Community College Outreach: Driving focus on patient access curriculums

In response to the ever-growing (now coming close to 700 participants per examination) testing windows, NAHAM has adapted our technology to make the application and maintenance process easier for certificant and testing candidate.

The new Certification Central provides certificants the ability to recertify and apply for certification online. You are also able to track continuing education hours for maintenance of certification, check application statuses, and re-print certificates from the comfort of your home or workplace; this personal dashboard has made managing your credential and CHAM/CHAA applications easier than ever before!

With this new certification management system in place, NAHAM has begun focusing on the outreach to community college programs with a focus on patient access courses to help turn out a new generation of educated patient access workers, whose main focus has been solely the access arena.

The number of community college programs geared specifically towards patient access has grown extensively over the past several years, with those enrolling either transitioning back into the workforce or simply having a desire to get involved in the ever-growing field.

NAHAM has recognized this growth and is currently developing a curriculum development guideline that all community college programs can follow to offer their students an alternative pathway to certification by taking the CHAA Examination immediately following graduation.

Many community colleges are able to partner with local hospitals: “Community college/employer partnerships and local workforce partnerships in health care are similar in that community colleges are essential providers of a range of services for both—from academic instruction to the wraparound supports that help worker-students address barriers to attaining credentials of value in the labor market.”

In our ever-changing economy, workforce stability is crucial; many healthcare jobs can’t be automated or outsourced, making them crucial entry points to employment for jobseekers, students, and displaced workers, as well as for currently employed workers who are seeking greater economic security.

Soon you will be able to log onto www.naham.org and search under the Education tab for our detailed outline and standards to see how you can be a part of the NAHAM program today!

2. http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/MeritLife-OpportunitiesInHealthCare-040711.pdf, pg. 2
Forward for Change:
One hospital’s transformation, one certificant at a time.

In 2010, Bassett Medical Center in Cooperstown, New York, began transforming everything from Central Registration to the Department of Patient Access. They involved people, technology, and culture in their journey. Below is how they achieved their goal, one certificant at a time.

Bassett began their first phase in transforming their patient Access department over two years ago. The background material for this work was the Healthcare Financial Management Association’s “Strategies for a High-Performance Revenue Cycle,” adapted to front end services. Six key competencies are identified as important — People, Processes, Technology, Metrics, Communication, and Culture. Bassett’s first phase focused on people.

People:
- Establish high standards for hires
- Devote significant resources to education
- Career approach to positions
- Leverage compensation for employee satisfaction

Bassett developed new job descriptions (and higher standards) for all current staff and potential staff. Representatives and new hires coming into the department could stay in their position for one year. After the year is complete, they are required to sit for their CHAA Certification. One new CHAA noted after her experience, “I am in a better position to help others.” Another observed the staff was “supportive and excited” during her CHAA credential process.

Once the credential is obtained, the new certificants are recognized by Bassett Management with improved grade and compensated salary. Part of their development includes a yearlong orientation; more professional learning, education and milestones completed.

The process doesn’t end there though; new qualifiers for specialists are being implemented this year, which will increase expectations for all staff. Part of their development will be orientation; more professional learning, education and milestones completed. Part of this process also includes a steady increase in expectations from the facility and knowing that competency requirements are a must.

In the end, Permanent Appointment to the Department of Patient Access is the goal.

Bassett Medical Center would like to thank HFMA who provided framework for their outline. If you have a story about your facility’s improvement that you would like to share with NAHAM, please email info@naham.org

Attention all Certificant! Have trouble keeping up with your hard copies of your recertification and/or initial attempt certificates? Recently misplaced one and need to confirm your certification status? Recently, a new feature has been added to your dashboard in Certification Central so you can instantaneously retrieve your most current certificate! Simply log-in to your dashboard and click on “Print Certification Maintenance Card.” Your certification is always secure and up-to-date and now with the convenience you need.

NAHAM
2025 M Street, NW Washington, DC 20036
(202) 367-1125 info@naham.org

NAHAM National Office
Mike Copps
Association Executive
Tiffany Boykin
Association Manager
Caroline Fabacher
Program Coordinator
Belle McFarland
Program Senior Associate
Lindsay Pullen
Marketing and Communications
Anne Nevel
Certification Manager

CertAlert is a publication of The National Association of Healthcare Access Management in Washington, DC.

Bassett Medical Center, Cooperstown, NY
Certification Central
Dates to Remember

In December 2011, NAHAM launched Certification Central; your one-stop shop to apply for and maintain your credential. From direct emails into your applicant home inbox to all past and future Certification Maintenance dates, Certification Central has taken all things NAHAM Credential related and put them in a single individualized dashboard, available 24/7 for any and all certification-related needs.

