MnCAT Step 4 – Recertification: Instructions

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Table of Contents

Recertification purpose ........................................................................................................................... 2

Background ......................................................................................................................................... 2

Importance of continued learning........................................................................................................ 2

Continued learning units ......................................................................................................................... 2

Definition ............................................................................................................................................ 2

Topics .................................................................................................................................................. 2

Person-centered practice..................................................................................................................... 3

Unit length .......................................................................................................................................... 4

Types of learning activities................................................................................................................... 4

Documentation ....................................................................................................................................... 5

Certified assessor tasks ........................................................................................................................ 5

Lead agency supervisor/manager ........................................................................................................ 5

Audit ................................................................................................................................................... 6

Record content .................................................................................................................................... 6

Timelines ................................................................................................................................................. 7

Exceptions ........................................................................................................................................... 7

Getting re-certified after loss of certification ........................................................................................... 9

Purpose ............................................................................................................................................... 9

Background ......................................................................................................................................... 9

Lapse ................................................................................................................................................... 9

Reinstating a lapsed certification ....................................................................................................... 10

Certified assessors ............................................................................................................................. 10

Lead agency supervisors who monitor assessor certification.............................................................. 11
Recertification purpose
Provide instructions and guidance on the requirements for MnCAT Step 4, which is the recertification of certified assessors as required by Minn. Stat. §256B.0911, Subd. 2c.

Background
DHS certifies assessors for three years. At the end of three years, the certification expires. An assessor must complete recertification before or within the same month in the third year for certification to be uninterrupted. In developing the requirements for certification, we took into account the ongoing training requirements for social workers and registered nurses. We blended those two sets of requirements, and modified them slightly, to create the recertification requirements for MnCHOICES certified assessors.

Importance of continued learning
Participating in continued learning activities should be meaningful to assessors and enhance their professional knowledge and skills in a way that improves their practice as a MnCHOICES certified assessor. The main responsibilities of a certified assessor are to:

1. Conduct person-centered needs assessment interviews;
2. Develop person-centered community support plans; and
3. Participate in a multidisciplinary team.

It is essential that they continue to grow in their knowledge, skill and ability to perform their main job responsibilities.

Continued learning units
DHS encourages certified assessors to use a variety of ways to improve their knowledge, skills and abilities. To be recertified, assessors must acquire 45 continued learning units (CLU) during the three-year certification period.

Definition
A continued learning unit:

- Improves the practice of a MnCHOICES certified assessor.
- Enhances the assessor’s knowledge, skill or ability to:
  - Conduct person-centered needs assessment interviews; and/or
  - Develop person-centered community support plans.
- Enriches the assessor’s capacity to participate as a valued member of the agency’s multidisciplinary team.

Topics
There are limitless topic areas for continued learning units (CLU), but keep in mind that the activity must improve the practice of a MnCHOICES certified assessor. DHS encourages assessors to consider the following areas as vital to professional development and include them in each three-year recertification period:
• Communication and interviewing style
  o Examples:
    ▪ How to do perception checking to prevent misunderstanding
    ▪ Reading body language
    ▪ Understanding cultural differences (age, disability, social role, etc.)

• Expanding knowledge about different long-term service and support populations
  o Examples:
    ▪ Learning about a specific diagnosis, such as diabetes, hearing loss, multiple sclerosis, depression, autism, etc., and how it affects daily living
    ▪ Learning about aging, brain injury, developmental disability, being medically fragile, adults with disabilities, children with special needs, etc.

• Command of resources for targeted referrals
  o Examples:
    ▪ Financial resources such as Medical Assistance, Alternative Care, Family Support Grant, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Social Security, veteran’s benefits, etc.
    ▪ Community resources such as Lions clubs, food shelf, transportation, Salvation Army, Bridging Inc., relocation/transition services, online resources, etc.
    ▪ Further evaluation and assessment, such as Rule 185, mental health, physical therapy, occupational therapy, special education, etc.

• Building person-centered practitioner skills
  o Examples:
    ▪ The role of traditions and routines
    ▪ Addressing health and safety while supporting individual choice and control
    ▪ Using person-centered practices in support planning

**Person-centered practice**
During the three-year recertification period, at least 12 of the 45 CLUs must improve the ability of the assessor to practice in a more person-centered way. We know that the University of Minnesota’s Institute for Community Integration does much work to help people, providers, practitioners and administrators gain an understanding about person-centered thinking and planning. Note, however, that neither the title of the activity nor its content is required to contain the phrase “person-centered” to meet the criteria of improving a person-centered practice.

A person-centered practice is not a just a phrase. It is a way of conducting a practice that embodies an assessment and planning approach that helps people with disabilities or people who are aging to:

• Share their desires and goals
• Learn about and consider different options for support
• Provide meaningful input
• Make informed choices
This means certified assessors may and should reflect on a learning activity to consider if it meets the requirements to improve their person-centered practice. The CLU may do this by helping the assessor to:

- Make it easier for people to visualize and share their desires and goals
- Know about many potential resources and options for each person’s situation
- Put people at ease when engaged in difficult conversations
- Feel confident that when a person makes a choice, he or she really understands all aspects of the decision

There is a decision tree to help determine if a particular learning activity meets the test for a CLU. This document is available on MnCHOICES CountyLink.

