Introduction

Background

This handbook is designed to provide information about the processes for the National Wellness Institute’s Certified Wellness Practitioner (CWP) certification program, and specifically for the CWP Beta Certification Examination to be administered in January 2022. CWP candidates include wellness professionals who are interested in obtaining the CWP credential to showcase their competencies and skills in wellness promotion. This handbook outlines important information regarding CWP benefits, registration and fees, beta examination process, maintenance requirements, and use of the CWP credentials.

The National Wellness Institute (NWI) developed the CWP certification program in 2014 to help establish professional standards in wellness and to recognize wellness professionals who have strong academic preparation, professional experience, and a commitment to ongoing professional development.

When the NWI Council on Wellness Certification Excellence (CWCE) released the original NWI Wellness Promotion Competency Model, based on research published in 2017, the model became the new standard for the CWP designation, and the CWCE revised the CWP application and eligibility requirements to reflect these competencies.

In April 2020, NWI collaborated with Butler University and a team of wellness promotion researchers to conduct an additional study clarifying and supporting the validity of the five-domain competency model [Peterson, C., Ellery, J., Laube, T., Yuhas, B., & Hunt, S, (2022), International Journal of Community Well-being]. A revised NWI Wellness Promotion Competency Model, comprised of 27 total competencies within five domains, was published in 2021.
In alignment with this competency model, NWI is launching a new certification examination and associated eligibility requirements in 2022 for the CWP designation. The new processes aim to increase access and learning opportunities for professionals with a variety of backgrounds and skills while providing a valid, reliable, and consistent certification experience. (Note: At this time, graduates of NWI Accredited Academic Programs are not required to sit for the CWP certification examination.)


The CWP beta exam will be offered for the first time in January 2022. Professionals who are first to sit for the exam will help evolve this credential and lead the way in advancing the wellness profession. Their feedback will help to shape the future of the program.

**Definition of Certification**

NWI applies the following definition to “certification,” derived from the National Commission for Certifying Agencies’ *Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs*:

Certification is a voluntary process that grants a time-limited credential to individuals meeting predetermined standards for knowledge, skills, or competencies. The assessment of the individual applicant is independent of a specific class, course, or other education/training program. Certification holders must complete continuing education requirements to retain the credential.

**Value of Wellness Certification**

Certification programs based on competencies are meaningful to employees and employers. Not only can credentials awarded help professionals stand out and claim recognition in their career, but according to the 2019 “Value of Certification” report by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (I.C.E.), certification can also help prepare employees for tasks and demands within their field of work. Self-reports from employees in I.C.E.’s study also show that certification can help with achieving career-related goals and advancing careers more quickly compared to individuals that aren’t certified. A professional certification program supported by a competency model can provide a collective understanding of employees’ knowledge, skills, and abilities. The CWP designation is one indication of professional competency and commitment to continued scholarship and professional development.

Certified Wellness Practitioners:

- Elevate their reputations as wellness professionals among their employers, colleagues, and clients
- Build enhanced connections and community with inter-disciplinary teams of professionals
- Share a common understanding of wellness and wellness-approaches
- Attain leadership opportunities that help shape the trajectory of the wellness field
- Create wellness-enhancing environments through the initiation of individual, organizational, and cultural change.
About the Council on Wellness Certification Excellence (CWCE)
CWP certification standards are continually reviewed and maintained by NWI’s Council on Wellness Certification Excellence (CWCE). This council serves as the decision-making body to evaluate, provide oversight, and give guidance on CWP policies and procedures, and sets continuing education requirements.

The CWCE does not require CWP candidates to complete certificate courses, trainings, or conference sessions offered by the National Wellness Institute to be eligible to sit for the certification examination.

Non-discrimination Statement
The National Wellness Institute shall provide equal access to and opportunity in its programs, operations, certification/recertification, facilities, selection of volunteers and vendors and provision of services, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Applying for CWP Certification
Beta Examination Timeline
• December 15, 2021: Registration for the Certified Wellness Practitioner beta examination opens.
• January 12, 2022: Registration for the Certified Wellness Practitioner beta examination closes.
• January 17 – January 31, 2022: Beta examination window open. (Candidates must complete the exam, in one sitting (4 hours max), by 11:59 p.m. CT, January 31, 2022.)
• May 2022: The first credentials based on the beta examination are awarded.