The deadline for the April testing window is February 28th!

Help employers match job requirements with your qualifications and skill; completing a certification program shows that you can acquire new knowledge and skills quickly and easily, enabling you to grow at the speed of new technologies. Start your journey towards becoming a Certified Healthcare Access Manager (CHAM) or Certified Healthcare Access Associate (CHAA) today!

Thoroughly review our Candidate Guide to Certification and then consider applying for your April examination window!

How to Enroll:
First Timers - Signing up in Certification Central (for non-members and non-certificants only)

Go to NAHAM’s home page www.naham.org
1. Go to right side of the page under "Sign in" and click "haven't joined yet"
2. Scroll to the bottom and click "non-member"
3. Enter your first name, last name, select your region and enter preferred username (usually email address).
4. From there you will fill out your contact information and create a password, which will be stored to your profile in Certification Central. You are logged-in to Certification Central after you submit at step #5. You may go directly to https://certification.naham.org/ and be logged-in there as well!

For a full overview of the process in PDF form please click here. For the complete Webinar, complete with voice over, please click here.

Please contact NAHAM with any questions by emailing info@naham.org or calling 202.367.1125.

The April CHAA maintenance window is fast approaching and we want to make sure you have all the necessary information to maintain your certification. Please remember, you may begin uploading your contact hours into your dashboard as soon as you would like after passing the examination; however, you may only enter your maintenance payment between April 1st and April 30th.

Quick Facts:
- Minimum 30 (thirty) contact hours are required
- Certification Maintenance fee for CHAA is $25.
- CHAA certified Associate Members of NAHAM are waived from paying the fee but must report their continuing education activities.
- NAHAM accepts credit cards or personalized check/e-check.
- Organizations may still pay with group checks.
- You will need to keep hard copies of everything in case of an audit.
- You will be participating in this year’s certification maintenance cycle if you earned or renewed your credential in 2011 or an odd year before that.

Once logged in, your home screen/dashboard will let you know once you have enough hours input to submit your renewal application; please note you are only able to submit your application starting on the first day of the renewal cycle; which is April 1st of the maintenance year.

You may view our Certification Maintenance Tutorial at any time for a step-by-step walk-through of the process.

Aren’t sure what you can report or how many Contact Hours your professional development activities are worth? Please refer to the NAHAM Contact Hour Guide for guidance.
the ten years since its internet genesis, LinkedIn has quickly grown to become the number one job-related site in the world; with help finding jobs in your area, other people in your field, and getting answers to tough questions, connections on this social networking site have never been more powerful.

NAHAM is excited to have a profile with LinkedIn designed to help YOU. Fans of the page can promote jobs openings in their area, exciting additions to their organizations, and new technology being used in the access field.

NAHAM will continue to share news regarding our CHAM & CHAA Certification examinations, the upcoming 39th Annual Educational Conference and Exposition and most recently, our FTE Calculator, NAHAM Newsbrief highlights, Joint Commission Survey Toolkit and much more!

Simply log-in to LinkedIn and search ‘NAHAM’ to connect with us today!

By joining the NAHAM Facebook page, you can post questions and discussion topics that are concerning to you and/or your organization. Other members can respond and give insight to solutions and alternatives to issues you’re facing.

The key to a successful Facebook page is community, and the goal is for NAHAM members and non-members to not only be able to interact with each other, but for you to be able to communicate with the NAHAM national office.

Post queries, view pictures from previous NAHAM national or affiliate events and get to know other certificants in your area! Simply search NAHAM under “pages” to join today!

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS: National Healthcare Access Personnel Week is April 1-7, 2013!** By supporting “Access Week”, you are showing your access team that you appreciate their hard work and encourage their efforts as goodwill ambassadors for the entire hospital. A recognition program implemented during this special week is an excellent means of enhancing guest relations, increasing hospital morale, and improving communications. Log on here for more information on how you can get your organization involved today!
CHAA Spotlight:

Agustin Sanchez, CHAA
Patient Access Representative I
Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
Los Angeles, California
CHAA since January 25, 2012

What drew you to the NAHAM credential program?
My management team at Cedars Sinai Admissions first told me about and encouraged me to pursue the NAHAM Certification program to develop and improve my knowledge of patient access.

What is the most rewarding aspect of having the CHAA?
The aspect I find most rewarding about having a CHAA is that going through the process enhances professionalism while garnering admiration and respect from peers and patients.

Would you recommend NAHAM Credentialing program to others?
I would definitely recommend the program to others because it allows the individual to show his or her attributes and skills in the field, while improving patient customer service.

