCDS Certification Program will respond within thirty (30) days of receipt of the appeal. If this decision is adverse, the candidate may file a second-level appeal within thirty (30) days. A three-member panel of the CCDS Certification Board will review the initial decision and respond with a final decision within forty-five (45) days of receipt.

### Scores cancelled by ACDIS or AMP

**ACDIS** is responsible for the integrity of the scores it reports. On occasion, occurrences such as computer malfunction or misconduct by a candidate may cause a score to be suspect. **ACDIS** is committed to rectifying such discrepancies as expeditiously as possible. **ACDIS** may void examination results if, upon investigation, violation of its regulations is discovered.

### Copyrighted examination questions

All examination questions are the copyrighted property of ACDIS. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute, or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Doing so may subject you to severe civil and criminal penalties.

### Confidentiality

Information about candidates' examination results are considered confidential; however, **ACDIS** reserves the right to use information supplied by or on behalf of a candidate in the conduct of research. Studies and reports concerning candidates will contain no information identifiable with any candidate, unless authorized by the candidate.

**ACDIS** would like to recognize the achievement of all individuals who successfully complete the CCDS examination on the **ACDIS** Web site or in *CDI Journal*. Applicants may select to accept or decline this option on the application form.

## Duplicate score report

Candidates may purchase additional copies of their score reports at a cost of \$25 per copy. Requests must be submitted to AMP, in writing, within 12 months of the examination. The request must include the candidate's name, Social Security number, mailing address, telephone number, date of examination, and examination taken. Submit this information with the required fee payable to AMP. Duplicate score reports will be mailed within approximately two weeks after receipt of the request and fee.

## Recertification

The recertification process for the CCDS ensures that clinical documentation improvement professionals stay abreast of changing government and private-payer regulations, documentation and coding requirements, and important developments in the field of CDI.

Individuals possessing the CCDS must apply for recertification every two years from the date on which they passed the CCDS exam. CCDS certification holders must submit 20 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) relevant to the field of CDI by using the **Continuing Education Submission Form**. Re-taking the CCDS examination is not necessary. Please review the document **CEU Qualifying Activities** for examples of acceptable CE activities.

Although ACDIS strongly recommends submitting 20 CEUs by the two-year examination anniversary date, CCDS certification holders are extended a 45-day grace period to submit their CEUs. Failure to submit CEUs within this 45-day grace period will result in revocation of the CCDS credential. A former credential holder may recertify by reapplying for and successfully passing the CCDS exam.

A percentage of participants will be audited to ensure that they have met the CEU requirements. We strongly recommend that participants keep a record of participation in all of their CEU qualifying activities in the event of an audit.

## Certification maintenance fees

ACDIS members pay a certification maintenance fee of \$100 when submitting their **Continuing Education Submission Form**. The fee for non-ACDIS members is \$200.

Please send your completed form to:

HPro, Inc.

Attn: Certified Clinical Documentation Specialist Program

75 Sylvan Street, Suite A-101, Danvers, MA 01923

Or fax to 800/738-1553, Attn: Certification Program Manager

## Failure to renew

A certificant who fails to renew his or her certification is no longer considered certified and may not use the credential awarded for certification in professional communications, such as on letterhead, stationery and business cards, in directory listings, or in signature.

## Disciplinary policy

The CCDS Certification Board is an independent and autonomous body within **ACDIS** that has been established to oversee and manage the Certified Clinical Documentation Specialist (CCDS) certification program. In order to maintain and enhance the credibility of the CCDS certification program the CCDS Certification Board has adopted the following administrative procedures to allow individuals to bring complaints concerning CCDS certificants' conduct to the CCDS Certification Board.

The CCDS Certification Board shall undertake sanctions against applicants, candidates, or individuals relating to failure to meet requirements for initial certification or recertification, or misrepresentation/misuse of the CCDS certification. The CCDS certification program is a voluntary process, not required by law for employment in the field. Monitoring and evaluating actual job performance is beyond the scope of the CCDS Certification Board or **ACDIS**.

Applications may be refused, candidates may be barred from future examinations, or candidates or individuals already certified may be sanctioned, including revocation of the CCDS designation, for the following reasons:

1. Attesting to false information on the CCDS application, recertification documents, or during random audit procedures of both forms
2. Giving or receiving information to or from another candidate during the examination
3. Removing or attempting to remove examination materials or information from the testing site
4. Possessing or distributing unauthorized official testing or examination materials
5. Representing oneself falsely as a CCDS

The CCDS Certification Board notes that the **ACDIS** Code of Ethics applies to **ACDIS** members as well as professionals possessing the CCDS who are not **ACDIS** members.

## Contact us

If you have questions regarding the CCDS exam or its requirements, please contact:

Penny Richards, **ACDIS** Member Services Specialist  
*prichards@cdiassociation.com*

You may also contact:

HPro, Inc.

75 Sylvan Street, Suite A-101

Danvers, MA 01923

Tel: 877/240-6586

Fax: 800/738-1553

E-mail: *customerservice@cdiassociation.com*

Web site: *www.cdiassociation.com*