Rationale for CWP Beta Examination Eligibility Requirements
The CWCE recommended the revised eligibility requirements in 2021. The eligibility outlines a combination of education and work experience needed to gain sufficient competence across the five domains of the certification examination blueprint, defined and validated through the evidence-informed and published NWI Wellness Promotion Competency Model.

The requirements were determined based on:

• the introduction of the requirement to pass a competency-based certification exam to earn CWP designation;
• the recognition of the required competence of a wellness practitioner;
• the consideration of the diverse backgrounds and experiences of qualified candidates;
CWP Beta Examination Eligibility

CWP candidates must meet ONE of the following pathways by the start of the beta exam window to qualify to sit for CWP Certification Examination. (Note: At this time, graduates of NWI Accredited Academic Programs are not required to sit for the CWP certification examination.)

Degrees in Wellness: Wellness, Health Promotion, Health Education, Public Health, Integrative Health, Healthy Living, Wellness Management

Wellness-related Degrees: Dietetics, Kinesiology, Exercise Science, Psychology, Social Work, Nursing, Health Psychology or Advanced Practitioner Degree (DO, MD, PA, DC, DPT)
How to Register for the CWP Beta Certification Exam

Individuals interested in sitting for the beta exam in January 2022, and who have determined they meet the eligibility requirements, must register online at NationalWellness.org/CWP and pay all associated fees no later than January 12, 2022. Beta examination participants will benefit from a discounted fee.

Candidates will be required during registration to verify that all eligibility and identifying information provided is accurate. If a candidate has forged or falsified information during registration or at any point during the examination/certification process, sanctions may result, including invalidation of beta exam score or revocation of certification or eligibility for certification.

Candidates may be contacted for additional information if the registration form is missing required components. A random selection of applicants may also be audited, prior to or after, the beta exam and asked to submit documentation to support their eligibility. If it is deemed that the candidate is ineligible, and additional documentation is not provided within 15 days of notification via email, the candidate will not be able to sit for the exam or their certification will be revoked.

If candidates do not currently have an active membership with the National Wellness Institute, they will be prompted to create a free Guest account or a paid membership to successfully register and complete the CWP Beta Certification Examination. A paid membership is not required to register for the exam.

Applicants with a disability or who require assistance in completing the online registration application form should contact NWI at certification@nationalwellness.org or 715.342.2969.

Certification Fees

Certification fees are required to be paid in advance of being approved and sitting for the CWP beta examination. The fee will total one payment. The 2022 beta examination fee is $225 (regularly $350). This discounted examination fee applies to the 2022 CWP beta examination only and is nonrefundable. Full payment must be received before beta examination access is granted.

After the first year of certification, certified individuals must pay a $75 annual fee to maintain active status. Every five years, in addition to the annual fee, a $50 recertification fee and proof of 50 continuing education credits earned will be required to re-certify for another five years. See additional recertification requirements on page 13.

Cancellation Requests and Technical Support

If an exam registrant is unable to complete the beta examination during the beta examination window due to a situation beyond their control (e.g., major illness, natural disaster), they must contact NWI at certification@nationalwellness.org as soon as possible to discuss their options. NWI may require documentation regarding the reasoning for not being able to complete the beta examination during the examination window.

Due to the nature of the CWP beta examination, if a candidate chooses to cancel their exam registration, or does not notify NWI of their inability to complete it within the beta exam window, no refund will be provided.

If a technical issue occurs while taking the exam, candidates should submit a support request at https://www.nationalwellness.org/LearningHelp for the quickest response.
**Taking the Beta Examination**

*Preparing for the CWP Beta Examination*

The CWP beta examination will be offered online only through the NWI Online Learning Portal at https://www.nationalwellness.org/OnlineLearning. A confirmation email with technical requirements and tips for taking the exam will be sent immediately upon registration.

Registered candidates whose payment has been processed will receive an email with exam access instructions at least 3 days prior to the start of the exam window.

To prepare for the beta examination, candidates are encouraged to review the NWI Wellness Promotion Competency Model and the CWP Beta Examination Blueprint (on page 9 of this document) and to seek out trainings and resources that support the competencies, such as the NWI Journal, NWI courses and webinars, or resources and trainings available through other reputable sources. See the CWP Beta Exam FAQs for additional suggestions.

