

Certified Veterinary Practice Manager (CVPM) Certification Procedures

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Introduction

A professional veterinary practice manager who is certified as having attained compliance with the professional competency standards identified and adopted by the Veterinary Hospital Managers Association ("VHMA") demonstrates to members of the profession, the public, and governmental authorities a commitment and interest in providing only the highest quality professional management services available. The VHMA's Certification Program, which is voluntary, provides more than an ordinary assurance of professional quality services; the certification designation "CVPM" is recognized as the sign of achievement of excellence. The professional veterinary practice manager who participates in the VHMA's Certification Program publicly endorses the VHMA Code of Ethics and standards of excellence and offers professional services knowing that the veterinary profession, the public, and governmental authorities realize that established CVPM standards serve as the certified professional's own starting point in delivering professional quality services.

To ensure the administration of the VHMA's Certification Program in a uniform and equitable manner, this Procedural Guide has been prepared for the information and guidance of the participants.

A. The VHMA's Certification Program Concept

The VHMA's Certification Program is based upon the philosophy that any standard of professional quality service is only as good as the application of, and continuous adherence to, the requirements of that standard by those who claim to comply with its provisions.

To the profession, the public and governmental authorities, the "CVPM" designation offers assurance that professional veterinary management services are provided through attaining and continuously maintaining high standards of excellence.

In short, the mission of the Certification Program is to advance and help assure a high overall quality of professional services in the veterinary field. To that end, the three specific goals of the Certification Program are:

1. To improve professional practice in the veterinary field through the establishment of professional development goals;
2. To identify a body of knowledge and skills necessary to the practice of the profession;
and
3. To recognize those individuals who have demonstrated a level of excellence in the practice of veterinary practice management.

B. Eligibility

Any individual who meets the criteria defined below is eligible, on a voluntary basis, to apply for certification. The specific program eligibility criteria are as follows:

1. Active employment as a practice manager for a minimum of three (3) years within the last seven (7);
2. Eighteen (18) college credit hours in management related courses;
3. Forty-eight (48) hours of continuing education courses, seminars, etc., specifically devoted to management (earned within the last three (3) years); and
4. Four (4) letters of recommendation.

No "grandfathering" process exists with respect to any of the eligibility criteria since the inception of the program.

Any individual who has had access to confidential examination items, developed or delivered preparatory courses or materials is not eligible to qualify for certification for a period of three years after the date of their last activity.

C. Who Conducts the Program

The VHMA is the sponsor of the program. The Certified Veterinary Practice Manager Board (CVPMB) is a division of the VHMA and is the administrator of the Certification Program. The CVPMB chair and members are elected by CVPM membership.

The CVPMB is granted full authority to establish policies, rules, regulations, and requirements, as well as to establish policies for the financial business of the certification program. The CVPMB shall operate in accordance with the established Governing Documents and these Certification Procedures.

The CVPMB considers program candidates and provides for review and testing as follows. The Board and its representatives develop education, experience, and communication service performance standards. The Board and its representatives oversee development and administration of competency examinations, review test data and perform other administrative services.

D. A Certified Professional's Representations to the Public

A certified professional in the program represents publicly that he or she meets or surpasses the experience, educational and professional competency standards of the VHMA's Certification Program.

E. How the Certification Program Works

The program provides for simple, equitable administration and enforcement through the following procedures:

1. Professional competency standards:

The CVPMB acts as follows.

- a. The CVPMB implements professional standards as the basis for the granting of professional certification, including standards as to length of education or professional experience, quality and quantity of any continuing professional education programs completed, and any other approved professional standards that have a reasonable relationship to the capacity of a professional to serve the profession, the public, and the government.
- b. The CVPMB may recommend relevant changes in standards of education, experience, performance, competency, or other reasonable criteria for certified professionals by submitting proposed relevant changes to the CVPM membership for review and comment. Upon proper notification and review by the CVPM membership as prescribed by the Bylaws, the CVPMB has the full authority of the VHMA to make necessary changes.
- c. The CVPMB administers an examination, the contents of which, are developed and validated by an impartial and independent third-party professional testing service.

The professional standards for certification of veterinary practice management professionals are reviewed by the CVPMB at least once every year to ensure they are current and up to date. Questions as to the applicability of any standard to a professional are to be referred to the CVPMB.

2. Standards of professional conduct

The CVPMB and the VHMA may develop, periodically review, and publish standards of professional conduct that all participants in the Certification Program agree to respect. A copy of the VHMA Code of Ethics is attached.

