



Certified Surgical Cleaning Technician **Candidate Handbook**



Introduction

This Candidate Handbook has been prepared by the Association for the Healthcare Environment (AHE) of the American Hospital Association (AHA) for technicians and others aligned with or conducting surgical cleaning services.

The handbook provides prospective certification candidates with essential information regarding eligibility requirements, the application process, testing information, and other important information related to the Certified Surgical Cleaning Technician (CSCT) certification. Surgical Cleaning Technicians and other candidates certified by AHE are referred to as *certificants*. The period of certification is 3 years. Certification expires automatically at the end of the 3-year certification period unless renewed. Certificants must maintain their certification and must not allow it to lapse to remain certified and to use the CSCT credential.

Procedures for certification renewal and maintenance are included in this handbook.

About AHE

AHE is the professional organization of choice for professionals responsible for caring for the patient and resident care environment, including surgical and other procedure rooms, across all care settings; including hospitals, long term care, continuing care retirement communities and ambulatory care, including ambulatory surgical facilities. AHE represents over 2,200 professionals working to ensure quality outcomes and healthy communities, and strives to help define and advance the healthcare environmental services profession.

AHE's mission is to advance members' ability to establish and maintain care environments that are free of environmental surface contamination and that support safety, service, and efficient and effective operations. Our vision is to be the global authority on caring for the healthcare environment. Programming is grounded in four primary areas of focus – prevention, education, standards, and management, and rooted in the following core values:

Core Values

Visionary Leadership

Evidenced by an earned reputation as a courageous, influential, and trusted authority committed to innovation, excellence, and awareness of the essential role of environmental services (EVS) in improving health care outcomes

Integrity

Evidenced by honesty in words and actions and dedication to effective stewardship characterized by value focused decisions made in an accountable and transparent culture

Innovation

As evidenced by a commitment to sound, knowledge based evolving science and professional practice

Community

Evidenced by an engaged fellowship of peers taking pride in the diversity of experience and the inclusion of multiple perspectives in advancing their profession

Oversight

The CSCT program is overseen by a three-person committee composed of dedicated, experienced, and knowledgeable environmental services professionals, appointed by AHE, and approved by the American Hospital Association.

Affiliation

AHE is a membership-based nonprofit organization affiliated with the American Hospital Association (AHA). Membership with the professional organization or its parent company is neither a requirement for, nor an indication of, certification or recertification. Please contact AHE at www.ahe.org if you require information or assistance with membership or CSCT certification.

CSCT Program Goals

- Endeavor to ensure individuals seeking certification meet predetermined criteria that serve to protect the public.
- Define the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to serve as a surgical cleaning technician.
- Utilize established principles of testing and measurement to test the knowledge, skills, and abilities of surgical cleaning technicians.
- Promote the value of surgical cleaning technicians in the delivery of patient care to the public.
- Provide a high-quality certification program for surgical cleaning technicians.
- Provide leadership and means for the credentialing of surgical cleaning technicians.

Credential

- CSCT stands for Certified Surgical Cleaning Technician.
- CSCT is the registered trademark of the Association for the Healthcare Environment.
- CSCT is the credential authorized for use by those individuals who have met the standards, qualifications, and testing requirements established by the Association for the Healthcare Environment.
- Individuals who allow their CSCT national certification to expire may not use the CSCT credential nor may they represent themselves as CSCT-certified surgical cleaning technicians.

Declaration and Statement of Nondiscrimination

The CSCT National Certification Examination is a competency-based examination reflective of knowledge and expertise required to carry out the essential tasks of a surgical cleaning technician.

AHE does not discriminate among candidates with respect to age, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, marital status, and sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity.

Qualifications and Eligibility for taking the CSCT National Certification Examination

Certification examinations are offered to individuals who have successfully completed the CSCT training program, as documented by their CSCT Trainer. Requirements to qualify for CSCT training include:

1. Candidates must have a minimum of six months healthcare environmental services cleaning experience in direct patient care **OR** At least six months cleaning experience in the **OR** suite or procedure rooms **OR** At least one year in healthcare cleaning in areas other than direct patient care

AND

2. Candidates must be able to read and write in English. Note: The CSCT curriculum is written at or above the junior high reading level but is suitable for employees with additional education.

Application Process.