**What to Expect for the Online Beta Examination**

- The successful CWP candidate will demonstrate competence across the five domains of the NWI Wellness Promotion Competency Model covered on the certification examination.
- The CWP beta exam will be administered via the NWI Online Learning Portal only. A current NWI membership or free Guest Account is required to access the exam.
- The beta exam is offered in English only.
- The exam must be completed by the registrant with no assistance from other individuals or other external sources, such as internet searches.
- The exam must be completed in one sitting at any time during the examination window (January 17-31, 2022). Candidates must complete the exam by 11:59 p.m. CT, January 31, 2022.
- Testing attempts are limited to one certification examination attempt per testing window.
- The CWP beta exam consists of 200 multiple-choice questions. Following psychometric review, some test items (questions) will be discarded. 150 questions will be used to calculate the beta exam candidates’ scores.
- All identifying information will be removed prior to demographic and question response data being provided to a psychometrician for analysis.
- Once a candidate begins their online exam, they will have four (4) hours to complete all 200 questions.
- Candidates will be given the opportunity for a 15-minute break after they have answered 100 questions. This break will not be counted as exam time.
- To allow for psychometric review and score calculation candidates will receive their examination results (and be notified of certification status) approximately 12 weeks after the beta examination administration period has closed.

**Examination Security**

The CWP beta examination is highly confidential. Every candidate will be required to confirm their understanding of statement below.

**CWP Candidate Statement of Understanding:**

Conduct occurring before, during, or after testing for the CWP beta exam that violates the ethics outlined in the Candidate Statement of Understanding may result in invalidation of examination results and/or other penalties and be reported to NWI.
1. The Certified Wellness Practitioner (CWP) beta exam is highly confidential. The examination questions are property of NWI. Unauthorized disclosure of any exam content or questions is prohibited under copyright laws. By acknowledging this statement of understanding, you agree to maintain the confidentiality of the CWP beta examination content and items. You must therefore:
   a. Keep the examination content confidential, even after completing the beta examination. This also includes not discussing the content with anyone who has been administered the examination before you, with you, or who has not taken the beta examination yet.
   b. Not use or be in possession of any electronic device other than the device being used to take the exam (such as cell phones, cameras, iPods, etc.) within reach while taking the beta examination;
   c. Not record, memorize, or attempt to recreate examination items, whether for financial gain or not.
2. The candidate attests that they neither received nor gave any outside assistance in the completion of this exam.
3. Any cheating (including, but not limited to, using internet searches and/or other external resources while taking the exam) and/or breach of confidentiality/security or any attempt to subvert the examination process by any candidate violates the purpose and principles of the examination. Any candidate, who carries out, takes part in, or who witnesses such behavior must report it to NWI as soon as possible.
4. NWI strives to report results that accurately reflect the competence and professional skill and performance of each candidate and represent a valid measure of this as sampled by the examination. In order to ensure the examination promotes these ideals, NWI reserves the right to cancel or withhold any examination results when, in the sole opinion of NWI, a testing irregularity occurs; cheating has occurred; there is an apparent discrepancy in, or falsification of, a candidate’s identification; a candidate engages in misconduct or plagiarism; when aberrancies in performance are detected for which there is no reasonable and satisfactory explanation; or the results are believed to be invalid for any other reason.

The candidate agrees to abide by all regulations, as well as written instructions controlling the conduct of the examination. These regulations are intended to preserve the integrity of the examination process by providing standard test administration conditions that yield valid and reliable results.

CWP Beta Examination Content and Development

Development of the CWP Beta Examination

The CWP beta examination blueprint and associated content were developed based on the NWI Wellness Promotion Competency Model released in 2021. The CWCE provided guidance on revised CWP eligibility requirements and the certification examination blueprint. NWI is also collaborating with a psychometrician to ensure the certification examination is developed appropriately to be valid and reliable and to mitigate item bias. For the CWP beta exam, approximately 25 subject matter experts (SMEs) participated in item writing, examination review, and standard-setting activities.