3. Professional competency application and examination

Within two years after the submission and approval of a program candidate's application by the CVPMB, the program candidate must complete a competency examination administered by the CVPMB as a prerequisite to obtaining certification. If a candidate's application does not meet the minimum standards required, he or she may appeal the decision. The contents of the competency examination are validated by an impartial and independent third-party testing service. If a candidate's application is approved, but he or she fails to meet the minimum score required to pass the competency examination, he or she may retake the competency examination within two years of the last failed examination date or appeal the score. Additional fees are required for retakes.

4. Continuing professional education

To maintain certification, each certified professional must file a bi-annual report with the CVPMB, in accordance with guidance furnished by the CVPMB. The report must provide evidence of the individual's continued compliance with the Certification Program which

requires that each certified professional must accumulate a minimum of forty-eight (48) hours of continuing education in management specific seminars. If this report is acceptable to the CVPMB, the individual's current accredited status is reaffirmed for the next two years. If it is not, the CVPMB may request additional information, stating to the individual the reason that such information is necessary. In either case, the current certified status of the individual is maintained until the CVPMB takes final action, in accordance with these Certification Procedures.

5. Inactive membership categories

Inactive Status

Occasionally, extenuating circumstances – such as prolonged unemployment or serious illness of a close family member – may prevent one from meeting the required hours of continuing education. Inactive status can be requested in such circumstances. Inactive status may be granted by the CVPMB, on a case-by-case basis, for a period not to exceed three (3) years, only one (1) time during a certificant's recertification career and must be approved prior to the certificant's certification expiration. Inactive members may not use the CVPM designation while inactive.

Certificants who have not accrued the required forty-eight (48) hours of continuing education by their renewal date and who have not experienced extenuating circumstances or have simply not submitted a renewal packet on/or before their renewal date are not eligible for inactive status.

If the inactive status is granted, the certificant's renewal date will be extended until the end of their approved inactive status period at which time the regular renewal requirements apply (proof of 48 hours of continuing education and the \$210 renewal fee). Upon successful renewal, a new two (2) year renewal cycle begins.

Examples of who may be eligible for inactive status:

- Certificants who have been out of work for at least one (1) year of the two (2) year renewal cycle due to unemployment or childbirth/childcare.
- Certificants who have spent a significant amount of time caring for a seriously ill family member or who have suffered serious illness themselves.
- Leave of absence to pursue a job in another field.
- Certificants who are being deployed to active duty in one of the armed forces for at least a six (6) month assignment.

To request inactive status, the following materials must be submitted prior to the certificant's certification expiration. The CVPMB will have the final authority to approve the inactive status:

1. A written request for inactive status providing a description of the extenuating circumstances.
2. Documentation of extenuating circumstances. This may include a letter from a physician, notice of termination or receipt of unemployment benefits, or documentation of activated military status.

Certificants who fail to renew their certification by the end of the inactive status period are no longer eligible to use the CVPM designation and may recertify by examination only.

Retired Status

Members in good standing who are no longer active in the veterinary industry in any capacity may request Retired status.

Fees for Retired Status are determined by the Board and may change from time-to-time.

Retired members may use the CVPMRetired designation (the word "Retired" must be appended to the designation) to signify to the industry and public that they are no longer active and do not currently meet the program's standards.

Retired members who return to the profession in any capacity are required to successfully complete the application and examination process again to be reactivated.

Retired status must be approved by the CVPM Board prior to the member's certificate expiration.

6. Candidate Confidentiality Policy

The application and examination status of every candidate is confidential. Information regarding application and/or examination status will be shared with the candidate only. The foregoing obligations shall not apply to information required to be disclosed under compulsion of law.

7. Certified professionals' directory

The names of certified professionals in the program are maintained in a database by the CVPMB. The CVPMB shall publish a Certification Directory. The Certification Directory is available to members of the veterinary profession, government regulatory agencies, and interested members of the public. Directory listings contain the participant's name only. The Certification Directory is updated periodically to reflect the participation of new participants in the Certification Program. The certification status of a veterinary practice manager is public information. Anyone seeking to verify the certification status of an individual may contact the CVPMB.

F. The Formal Certificate of Competency and Compliance with Voluntary Professional Standards

An applicant who successfully complies with the standards and procedures of the Certification Program is entitled to certify that:

1. He or she is a Certification Program participant and a member in good standing in the certification program.

2. He or she meets the professional standards of the Certification Program sponsored by the VHMA.

The veterinary practice manager who certifies his or her voluntary compliance with the standards of the program is entitled:

1. To use the terms "Certified Veterinary Practice Manager " and "CVPM."
2. To publicly display a formal certificate of Certification Program good standing, participation, and standards compliance.
3. To use any other Certification Program trademarks owned by the VHMA and whose non-exclusive use is licensed to the program participant.