Was earning a credential in healthcare something you aspired to?
Earning a credential in healthcare is something I aspired for it puts me one step closer toward my future career goal of healthcare management.

What were your reasons for seeking certification?
My main reason for seeking certification was to increase my knowledge and understanding of the healthcare field and to strengthen my skills in my workplace to provide excellent customer service.

How does certification distinguish you from other patient access healthcare professionals?
With the CHAA, I am an adept healthcare professional with a proven knowledge in providing patient access service.

What did you expect the certification process to be like?
I expected certification to be a difficult process because of its long list of topics learned in the certification program.

What have been the rewards of earning your credential?
The main reward from obtaining this nationally recognized credential is a sense of personal accomplishment from developing these important workplace skills, which also happens to come with the respect of my peers.

What does your hospital’s executive management think of your earning of the CHAA Credential?
The hospital’s executive management admires and encourages everyone to apply for the CHAA credential and recognizes all staff who has obtained certification in our quarterly director updates. The medical center also provides a one-time incentive to all who successfully attain their CHAA credentials.

What advice would you give those seeking to earn their credential?
I encourage everyone to apply because the process is not hard for those determined to better themselves. With proper studying and dedication, anyone can attain the CHAA certification. It helped to have the amazing support of my workplace.
CHAM Spotlight:

Philip Quick, BA, CHAM
Manager, Patient Access Services & Bed Management
Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center
Chicago, Illinois
CHAM since January 23, 2009

What drew you to the NAHAM credential program?
I felt it was important, as it is with any career, to certify your profession. It provides recognition to your individual area of expertise and gives you an advantage within the industry.

What is the most rewarding aspect of having the CHAM?
On a personal note, I felt recognition from my clinical colleagues and it provided a sense of heightened awareness for our industry. Professionally, I have been able to meet and network with Access professionals across the country.

Would you recommend NAHAM to others?
Absolutely, I would recommend it. I think that obtaining a certification through NAHAM provides individuals with personal growth, recognition, empowerment, and increases autonomy among Access professionals.

How does certification distinguish you from other patient access healthcare professionals?
I believe that it not only makes you more marketable, but also provides you with that additional recognition for both your own career as well as the industry.

Was earning a credential in healthcare something you aspired for?
When I entered leadership, I was fortunate to have a mentor who not only was certified himself, but strongly encouraged professional and continuing education. It was my mentor that provided the inspiration I needed to obtain it myself.

What were your reasons for seeking certification?
As a Patient Access Manager, I felt it was important to set an example in my department as I encouraged my own associates to pursue their own professional certification through NAHAM. Additionally, I knew from other colleagues that obtaining the CHAM offered an immense networking opportunity that would be difficult to find elsewhere.

Was the NAHAM Certification process what you expected?
That’s a tough question. I think everyone has some sort of test anxiety, but most of it is in your mind. Using the certification guide was quite helpful!

What have been the rewards of earning your credential?
I would have to say both the professional recognition from my non-Access colleagues as well as the great networking opportunities.

What advice would you give those seeking to earn their credential?
Use the certification guide and read the study guide, don’t just focus on things you feel you aren’t as familiar with.

What does your hospital’s executive management think of your earning of the CHAM credential?
Professional certification is highly encouraged throughout my hospital, from the top down. I actually received a personal thank you note from my CFO, which was a great feeling.
Facility Spotlight:

Kaiser Permanente

Sunnyside & Westside Medical Centers
Clackamas & Hillsboro, Oregon

Over 100 Certified CHAM & CHAA Individuals

Kaiser Permanente Sunnyside Medical Center has many services and amenities available to you and your visitors. KP Sunnyside offers 329 licensed beds, making it the largest in Clackamas County. Kaiser Sunnyside opened in 1975 and expanded in 1983 and 2007 in an effort to serve our growing patient population. Sunnyside is home to Kaiser Permanente Northwest Center for Heart and Vascular Care. We’re also Kaiser Permanente’s Regional Center for Adult Cancer Care, neurosurgery, and most non-emergency inpatient surgeries.

Special thanks to Lisa Morrison, Patient Access Director for the contribution of this article. Please visit www.kaiserpermanente.org for more information!

What drew you to the NAHAM credential program?
As a part of the new structure we created a career ladder for our team that allowed them to advance without an open position based upon specific training and educational requirements, as well as successfully meeting or exceeding set behavior and performance standards. One of the educational requirements to advance from a level one to a level two was to become CHAA certified. Having our team certified guarantees a better understanding of the revenue cycle requirements of the Patient Access positions. It also gives each team member a sense of ownership and pride to know they have a National Organization and Certification to belong to.

