

**Colorado Veterinary Medical
Association**

**Certified Veterinary
Assistant (CVA)**

**POLICIES &
GUIDELINES**

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1.0 Introduction and Program Overview

1.1 Owner

The Certified Veterinary Assistant program is a member service of the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA), a 501(c) 6 not-for-profit professional association chartered by the State of Colorado and serving the needs of the veterinary profession and individual veterinarians in Colorado.

1.2 Background

The CVA program has evolved from the awareness that training and career development are key attributes of successful veterinary practices. With this focus, the CVMA has adopted a formal program developed by the TVMA and Animal Care Technologies to train and certify those individuals wishing to follow a career path as a Veterinary Assistant. This program has been implemented in hundreds of hospitals and has resulted in over a thousand CVA's since its inception. The Colorado Veterinary Medical Association embraces the goals and objectives of this program with a sincere belief that recognizing CVAs in Colorado will truly benefit the profession and the animals it serves.

1.3 Purpose and Mission

Purpose

The modern veterinary clinic depends on a knowledgeable and well-trained animal health-care team to deliver the quality medical services demanded by animal owners and required by the ever advancing standards-of-care accepted within the veterinary profession. Well-established, high quality, formal educational programs exist to provide the education and training required by veterinarians and veterinary technicians. However, there has long existed a need to establish standards of competency and performance for individuals employed as veterinary assistants—the third member of the successful animal health-care team. The Colorado Veterinary Medical Association implements the Certified Veterinary Assistant program to meet this need.

Mission

It is the mission of the CVMA Certified Veterinary Assistant Program to establish knowledge and performance standards in the practice of veterinary assisting and to encourage the widespread adoption of these standards through a highly valued credential of competency.

1.4 Program Governance

The Certified Veterinary Assistance Program is operated by the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association and it is governed by the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association. All appeals, complaints and grievances should be directed to this Association.

1.5 CVA and the Veterinary Health Care Team

The modern veterinary clinic or hospital represents a highly complex, well coordinated animal health-care environment. Every person on staff has a vital and specific role to play in caring for the patients entrusted to their care. The central components of a well-functioning animal health-care team include the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, assisted by the Certified Veterinary Technician, and supported by the Certified Veterinary Assistant. Depending on specific circumstances, the exact deployment of these highly skilled individuals may vary from one health-care team to another, but these three working together represent the ideal. Other non-credentialed members of the veterinary staff make many valuable contributions to the hospital function, but these credentialed staff members are the key to state-of-the-art veterinary care.

Levels of training, expertise and responsibility naturally segment the animal health-care team along a hierarchy of medical authority with the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine accorded the highest rank within the team, followed by the Certified Veterinary Technician and with the

Certified Veterinary Assistant filling the third tier of authority and responsibility. Thus the DVM is self-directed within the team and supervises and directs all other members of the team including the RVT and CVA members. With the doctor's approval an RVT may be assigned some degree of oversight for the CVA team members.

Each role on the health-care team is important and distinct. It is not best-practice, nor is it the policy of the CVMA to suggest the use of a CVA to do those functions that should be reserved to the CVT. The training and capability of the CVA is considerably below that of a CVT and, while every practice owner will deploy staff as she or he deems best, it is highly recommended that one or more CVTs form the back-bone of the support staff with able assistance provided by the CVA.

The CVA program is a learn-on-the-job vocational training experience that covers the basic fundamentals of veterinary medicine and animal care and handling. CVMA envisions the ideal veterinary practice as one in which the veterinarian, CVT, and CVA work together as valuable and highly productive members of a unified animal health-care team.

1.6 Benefits of Certification

The Certified Veterinary Assistant receives a number of benefits as a result of certification in the CVMA program, including:

- **Certificate:** All successful applicants for certification as a CVA will receive a professional quality certificate designating the date and level of certification as well as the name of the certified individual.
- **Verification of Certification:** CVMA maintains a permanent registry of all CVA's who have completed and maintained their certification status, and will respond to all employer inquiries to verify an individual's certification.
- **Promotion of Certification as an Employer Benefit:** CVMA will continually promote to its member veterinarians the value of employing certified veterinary assistants.
- **Discounts on Continuing Education:** Individuals who hold current certification will be allowed to register for continuing education at any CVMA-sponsored seminar or conference at a member rate.
- **FYI Newsletter:** All individuals who maintain current certification as a CVA and provide an email address will receive the bimonthly CVMA publication.