G. Assuring Compliance with Certification Standards

1. Decertification

Any individual certified in the Certification Program found to not be in compliance with the program's procedures, policies or professional standards is subject to removal of certification by the CVPMB. Examples include, but are not limited to non-renewal, incompetence, unethical behavior, or physical/mental impairment affecting performance. Following a certified professional's receipt of a notice of noncompliance, the professional enjoys a 60-day grace period in which corrective action to the satisfaction of the CVPMB may be taken. If satisfactory corrective action is not accomplished by the end of the 60-day period, the certified professional automatically is no longer entitled to claim he or she is certified under the VHMA's program, and he or she thereafter is excluded from the program.

2. Notice of directory delisting

If 60 days after the certified professional's receipt of notice of noncompliance, required corrective action is not taken, the CVPMB will notify the professional of certification delisting. The Board will remove that individual's name and listing from the next issue of the Certification Directory

3. Notice of exclusion

If, after ten business days from the date of mailing a certified mail notice of noncompliance to the certified professional, the CVPMB has received no notice or other evidence from the certified professional of his or her intent to take required corrective action, the CVPMB will exclude that individual from the program.

4. Complaints of noncompliance

Information on a certified professional supporting a complaint of noncompliance may be submitted from any source, including other certified professionals. Complaints in writing will be received by the CVPMB, which will investigate the complaint.

H. Program Responsibility

1. The VHMA (Sponsor of the Certification Program)

The VHMA has full responsibility for the sponsorship, development, and guidance of the Certification Program and formulation of general policy to ensure the uniformity and equity of its administration on a continuing basis. Actions relating to program policy and administrative matters are delegated by the VHMA to the CVPMB (which administers the Certification Program).

All correspondence relating to the Certification Program shall be directed to Board Administrator/Coordinator for an appropriate response by the CVPMB.

2. The certification board

The Certification Board shall:

- a. Establish, implement, and review all policy and administrative procedures for the Certification Program.
- b. Conduct any review of questions raised by participants. Actions taken in the name of the CVPMB shall be by majority vote.

3. Due process appeals review

A participant in the Certification Program may appeal in writing to CVPMB for review of the final determination of a candidate's noneligibility or nonadmittance to the Certification Program, for review of final examination scores or for a hearing on any other complaint pertaining to the CVPMB's final actions. The procedures for a program candidate/certified professional's appeal are as outlined below.

A decision affirming an action or determination of the CVPMB adverse to a Certification Program participant shall be by a three-fifths vote. The decision of the CVPMB shall be final in the matter under consideration.

a. Application/Renewal Grievance

This policy affords program candidates and certified professionals an opportunity to appeal a decision by the CVPMB if an application is denied or if a re-credential application is denied.

1. The program candidate/certified professional is informed in writing of his or her denied application within 60 days of submittal. Notification of denial must state the reason for the denial or request for additional documentation required to complete the application, stating to the individual the reason that such information is necessary.
2. The program candidate/certified professional has 60 days to resubmit requested materials.

3. Upon receipt, the application is reviewed for completeness and accuracy. If the application is again denied, another notice is mailed to the program candidate/certified professional stating the reason for the denial or request for additional documentation, stating to the individual the reason that such information is necessary. This time a 30-day time frame for resubmittal is allowed.
4. Upon receipt of newly-submitted materials, the application is again reviewed and if determined incomplete, program candidate/certified professional is asked to resubmit the application in full, with all elements complete.
5. Process continues until program candidate/certified professional is able to complete all the required portions of the application to the satisfaction of the CVPMB.

b. Examination Appeals Process

The appeals process is made available to all program candidates who, upon receipt of their exam results, choose to contest these results.

1. The program candidate is informed immediately of his or her examination results.
2. The program candidate has 30 days to request an appeal in writing, sent by certified mail, to the CVPMB. Only the candidate may request an appeal.
3. Upon receipt of the written request for appeal, the candidate's examination will be re-scored.
4. After the candidate's examination has been re-scored, the CVPMB will notify the candidate in writing if he or she passed or failed the examination based on the re-scoring.
5. If a program candidate does not successfully pass the examination after the appeals process is complete, he or she can apply to retake the examination within two years of the last failed examination date, additional fees are required.

I. Non-Discrimination Policy and Compliance with ADA

The VHMA and CVPMB subscribe to all Federal and State regulations that prohibit discrimination. All applications are considered regardless of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status, or any other legally protected status or class. Reasonable accommodations will be made for program candidates with disabilities. Applications requiring a reasonable accommodation to participate in the Certification Program are encouraged to contact the CVPMB office.

J. Certification Program Documents

This guide sets forth the operational procedures for the operation of the Program that are intended first to ensure its integrity, and second to maintain the uniformity and equity of its administration impartially.