Those individuals who meet eligibility requirements wishing to enroll in a CSCT training program should first contact their manager to ask if there is a CSCT-certified trainer associated with their facility or health system.

If there is a CSCT-certified trainer associated with their facility or health system:

1. Get a statement in writing from your supervisor that states you meet the CSCT eligibility requirements and are recommended and approved for CSCT training.
2. Contact the CSCT-certified trainer and request to be part of their next training program in your facility.
3. Present the eligibility statement to the trainer.

The trainer will enroll you in training and purchase training materials; CSCT-certified trainers are the only individuals who can purchase books for CSCT training.

There are no application fees required of the candidate, however, the sponsoring facility or health system will be responsible for the training fee, which includes CSCT exam, certificate, and pin.

Candidates will be required to establish an *online profile* account with the American Hospital Association (AHE's parent company) before training begins. CSCT trainers will walk trainees through this process on or before the first scheduled day of training.

If there is not a CSCT-certified trainer associated with their facility or health system:

1. Get a statement in writing from your supervisor that states you meet the CSCT eligibility requirements and are recommended and approved for CSCT training.
2. Contact AHE at aha@aha.org or 312-422-3860 to declare your interest in CSCT certification.
3. Follow the instructions of the AHE representative.

AHE will make every effort to connect you with a nearby training, but does not guarantee availability or approval.

Content Delivery

CSCT certification training is comprised of 20 hours of classroom instruction. The content covered during the workshops is based on the five domains shown below. The amount of time allocated to each domain was determined through a nationwide job analysis of environmental services tasks:

- Infection Prevention 40%
- Cleaning and Disinfection..... 30%
- Effective Communication 10%
- Problem Solving 10%
- Making an Impact..... 10%

Each domain is covered in a series of 5 modules which are built around typical responsibilities and situations encountered as a surgical cleaning technician.

- **Module 1:** Why Your Role Matters
- **Module 2:** Prepare for Action
- **Module 3:** Master the Procedures
- **Module 4:** Solving Sticky Situations
- **Module 5:** Making an Impact

Each module has its own set of distinct learning objectives.

The content may be delivered over two and a half consecutive days, or it may be spread out over several weeks; the format of content delivery in each facility is determined by the CSCT trainer from that facility.

CSCT National Certification Examination

The CSCT exam consists of about 50 multiple choice questions, covering the five surgical cleaning domains mentioned above. Each domain has a set of associated tasks, which the course content and exam questions were built around. The number of questions per domain is equivalent to the percentage of content per each domain.

Generally, the CSCT Examination questions are categorized by the following cognitive levels:

- **Knowledge:** The ability to recall or recognize previously learned information
- **Comprehension:** The ability to demonstrate understanding of the facts
- **Application:** The ability to apply knowledge to real-world situations

The CSCT exam is structured so that approximately 38% of the questions pertain to Knowledge, 28% pertain to Comprehension, and 34% are Application-based.

Infection Prevention

- 40% of content/exam

TASKS

- Perform actions to prevent the spread of infection, break the chain of infection, and prevent cross contamination
- Change gloves, perform hand hygiene and enter procedure room to be cleaned, closing the door behind
- Gather correct equipment and supplies needed to clean and disinfect room, ensuring that cleaning solutions and disinfectants are not expired
- Immediately perform hand hygiene after exiting OR/sterile room
- Allow appropriate dwell and drying times according to label instructions
- Never re-dip cloths or re-use
- Frequently change to a fresh cleaning cloth or saturated wipe when needed
- Use well-saturated disinfecting wipes with appropriate contact times and/or microfiber cloths and chemicals dispensed using a spout top
- Use only lint-free cleaning cloths
- Never use brooms
- Never use spray bottles
- Never move anything from a procedure room into the sterile core
- Use gloves whenever contact with blood, bodily fluids, or other potentially infectious material is possible, and/or when touching or handling contaminated items or surfaces is possible
- Use face protection whenever contact with splashes, sprays, splatter, or droplets of blood, bodily fluids or other potentially-contaminated materials is possible
- Prevent cross-contamination, when leaving

OR:

- Strip off shoe and head covers
- Wear specialty gown over scrubs, different color than ones they wear actively in OR
- Switch out gown when moving between restricted and unrestricted areas