2.0 Certification Criteria and Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Certification Levels

The CVA program consists of three levels of attainment, as follows:

- **CVA Level I:** Entry level skills and knowledge, roughly equivalent to 90 days of on-the-job training in a veterinary clinic.
- **CVA Level II:** Intermediate level skills and knowledge, roughly equivalent to 180 days of on-the-job training in a veterinary clinic beyond certification at CVA Level I.
- **CVA Level III:** Advanced level skills and knowledge, roughly equivalent to 180 days of on-the-job training in a veterinary clinic beyond certification at CVA Level II.
- It is the policy of the CVMA that all certified veterinary assistants must progress through each certification step in sequence, that is, all CVAs must certify first at Level I, then go on to Level II, then Level III in sequence.

2.2 Eligibility Criteria and Requirements

The eligibility criteria and requirements for certification established for each of the three levels of CVA certification are as follows:

CVA Level I:

- Applicant must be at least 16 years of age
- Applicant must have obtained 90 days of practical work experience (equivalent to 500 hours, paid or volunteer) in a veterinary setting under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian or a certified veterinary technician
- Applicant must submit a completed application for examination for CVA Level I certification including complete payment of examination fee(s)
- Completed CVA Level I "Skills Validation Checklist"
- Applicant must score 70% or better on the CVA Level I certification exam

CVA Level II:

- Applicant must hold a valid CVA Level I certification
- Applicant must have obtained 180 days of practical work experience (equivalent to 1,000 hours, paid or volunteer) under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian or a certified veterinary technician, counted from the date initial certification at CVA Level I was awarded (see section 3.3 for exception).
- Applicant must submit a completed application for examination for CVA Level II certification including complete payment of examination fee(s)
- Completed CVA Level II "Skills Validation Checklist"
- Applicant must score 70% or better on the CVA Level II certification exam

CVA Level III:

- Applicant must hold a valid CVA Level II certification
- Applicant must have obtained 180 days of practical work experience (equivalent to 1,000 hours, paid or volunteer) under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian or a certified veterinary technician, counted from the date initial certification at CVA Level II was awarded (see section 3.3 for exception).
- Applicant must submit a completed application for examination for CVA Level III certification including complete payment of examination fee(s)
- Completed CVA Level III "Skills Validation Checklist"
- Applicant must score 70% or better on the CVA Level III certification examination

3.0 Program Organization

The CVA program consists of three core components, which are included in every level of certification as outlined above: Knowledge, Skills, and Experience.

3.1 Knowledge Standards

The knowledge standards established for the CVMA Certified Veterinary Assistant are expressed in terms of minimum competencies which must be demonstrated by the candidates for certification at each of three certification levels. The competencies are subdivided into ten knowledge domains that together span the range of work typically assigned the veterinary assistant in a professional practice of veterinary medicine. These competencies and their assignment to appropriate certification levels are presented in Appendix A for each knowledge domain.

3.1.1 Acceptable Learning Formats for Achieving Knowledge Standards

The Certified Veterinary Assistant Program is a credentialing process, not an educational program. It serves to define the basic knowledge and skills required for successful work as a veterinary assistant and to grant the CVA credential in recognition of demonstrated performance capabilities meeting or exceeding established standards. There are various routes recognized by CVMA for gaining the knowledge required for certification, which may include but are not limited to:

Seminars and Workshops

Some of the continuing education programs presented by CVMA, the Colorado Association of Certified Veterinary Technicians, the College of Veterinary Medicine and other providers would be included here.

Internet-Based Instruction

A full program of educational and training activities available online through Animal Care Technologies, which includes online testing and skills validation, is recognized by the CVMA as a comprehensive option for completing CVA certification, provided the work experience and supervision requirements are met.

3.2 Skills Standards

Each candidate for certification must acquire specified skills and performance abilities appropriate to the certification level sought. These skills and performance abilities must be validated and confirmed by a licensed veterinarian or a certified veterinary technician (or equivalent).

