National Exam Basics*

1. At what point in the CWLS application process do I take the exam?
   - You can take the exam at any point during the CWLS application process. In order to be certified as a CWLS, you must pass the exam and your application must be approved by the CWLS Certification Committee, but these two requirements may be met in either order. You must submit your CWLS application prior to taking the exam, but committee approval of your application is not required first.

2. How long is the exam?
   - The national exam consists of 60 multiple choice questions and 2 essay questions.
   - You will have 3 hours and 55 minutes to complete the entire exam (multiple choice and essays).
   - The 3:55-hour block of time is not divided into a specific amount for multiple choice, a specific amount for essays, and a specific break period(s). You are responsible for managing your time. However, it is recommended that you give yourself approximately 2 hours for the multiple choice section, and 1 hour and 40 minutes for the essays.
   - 15 minutes have been included for breaks at your discretion. You are not required to take a break. (See Question 15 for additional information about breaks.)

3. When and where is the exam offered?
   - You can schedule your exam for a date of your choosing anytime within our exam season (March through December). You can choose any available day and time (weekends included) with our remote proctoring partner, Examity. Remote proctoring lets you take the exam from the comfort of your own home, monitored via webcam. (Home is one option – but you can basically choose any single-room location that has a reliable internet connection.) We don’t restrict testing to a single day or specific location. (See Scheduling Your Exam below.)

4. What is “remote proctoring”?
   - In 2018, NACC began partnering with an exam proctoring company called Examity. Via the webcam and audio on your computer, on exam day a live Examity proctor will validate your identity, help you launch your exam, and monitor you throughout the test-taking process. This allows NACC to maintain integrity and security in the delivery of the exam while offering you flexibility in scheduling and location. Taking the exam at home or in another familiar location can ease some test-taking anxiety by eliminating concerns about getting to a test center on time, traffic, parking, restrooms, noise or other people in the room, etc.

5. Is the exam open-notes?
   - The exam is open-notes. This includes hardcopy notes, study guides, handouts, etc. You may also use any hardcopy legal references or books except the Red Book.

*See Question 7. California requires a state-specific exam in addition to the national exam.
6. **What am I not allowed to use?**
   - **You may not use the Red Book** in any format (the book itself, photocopies, or electronic version).
   - You may not use any online or electronic resources. All materials must be hardcopy.
   - You may not have dual computer monitors or other screens visible to you (phone, tablet, etc.)
   - You may not wear headphones.
   - You may not access your smartphone (or other mobile devices), even to track time. There is one default warning alarm under “Preferences” in ExamSoft. Once the exam clock has started, you will have the ability to set two additional warning alarms at times of your choosing. It is also suggested that you wear a wristwatch or have an actual clock nearby to keep yourself on pace.

7. **Is there a state-specific exam in addition to the national exam?**
   - Currently, only California requires an additional state-specific exam for CWLS certification.
     - The California exam consists of 30 multiple choice questions and 1 essay question.
     - You have 2 hours and 10 minutes to complete the California exam.
     - All the same rules regarding notes and reference materials apply.
     - You may schedule your California exam directly following your national exam or on a different day, but you will need to schedule two appointments with Examity and download two exams from ExamSoft.