Cleaning and Disinfection

- 30% of content/exam

TASKS

- Clean and disinfect items and areas to physically remove and kill potentially harmful microorganisms
- Ensure that EVS carts are stocked with all required equipment and products
- Before the first case of the day, conduct appropriate damp wiping in sterile rooms according to standard procedures

- Between cases, conduct appropriate end-of-procedure cleaning and disinfecting in sterile rooms according to standard procedures (which may involve performing specialized cleaning processes, such as those required for Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), or other highly-infectious illnesses)
- After the last case of the day, conduct end-of-day cleaning and disinfecting in sterile rooms according to standard procedures
- Segregate, remove, and dispose of waste (including liquid waste and associated equipment) and instruments properly (includes recycling)
- Validate and track the cleaning of each room using a quality checklist and return checklist to supervisor before the end of the shift
- Select and don appropriate attire and PPE before entering any OR/sterile room or support areas, such as central core, specimen room, scrub room and sink, halls, utility rooms (any place within the red line of demarcation)
- Safely doff PPE after leaving OR suites
- Remove all cleaning equipment brought into the room
- Remove all trash, waste (including infectious waste, liquid waste from surgical suction systems, suction canisters, etc.) and linens from the room, and safely dispose of trash and waste, including recycling of items, when applicable
- Begin cleaning procedures only after: -Patient has left the room -Surgical count has been verified (nothing can be removed from the room until count is complete, including trash)
- Clean all required items and areas in the room in accordance with AHE's Practice Guidance for Healthcare Environmental Cleaning, 2nd Edition
- Check for any remaining instruments, basins, trays and sharps, or waste involving blood or blood-soaked linens, and remove if present
- Always support areas prior to cleaning OR/sterile rooms (support areas include central core, specimen room, scrub room and sink, halls, utility rooms, etc.)
- Follow standard techniques for cleaning and disinfecting ORs or other procedure rooms
- Clean from the sterile core entrance to the non-sterile corridor
- Clean and disinfect all required items in the OR or procedure rooms following standard guidelines.
- Recognize the right attire and/or PPE depending on the type of room or procedure
- Select and properly use the correct cleaning equipment, supplies, and products for each cleaning task, and dispose of them properly
- Segregate and remove waste and dispose of it properly

Effective Communication

- 10% of content/exam

TASKS

- Communicate why working methodically in an organized pattern through the room (Clockwise or counterclockwise—Highest to lowest—Cleanest to dirtiest) is important.
- Communicating and coordinating with nurses, technicians, or other staff
- Understanding the expectations for their role (both what they must do and how)
- Asserting oneself in communicating with nurses or physicians when a room is not ready for the next case

Problem Solving

- 10% of content/exam

TASKS

- Perform cleaning at the appropriate time and in a timely manner
- Perform cleaning first, followed by disinfecting
- Follow special cleaning procedures for specialized cases
 - Cleaning after a trauma surgery, which may involve a lot of fluid clean up
 - Cleaning after a minor procedure, which may involve little or no fluid clean up
 - Specialized cleaning after suspected or confirmed CJD, C-Diff or MRSA case
 - Specialized cleaning procedures for other novel infectious diseases
- Choose the right attire and/or PPE for a given circumstance, and don and doff PPE correctly
- Ability to complete tasks efficiently and effectively
- Prioritizing tasks and managing time
- Critical thinking and decision making on the job (e.g., prioritizing which room should be cleaned first, if multiple rooms are needed at the same time; deciding when certain cleaning procedures may be omitted)
- Dealing with "sticky situations"
 - Feeling rushed to complete in-between case cleanings
 - Difficulty following standard cleaning procedures correctly
 - Being asked by the surgical staff to perform tasks or duties outside of their responsibilities
 - Handling awkward situations with colleagues and surgical staff

Making an Impact

- 10% of content/exam

TASKS

- Follow Standard Precautions and other safety guidelines at all times to prevent patient and technician exposure to blood and other potentially-infectious material, and other hazards
 - Identify and report potential problems or hazards impacting patient, healthcare worker, or equipment safety
 - Wear proper PPE: Scrubs or scrub suit, shoe covers, surgical cap, latex-free disposable gloves, mask or face shield
 - Use chemicals as directed by manufacturer's label
 - Never mix or combine chemicals
 - Report blood and body fluid exposures
 - Be alert for sharps and sharp objects
 - Always display wet floor or caution signs when cleaning floors or vacuuming
- Lead, mentor, and coach fellow peers and staff members
- Protect patient safety by observing and respecting HIPPA laws