The CVA program relies upon observation and supervision by appropriate professional personnel to assure appropriate skill levels in the veterinary assistants achieving certification. This is accomplished through the "Skills Validation Checklist", which must be completed and signed by an immediate supervisor who is either a DVM or CVT. Digital submission of the "Skills Validation Checklist" is recommended through the CVMA-approved online program provided by Animal Care Technologies. The skills required for each certification level are presented in Appendix 3.

3.3 Experience Standards

Certification at any CVA level requires demonstrated proficiency of work-related tasks in an appropriate environment, which is to be a veterinary hospital or its equivalent. The hours required for each level of certification are outlined in section 2.02 and summarized here:

CVA I:	500 hours	It should be noted that these hours are cumulative, i.e. each subsequent level's experience requirement is in addition to the preceding level. For example, CVA III requires a total of 2,500 hrs. of work experience.
CVA II:	1,000 hours	
CVA III:	1,000 hours	

Cumulative Hours

Work experience will be cumulative when acquired working at the same practice or in multiple practice (assuming sufficient documentation is available). This will allow an applicant who has completed the appropriate hours to receive a waiver of the designated time period between levels. Thus if someone has already accumulated enough hours to meet the total required to move onto the next level, they do not need to wait the prescribed time period listed for that level.

4.0 Examination Standards

4.1 Composition and Weighting of the Examination

The CVA examination for each certificate level will consist of 100 multiple choice questions appropriate to the level of certification covered. This online exam pulls 100 questions from a larger bank of test questions creating a unique test each time it is taken.

4.2 Examination Administration

Online Testing

Level I, II, and III certification examinations (online tests located at the end of the online curriculum - 4ACT.com) may be taken at the place of employment. The supervisor will be required to log in at the time of examination. Because this is NOT an open book test, the supervisor must provide some level of oversight to insure that there is no access to outside materials during the test. Scores will be immediately reported to the student and the CVMA.

Retesting Provisions

Should an applicant for CVA certification at any level fail to pass the examination they may retake the exam as often as they wish following the initial examination date. ACT will charge a re-test fee to cover the cost of retaking the test. This fee is \$35 for each retest at CVA Levels I, II, and III.

5.0 Renewal of Certification and CE Requirements

5.1 Renewal Dates and Fees

Certification is valid for one calendar year, beginning with the date of initial certification. This date will be clearly shown on the certificate issued to the successful candidate and on each subsequent certificate issued for re-certification. This date will serve as the CVA's permanent anniversary date. Beginning the second year of seeking certification renewal, candidates are required to acquire five (5) hours of continuing education (CE) each year (this requirement is waived the first year). These CE hours may be acquired through any legitimate veterinary educational venue, including but not limited to: state and local VMA meetings, online courses, professional seminars presented by veterinary companies, etc. Hours accumulated beyond the five required hours may be carried over to the next year's requirement.

CVMA will make every effort to notify the CVA in writing when their certificate is due to expire, but the CVA is responsible for contacting CVMA on or before their anniversary date and for submitting the application for renewal of certification. The CVA has sixty (60) calendar days following the anniversary date in which to submit the application for renewal of certification, the CVA evaluation, and the renewal fee. If all items required for renewal of certification are not received in the CVMA office before the 60-day deadline, the CVA will lose certification status and will be required to re-test for certification.

The CVA renewal fee is \$30.00 and the candidate for renewal must submit a check for that amount made payable to CVMA.

5.2 Continuing Education Requirement

During the calendar year preceding the date of expected renewal, the CVA must complete a minimum of five (5) hours of continuing education instruction.

Any educational content produced and provided by a recognized provider and intended for veterinary staff training may be used to satisfy the CE requirement.

Proof of Participation

Documentation validating each continuing education activity must be kept on file by the Certified Veterinary Assistant. These records will be audited at random. When CVMA requests copies of CE documentation the veterinary assistant must provide copies of all documentation for review by CVMA. Failure to provide sufficient documentation of required CE will be cause for the applicant's certificate to be deactivated to probationary status.

The applicant for certificate renewal will have six (6) months to correct the CE deficit and thus remove the probationary status.

Failure to complete all CE requirements within the 6-month probationary period will deactivate the certificate completely and the individual will lose the right to use the CVA designation and all other privileges pertaining to certification.

To regain certificate status, the lapsed individual must re-test for certification.