The CWP beta examination consists of 200 multiple choice questions; after psychometric review, 150 questions of these questions will be selected for scoring. The exam questions cover competency areas noted in the CWP Beta Examination Blueprint (page 10), based on NWI’s Wellness Promotion Competency Model.
### CWP Beta Examination Blueprint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Areas</th>
<th>Number of Items Included in Beta Exam</th>
<th>Number of Scored Items</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain 1: Authenticity &amp; Self-awareness (20%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Competencies:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Engage in ongoing reflection to expand personal growth and professional development in multiple dimensions of wellness</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate commitment to wellness promotion by modeling healthy lifestyle practices in multiple dimensions of wellness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Establish authentic and autonomy-supportive relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recognize your own limitations in wellness promotion and refer individuals to other professionals when appropriate to support their wellness goals</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Domain 2: Whole-person &amp; Systems Approaches (30%)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Competencies:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use an ecological approach (e.g., interactions among the individual, family, organization, community, and social systems) to understand the ways dynamic systems impact an individual’s experience of wellness</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assess individual and/or group characteristics, interests, and needs using a multi-dimensional and ecological approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Identify health and wellness resources and materials that allow for an individual’s self-discovery, self-knowledge, and self-direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Apply relevant theories and models to explain the integrated role of physical, social, intellectual, emotional, occupational, and spiritual aspects in the human pursuit and experience of wellness throughout the lifespan</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adopt person-centered communication practices that consider the whole person, recognizing the influence factors such as socio-demographic variables and worldview have on the communication process</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provide developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant evidence-based information to educate individuals and the public about wellness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use participatory, humanistic, and strengths-based processes to design opportunities that will lead toward achieving established objectives and outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use appropriate techniques (e.g., strengths-based, humanistic, cognitive-behavioral) to encourage individuals to be active participants in their personal wellness journey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domain 3: Inclusive &amp; Responsive Practices (20%)</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competencies:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Practice self-awareness and self-regulation to minimize the effects of personal bias in working with diverse individuals and groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Practice multicultural competence, recognizing the dynamics of oppression and privilege on an individual’s lived experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate compassion, integrity, and respect for diverse individuals and groups, including but not limited to diversity in sex, age, culture, race, ethnicity, disabilities, body size, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and gender identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Work to uncover individual’s strengths, concerns, and values using a person-centered approach to inquiry that includes active listening to help set appropriate wellness goals and strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assist individuals in identifying barriers or resistance to change that are interrupting their ability to integrate wellness-promoting behaviors into their lives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adapt wellness strategies to fit individual, geographical and cultural needs, acknowledging that there are no universally correct models or processes</td>
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<tr>
<th>Domain 4: Communication &amp; Connection (20%)</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>30</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competencies:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recognize the influence of organizational development, leadership, and culture on individual wellness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Articulate to key stakeholders the value of wellness for individuals and how it supports the organization’s or community’s mission, purpose, and strategic goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Establish collaborative relationships and interdisciplinary teams to promote sustainable wellness practices that meet long-term individual, organizational, and/or community goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use meaningful and inclusive communication methods and technologies to support, manage, and promote wellness initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use quantitative and qualitative feedback to continually evaluate the quality and effectiveness of initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use quantitative and qualitative data to communicate key findings to stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<th>Domain 5: Legal &amp; Ethical Principles (10%)</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Competencies:</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Comply with legal standards for confidentiality, compliance, and mandated reporting</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Work within your scope of practice and in accordance with your profession-specific code of conduct</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Maintain ethical relationships</td>
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After the CWP Beta Examination

Beta Examination Review
Following the administration of the CWP beta examination, all question data will be reviewed to determine whether questions meet best-practice standards for certification examinations. All identifying information will be removed prior to demographic and question response data being provided to a psychometrician for analysis. If some questions do not meet such standards, they will be reviewed by the psychometrician, CWCE, and SMEs to determine appropriate next steps in order to ensure examination fairness. This may include excluding certain questions from the calculation of the candidates’ final scores.

Beta Examination Results
Beta exam results will be provided after the examination review by the psychometrician, CWCE, and SMEs, and the determination of the passing score. The time between the end of the examination administration window and the release of scores to candidates will be approximately 12 weeks. Please do not contact NWI regarding scores, as candidates will receive an email notification when their results are available. For privacy and confidentiality, beta examination scores are released to the candidate only.