Testing Procedure

1. The examination is available online only and is administered by a CSCT trainer at the trainer's healthcare facility.
2. Candidates cannot sit for an examination until after they have completed the CSCT training program.
3. Once training is completed, the CSCT trainer notifies AHE that a candidate is ready to sit for the CSCT National Certification Exam.
4. The candidate and CSCT trainer schedule the exam at a mutually agreeable time.
5. On the day of testing, candidates will show up at the assigned time and location given them by their trainer, log in to a computer using the unique identification they established when setting up their AHA online profile, and sit for the proctored online exam.
6. Candidates are allowed two (2) hours to complete their exam.

Test Scoring

The CSCT National Certification Examination is designed to assess knowledge required for essential environmental service tasks. A candidate must obtain a score equal to or higher than the "passing score" to pass the test. The passing score is determined by a panel of environmental services content experts using psychometrically accepted standard-setting methodology through a facilitation process led by a licensed psychometrician. A candidate's performance on the examination is not compared to the performance of others taking the examination.

How CSCT Examination Passing Score is Set

The methodology used to set the initial minimum passing score is the Angoff method in which content experts estimate the passing probability of each question on the CSCT Examination. These ratings are averaged to determine the preliminary minimum passing score (i.e., the number of correctly answered questions required to pass the examination). This method takes into account the difficulty of the CSCT Examination.

The preliminary minimum passing score is validated by the test performance of candidates.

The passing standard is applied consistently across all CSCT candidates who take the same form of the Examination. When new forms of the Examination are introduced, a certain number of CSCT Examination questions in the various content areas are replaced by new CSCT Examination questions. These changes may cause one form of the CSCT Examination to be slightly easier or harder than another form. To adjust for these differences in difficulty, a procedure called "equating" is used. For equated CSCT Examinations that have different passing scores, the equating process helps ensure that the levels of CSCT examinee knowledge are equivalent on the various Examination forms.

Passing the CSCT Examination

An eligible candidate who passes the CSCT Examination is awarded the CSCT credential. Generally about six or seven weeks after the candidate passes the CSCT Examination, AHE mails in a sealed packet, each individual candidates' certificate (which verifies their credential), a pin, a score report, and information about CSCT certification renewal requirements. This packet is mailed directly to the certificant.

The name on the certificate will be the same as per the registration information provided to AHE. It is the candidate's responsibility to keep their information updated with their AHE user log in. AHE reserves the right to publicly recognize any candidate who has

successfully completed the CSCT Examination. Scores are never reported.

Candidates will be able to view a brief overall Pass or Fail status report on the computer upon completion of the test. The examination is electronically scored.

A candidate's examination scores are considered confidential information and will not be disclosed to anyone other than the candidate. AHE will not release test scores to anyone without specific written instructions from the candidate indicating to whom and why the information is to be disclosed.

Failing the CSCT Examination

If a candidate does not pass a CSCT Examination, the score report is mailed. A candidate must reschedule an exam date with their facility's CSCT trainer if re-testing is desired. There is no limit to the number of times an individual may retake the CSCT Examination.

Following the CSCT Examination

Examination Score Reports are issued by AHE. Scores are reported in written form only. Examinees will receive an online score immediately after submitting their exam. AHE will mail score reports directly to the test-taker in a sealed package. Scores are not reported over the telephone, by electronic mail, or by fax. The score report indicates a "Pass" or "Fail," which is determined by the raw score on the CSCT Examination. A raw score is the number of questions answered correctly. Responses to individual CSCT Examination questions will not be disclosed to a candidate.

CSCT Examination Score Confidentiality

Pass and Fail scores are considered confidential. It is the CSCT candidate's responsibility to abide by their employer's requirement to disclose their pass or fail status, with or without disclosure of their actual score. AHE will keep all scores confidential, unless specified by the CSCT candidate.

Renewal of CSCT Certification

CSCT certification is valid for three (3) years. A renewal application will need to be submitted, as well as documentation of five (5) hours of Continued Education Units (CEU) earned per year for a total of 15 CEU hours during the certification period.