What aspect of working with NAHAM have you enjoyed the most?
NAHAM is a great organization and there are many components to benefit any Patient Access department. I have had the privilege of participating on the education leadership group. I have tapped into the Patient Access Week ideas, credentialing, newsletter articles, what others are doing in the Patient Access arena, and local chapter participation as well as conferences and networking.

What are the benefits to your employees?
Our team as well as other teams I have managed has enjoyed the Patient Access week celebrations, local chapter and national conferences. As a managed care organization, we’ve had opportunity to learn challenges non-managed care organizations are facing along with their successes and brought some of those similar ideas to improve our processes.

How is the patient access healthcare profession changing?
The patient access healthcare professional is not nor has it been for some time an entry level position. The employees in this field must be willing to embrace change on a consistent basis. Team members need to have a good understanding of the Revenue Cycle front, middle and back end processes, in order to effectively and efficiently provide service to our customers. Employees need to be experts in customer service, understand insurance requirements, and possess a fairly detailed understanding of the CMS regulations; not to mention the effects on coding and billing. With healthcare reform the Patient Access Healthcare Professional will be the front line liaison for our patients as they struggle to understand what their benefits coverage and how they can get the medical care they need.

What benefits does certification bring to your hospital?
Our team at KP Sunnyside Medical Center is 74% CHAA Certified, with many of our other team members currently in the process. We will be adding with our second facility as a 100% certified team. The certification lends to a professional team that seeks knowledge and to be on the cutting edge of new processes and change within their field of expertise. It brings a higher respect from others in the healthcare profession.

Do you believe having credentials will help employees adjust to changes in healthcare?
I strongly believe that change has to be something an employee likes to simply be successful in Patient Access to begin with. Credentials, simply add to a greater understanding of that fact.

How do you believe having credentialed professionals will benefit your hospital?
I think it provides many of the benefits I’ve spoke about throughout the surrounding questions. Employees who feel confident in what the job expectations are, and how they are to be performed lead way to more satisfied employees providing exceptional service to our customers (both internal and external). Our team is the first and usually the last impress and we believe we set the tone for the entire patient experience.
The CHAA Certification Preparation Course

"The CHAA prep course was very beneficial in helping me pass the course. The various scenarios and test yourself questions definitely help you become prepared. The Candidate Guide to certification was used in addition to the prep course. Thank you!"
- Deirdre Spearman, CHAA
  The Ohio State Wexner Medical Center

Designed to help you assess your knowledge of the CHAA exam content, this new web based program will help you identify areas in which additional study is necessary before you take the exam. Specifically, the course will help you:

- Learn about the CHAA examination
- Assess what you already know
- Identify areas of improvement
- Learn successful test-taking strategies
- Develop a study plan that will help you prepare for the examination

In addition, the CHAA Certification Preparation Course comes with access to:
- NAHAM Access Management Glossary
- CHAA Certification Preparation Course Participant Guide
- MSP Fact Sheet
- Over 100 Multiple choice practice questions throughout the course

Participants who complete the online prep course will earn 3.5 contact hours toward their certification. Priced at just $50 for members and non-members, this tool is a great resource for anyone on your team to determine if they are ready for the next step in their career. Visit the Certification Examination Preparation page of the NAHAM website for more information and to purchase the prep course today!

Attention Managers!

NAHAM wants to thank you for supporting the NAHAM Credential Program, and would like to remind you that available on the NAHAM website is our FAQ’s for all examination testing periods in our Before You Apply section.

It is important to remember that when proctors, managers, HR, and candidates work together, the testing window(s) run smoother for all involved.

Please remember that it is the responsibility of the candidate to read the entire contents of the Candidate Guide to Certification before starting the certification process.
### Dates to Remember...

- **February 28, 2013**  
  Deadline to sign-up for the examinations in the April testing window.
- **April 1-7, 2013**  
  Patient Access Week 2013
- **April 1-30, 2013**  
  Those who earned their CHAA certification in an odd year to participate in the CHAA Certification Maintenance Program.
- **May 15-18, 2013**  
  NAHAM’s 39th Annual Educational Conference & Exposition, Atlanta, GA (www.naham.org/conference). *Earn up to 22 contact hours!*
- **June 1-30, 2013**  
  Those who earned their CHAM certification in an odd year to participate in the CHAM Certification Maintenance Program.

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**Sign up to take the CHAM or CHAA Examination at the Annual Conference starting March 1st, 2013! Register through Certification Central and select NAHAM 39th Annual Conference - Atlanta, GA.**