Retesting
Candidates notified that they didn’t pass the CWP beta examination will receive information about retesting. Retesting will be available during the first regular testing window in 2022 (after May 2022). Candidates interested in retesting must complete the retest within 12 months of notification of failed status. Testing attempts are limited to one certification examination attempt per testing window.

Post-Beta Exam Candidate Survey
All candidates are encouraged to complete the Post-Beta Exam Candidate Survey, which will be available in the NWI Online Learning Portal and sent via email after the beta examination window closes. Feedback on this survey will provide insight into improving the testing experience for future candidates.

Appeals
All candidates have the right to file an appeal of an adverse decision resulting in a denial of certification or recertification based on a failure to satisfy application or eligibility requirements, payment of required fees, or failure of the certification examination caused by conditions beyond the candidate’s control. Appeals should be submitted in writing via email to certification@nationalwellness.org within 15 calendar days of the determination notice. If no request for appeal is made within 15 calendar days, the NWI adverse decision shall be deemed final, effective immediately.

Appeals must include a statement from the candidate affected by the adverse decision containing their full statement of the facts relevant to the alleged violation and the specific basis for the appeal, as well as any verifiable supporting documentation that the individual wishes to be considered, including any available and relevant documentary evidence from pertinent regulatory or credentialing proceedings.

Appeals of adverse decisions will be investigated by a panel consisting of three (3) members of the CWCE, who will make the final determination about an appeal. The certification candidate will be notified of the final decision within sixty (60) days of receipt of the written (emailed) appeal statement.

To protect the security and integrity of the CWP certification examination, NWI will not release examination questions or answers to any individual or organization. Every effort is taken to ensure the accuracy of the examination. If a candidate believes there is an error in an examination question, the concern should be emailed to certification@nationalwellness.org.
CWP Certificate & Credentials

Certificate
Candidates who receive a confirmation email that they passed the CWP beta examination will receive additional information related to the credential. Individuals earning the CWP credential will be issued a professional certificate (via mail) to display and validate their Certified Wellness Practitioner status. The CWP designation lasts for five years. A new certificate will be sent upon recertification approval.

Credential
Use of the CWP credentials may be used only after receiving official notification of certification. The credential may be used only as long as certification remains valid, current, and in active status. Should the certification be withdrawn for any reason, the individual must immediately cease the use of the credentials.

After meeting all eligibility requirements and passing the examination, individuals may use their credential in all correspondence, on resumes/CVs and promotional materials.

- Examples of correct usage:
  - Joe Smith is a Certified Wellness Practitioner
  - Joe Smith, CWP
  - Two XYZ employees hold the National Wellness Institute CWP certification

Verifying Certification Status
NWI reserves the right to make available to the public a certified individual’s name, city, state, country, and certification status. An online directory of NWI Certified Wellness Practitioners may also be available on NationalWellness.org.

Benefits + Maintaining CWP Certification

Benefits, Annual Fee, and Recertification Fee
Individuals who pass the CWP Beta Exam and earn their CWP credential receive access to all NWI member benefits, effective on their initial certification date and as long as their certification remains in active status. Membership benefits include access to an online Certification Journal to track continuing education credits earned toward recertification of their CWP, CWP-exclusive networking opportunities, discounts on continuing education, and more. Beginning at the start of the second year of certification, certified individuals must pay a $75 annual fee to maintain active status.

Every five years, in addition to the annual fee, a $50 recertification fee and proof of 50 continuing education credits earned will be required to re-certify for another five years.

Continuing Education Requirements
NWI requires CWPs to pursue continuing education that aligns with the NWI Wellness Promotion Competency Model. By participating in continuing education activities, CWPs continue to advance their knowledge and skills, keeping them current, relevant, and at the forefront of a rapidly evolving and demanding field.

CWPs can earn Continuing Education Credits (CECs) through various activities and must earn at least 50 CECs every five years to maintain certification:

- At least 20 CECs from Category 1 (CE activity pre-approved by CWCE)
- A maximum of 30 CECs from Category 2 (CE activity not pre-approved by CWCE).

CECs can be earned through NWI or through other credible organizations. Further information regarding CECs will be provided upon passing the CWP beta examination and becoming certified.