Certificants can also renew their CSCT credential by retaking the CSCT certification exam. To retake the exam, certificants must contact their CSCT trainer and schedule the exam.

Test Security

Candidates who apply and sit for the CSCT National Certification Examination must acknowledge that they understand the following:

- The CSCT National Certification Examination is the exclusive property of the Association for the Healthcare Environment of the American Hospital Association.
- Federal copyright law protects the CSCT examination and the items contained therein;
- The retention, possession, copying, distribution, disclosure, discussion or receipt of any CSCT certification examination question, in whole or in part, by written, electronic, oral or other form of communication, including but not limited to texting, emailing, copying or printing of electronic files, and reconstruction through memorization and/or dictation, before, during or after the examination is strictly prohibited.
- Theft or attempted theft of examination content is punishable as a felony;
- Candidate participation in any irregularity occurring during or after this examination such as giving or obtaining unauthorized information or aid, as evidenced by an observation or subsequent statistical analysis, may be sufficient cause to terminate participation, invalidate the results of the examination, or necessitate other appropriate action; and
- Incidents regarding test security or examination administration will be reported to the CSCT Oversight Committee. Grounds for sanction may be undertaken with AHA legal counsel

Professional Standards of Conduct

A certificant who is awarded certification by the AHE agrees to conduct himself/herself in an ethical and professional manner. By accepting certification, the certificant agrees to:

1. Maintain competence;
2. Demonstrate work behavior that exemplifies ability to perform safely, competently, and with good judgment;
3. Conduct technician activities with honesty and integrity;
4. Avoid discriminating against any individual based on age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, or marital status;
5. Abide by rules and regulations governing programs conducted by the AHE;
6. Not misrepresent the credential, and
7. Adhere to the guidelines for use of the Certification Marks as posted on the AHE website.

Violation of these Professional Standards of Conduct is misconduct for which granting of a certification or renewal of a certification may be delayed or denied, or for which a certification may be revoked by the AHE.

CSCT - Certificant Responsibility

Surgical cleaning technicians are certified by AHE for a 3-year period. Certification expires automatically at the end of the 3-year certification period and must be renewed prior to the expiration date.

- Certificants are responsible for notifying AHE of changes to their contact information during the period of their certification.
- Failure of a certificant to receive their renewal notice does not relieve the technician of his or her professional responsibility for renewing their National Certification prior to their expiration date.
- AHE is not responsible for financial or other damages occurring with respect to expiration of a certification due to lack of notification of a change to certificant contact information, address, or email.



CSCT Certification Application

A candidate is eligible for CSCT Certification if employed by a health care facility with at least 6 months experience cleaning **within** the patient room, or six months cleaning experience in an OR Suite, or at least one year in a health care facility cleaning in areas other than direct patient care areas.

Applicant Information

Last Name

First Name

Middle Initial

Street Address

Unit/Apt #

City

State

Zip

Preferred Phone

Preferred Email Address

Title & Name of Hospital/Organization

Name of CSCT trainer

Name as you wish it to be printed on certificate

Application Status

Check on of the following:

I am applying as a new candidate.

I am applying as a re-applicant; i.e., to retake the examination.

I am applying for renewal of certification.

Demographic Information

How many years of experience do you have in environmental services (operations related to environmental sanitation, waste management and textile management)?

6 months-1 year 2-4 years 5 or more years

How many years have you worked in health care, cleaning patient rooms/areas?

6 months-1 year 2-4 years 5-7 years

7-10 years 10-15 years More

Do you require special disability related accommodations during testing? If yes, please contact the T-CHEST at your facility at least 45 days prior to the testing date.

No Yes

I certify that I have read all portions of the CSCT Candidate Handbook and Application and agree to abide by regulations contained therein. I certify that I am eligible to take this CSCT Examination and the information I have submitted in this application is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that, if the information I have submitted is found to be incomplete or inaccurate, my application may be rejected or my CSCT Examination results may be delayed or voided.

Signature

Print Name

Date



**CONTENT IN THIS HANDBOOK, INCLUDING POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND FEES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE MOST RECENT VERSION OF THE HANDBOOK ONLINE AT WWW.AHE.ORG.**

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