**Preparing for the Exam**

8. **How should I study for the exam?**
   - The national CWLS exam is based on the contents of *Child Welfare Law and Practice: Representing Children, Parents, and State Agencies in Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency Cases, 3rd Edition* (the Red Book). This should be your main resource. On the Exam Details page of the NACC website ([www.NACCchildlaw.org/ExamDetails](http://www.NACCchildlaw.org/ExamDetails)) you will find additional resources to help you prepare:
     - The Exam Competency Distribution Chart (the Matrix): The matrix gives you an idea of where to focus your studying by showing the percentages of multiple choice questions on the exam that come from each section and chapter of the Red Book.
     - The Practice Multiple Choice Mini-Exam: This is a short, 8-question practice exam you can take to help familiarize yourself with type, length, complexity, and range of multiple choice questions you'll encounter on the official exam.
     - We don't release practice essay questions publicly. However, they generally include a scenario or fact pattern and ask you to identify legal issues and to describe and support the steps you would take to resolve the legal issues and/or what considerations would need to be taken into account from a given perspective:
       - **For example -- Fact pattern given. You are the mother’s attorney. What would you...?**
     - The Red Book Training: This is a one-day, in-person exam prep training that walks you through the Red Book and pertinent information you will need to know for the exam including practice multiple choice and essay questions. The in-person training is offered annually at NACC’s national conference.
     - The Red Book Training Course: This is an online series of seven live webinars covering substantially the same information as the one-day training. The Course is offered once in the spring and once in the fall. It includes access to the electronic version of the Red Book and recordings of the live sessions for six months as well as a comprehensive workbook to use as you follow along with the presentations. This workbook (if printed out in hardcopy) can be used during the exam.
9. What else do I need to do ahead of time?
   • Download the exam software from ExamSoft – Applicants will receive an email containing a link to NACC’s ExamSoft portal as well as login credentials. Follow the download instructions given based on your operating system (Windows or Mac). Once you have downloaded the software (Examplify), you will be able to select the appropriate exam and download it, and you will be able to familiarize yourself with the program using the Help topics in the Home Menu. **Download the exam but do not try to launch the exam on your own.** (Remember, if you are a California applicant, you will need to download the national exam AND the California exam.)
   • Set up your Examity profile – Applicants will receive an email containing a link to NACC’s Examity dashboard as well as login credentials. Once you have logged in, click the “My Profile” icon. Follow the onscreen instructions for creating your profile (this will include uploading a picture of your government-issued photo ID, creating security questions, and entering your biometric keystroke pattern). Once your profile has been created, you can run a computer requirements check to make sure all necessary components are operating properly.
   • Familiarize yourself with the technology – Please take advantage of the resources and tutorials on the ExamSoft website (particularly the video called “Taking an Exam”). This will familiarize you with what kinds of screens you’ll see on exam day.

**Technology**

10. What is the difference between ExamSoft and Examity?
   • ExamSoft is the software company that NACC uses to offer the actual exam content to you. The software you will download is called Examplify. Unless you are having a technical problem, you likely won’t have much personal interaction with ExamSoft.
   • Examity is the exam scheduling and proctoring company that NACC uses allowing you to schedule the exam at your own convenience and have it proctored remotely. You will set up a user profile and schedule your exam on Examity’s website. On exam day, you will have direct interaction via webcam with an Examity proctor who will verify your identity, help you launch the exam, and monitor you throughout.

11. What are the system requirements?
   • You must take the exam on a desktop computer or laptop. You cannot take the exam on a tablet.
   • You must be in a location with a reliable internet connection and power source.
   • You can take the exam using either a Windows or Mac operating system. Make sure your pop-up blocker is disabled. You will communicate with the proctor in a pop-up window.
   • You must have built-in or external webcam (with microphone) on your computer or laptop and built-in or external speakers. An external webcam with mic can be purchased for around $15.
   • Specific system requirements for ExamSoft can be found on the ExamSoft login page at: www.examsoft.com/nacc.
   • Once you have logged in and set up your profile in Examity, you will be able to run a system requirements check to make sure the webcam and audio will function properly on exam day.

12. I need technical support. Who do I contact?
   • If you are having trouble downloading the Examplify software, contact ExamSoft (24/7) at:
     o Phone: 1-866-429-8889
     o Email: support@examsoft.com
     o Chat: www.examsoft.com/support (click green “Chat Now” button)
   • If you are having trouble setting up your Examity profile, scheduling your exam, or have webcam technology questions, contact Examity (24/7) at:
     o Phone: 1-855-392-6489
     o Email: support@examity.com
     o Chat: https://prod.examity.com/NACCchildlaw (click “Live Chat” at bottom)
Scheduling Your Exam

13. How do I schedule my exam?
   • You will schedule your exam through the Examity website once you have created your Examity profile. Click the “Schedule Exam” icon in the middle of the screen and follow the scheduling instructions.
   • Once you schedule your exam, you should receive a confirmation email from Examity with a list of standard exam rules plus additional rules we’ve allowed. (Be aware that some may seem contradictory – particularly “no leaving your seat” and “bathroom breaks allowed” – leaving your seat for bathroom breaks is allowed.)

14. What if I need to cancel?
   • You can cancel or reschedule at any time prior to launching the exam by logging into your Examity profile and clicking the “Reschedule/Cancel” icon and then following the directions. If you fail to show up for your scheduled exam, a no-show fee may apply.

Exam Day

15. What can I expect on exam day?
   • Success!
   • Also, make sure:
     o You have already downloaded Examplify and the appropriate exam(s) – just national or both national and California – to the computer you are using.
     o Your pop-up blocker is disabled.
     o You have your government-issued photo ID with you.
     o You have all of the materials you plan to use in one place.
     o All mobile devices are in another room or stowed away.
     o All other electronics (TVs, other computers or monitors) in the room are clearly off.
   • Close all open programs on your computer except the internet.
   • About 30 minutes before your scheduled exam start time, log in to your Examity profile and click the “Start Exam” icon. This will not actually begin your exam – it will just let the proctor know that you are online and ready for the identity verification process.
   • The proctor will then walk you through five steps:
     1. Identity verification using your photo ID
     2. Review of the exam rules
     3. More identity and security measures:
        ▪ 360° room scan and desk sweep. You will need to hold up your laptop or detach your external webcam and turn around to show the proctor the whole room and your desk.
        ▪ Answer your security question
        ▪ Type your biometric keystroke signature
     4. Accept the user agreement and exam rules
     5. Launch the exam – At this point, you will navigate to where you downloaded Examplify (in your computer’s Finder or Start Menu).
        ▪ Log in, if prompted, with your ExamSoft (Examplify) credentials.
        ▪ Select the appropriate exam on the left.
        ▪ The proctor will give you an Exam Password. When the proctor instructs you, enter the Exam Password and click “Start Exam.” Again, this will not actually start the clock.
        ▪ You will be shown a pre-exam notice:
          o Welcome to the NACC CWLS National Certification Exam!
            You will have a total of 3 hours and 55 minutes to complete the exam including any restroom or other breaks you wish to take throughout the exam – the clock
will keep running once you begin. Your exam time is yours to allocate — here’s what we recommend:

- **Multiple Choice (60 questions/60 points)** — 2 hours (2 minutes per question)
- **Essay 1 (24 points)** — 1 hour
- **Essay 2 (16 points)** — 40 minutes
- **(Optional) Total Break Time** — 15 minutes (This includes the time it may take for the proctor to revalidate your identity when you return to your desk)

*Please take a moment to write down your specific transition times so you know when you should be moving on to Essay 1 and then Essay 2. You will also be able to set two additional alarms within the exam.*

- Obey proctor instructions at all times and best of luck!

- Once you have read the notice, click “Next.” You will be asked to enter a unique code that will be shown onscreen.

- **Once you enter the code and click “Start Exam,” the exam clock starts.**

**Things to keep in mind while taking the exam:**

1. You will be able to set alarms for yourself once the exam starts to keep yourself on track (e.g., you can set an alarm to remind you when half your time is left or when you plan to switch from multiple choice to essays). It is your choice whether/how to use the alarms.
2. You will be able to navigate backward and forward between questions.
3. You will be able to flag questions and come back to them later.
4. Answer every question. There is no penalty for incorrect answers.
5. You will be able to cross out answer choices that you don’t think are right in order to narrow down your selections. Do this by clicking the eyeball icon at the far right of the answer choice.
6. An answered question looks like this:

![Screenshot of answered question](image)

Select your answer by clicking on the answer text. Your chosen answer should now have a blue ring around it and a checkmark on the far right. **If the question number on the far left is not in a solid blue dot, you have not selected an answer for that question.** In the screenshot above, the examinee knew that answers B and D were both wrong, so they were “eliminated” by clicking the eyeball icon. The examinee chose C so there is a blue ring, a checkmark, and the question number is in a solid blue dot.

7. Spellcheck, cut-and-paste, and highlighting will be enabled within each essay question. Some essay questions are long — remember to scroll down through the entire question.
8. You may take restroom breaks whenever you need to. **Time spent on breaks and on reverifying your identity when you get back to your desk count against your total exam time. The clock will keep running.**
• When your time has expired, you will be prompted to submit your exam to ExamSoft. Follow the onscreen instructions. Once submitted, you should see a green confirmation screen. If it does not appear, notify the proctor and contact ExamSoft tech support. The ExamSoft tech support phone number will be visible on your screen throughout your exam in the event of a software problem. *However, you may wish to print this FAQ resource and have it available on exam day.*

**Exam Grading and Results**

16. **How is it graded?**
   • The exam is pass/fail.
   • Again, answer every question! You will not be penalized for incorrect answers.
   • The multiple choice section is 60% of your grade; the essays combined make up 40%.

17. **When will I get my results?**
   • Typically, results will be emailed to you at the end of the month following the month you sat for the exam (e.g., results for exams taken in April will be available at the end of May).

18. **What if I fail it?**
   • Don’t worry, you can try again in the next calendar year. You can sit for the exam once per calendar year while your application is open (a maximum of three years).
   • You’ll need to pay a small retake fee.
   • When reviewing applications, the CWLS Certification Committee is not made aware of any exam results or even if you have taken the exam yet. Exam passage and committee approval are kept separate – one does not influence the other, but both are required in order to be certified.