**Unit length**

A continued learning unit (CLU) is one hour (60 minutes) in length.

If a qualifying learning unit is shorter or longer than an hour, credit is calculated to the nearest quarter hour.

- For example, if a learning unit is 15 minutes in length, it can be documented and calculated at .25 CLUs. In similar fashion, if a learning unit is 20 minutes in length it is also calculated at .25 units.

A one-semester college credit equals 15 CLU hours; one-quarter college credit equals 10 CLU hours.

**Types of learning activities**

Each assessor is responsible to determine if an activity meets the CLU requirements. We recommend certified assessors use a variety of types of learning activities during each three-year recertification period. The list below is not intended to be all-inclusive, but rather provide examples of types of learning activities:

1. Participate in an in-person or virtual training provided by a person qualified to teach the subject matter
2. Complete on-line training provided by a recognized organization such as DHS, trade associations, institutes of higher learning, etc.
3. Develop and present a training session on assessment/support planning, long-term services and supports, specific diagnosis, etc.
4. Publish an article or book, or deliver a professional paper
5. Participate in a work-related quality-improvement project, such as a focus group with people who need/use long-term services and supports
6. Participate in a data-analysis/research project about assessment/support planning for long-term services and supports
7. Coach a qualified candidate or new certified assessor and share important strategies that will help him or her through training/certification or beginning his or her career as a certified assessor
8. Self-study through reading books, online resources, journal articles and other professional publications
Documentation
Assessors need to document each learning activity and maintain their records for at least three years following recertification. The information on record will vary, depending on the type of CLU that is completed.

Certified assessor tasks

1. Prerequisite: Review online training module about how to use TrainLink to record CLUs: MnCHOICES Step 4: Recertification. There are now two courses in TrainLink for Recertification:
   - Assessors’ first recertification: MNCH8012
   - Assessors’ second recertification: MNCH8015
2. Complete one or more CLUs.
3. Record CLU information in TrainLink
4. CLUs must be within the current certificate’s start and end date.
5. Develop portfolio to save supporting documents.
6. When an assessor records 45 or more CLUs in TrainLink, features such as the “Total CLUs earned in the current recertification period” will turn to bright green (make sure at least 12 CLUs are connected to improving person-centered practice).
7. Click the Save All Activities button.
8. Print a transcript for yourself and/or your supervisor.
9. Close the documentation by clicking the X in the upper right corner of the screen.
10. Follow the instructions to obtain a new certificate.
11. Present recertification package to lead agency administrator for final approval:
   a. Newly issued certificate
   b. Portfolio with supporting documents
   c. Printout/email of TrainLink record of CLUs
12. If your lead agency administrator approves your CLUs, then your supervisor will co-sign the certificate to make it official.

Lead agency supervisor/manager

1. Should review quarterly the Statewide List of Certified Assessors to ensure lead agency assessors’ certificates have not lapsed. The list is updated each quarter of the calendar year and posted to MnCHOICES CountyLink the following month.
2. DHS recommends that during annual performance evaluations, supervisors review individual assessor’s strengths and areas for growth. Together with the assessor, develop an annual professional-development plan, including recommending CLU topics and activities to pursue
3. Check that recertification materials are presented by assessor (list, portfolio, certificate)
4. Decide if there are at least 45 CLUs to meet the requirements for recertification, including the required person-centered practice CLUs noted above.
5. If an assessor meets all requirements, co-sign the newly issued certificate.
6. Return to assessor and communicate decision to approve or not.
If the assessor has met the requirements, you may want to acknowledge several CLUs you believe were significant to his or her growth as a MnCHOICES certified assessor.

7. If the lead agency administrator determines the portfolio does not contain 45 qualifying CLUs or the required person-centered practice CLUs noted above:
   a. Review the portfolio with the person to discuss why you are not able to co-sign the new certificate.
   b. If the assessor still has time remaining on the “old” certification, help him or her plan how he or she will obtain the required CLUs to meet the deadline.
   c. If the assessor meets the requirements before the expiration date of the “old” certification, co-sign the newly issued certificate.
   d. Take any necessary steps to support this person to meet the recertification requirements or guide him or her to find a more suitable position in the agency.
   e. Immediately notify the designated MnCHOICES mentor to update the MnCHOICES security access so the former certified assessor can no longer create or edit a MnCHOICES assessment.

Audit
Recertification records are subject to audit by DHS and must be maintained for at least three years following recertification. For example:

• Re-certification issued on Nov. 1, 2016
• Effective until Nov. 1, 2019
• Portfolio holds documents related to completion of CLUs between Nov. 1, 2013, and Nov. 1, 2016.
• Maintain and make portfolio and its contents available, upon request, until Nov. 1, 2019.

Record content
MnCHOICES certified assessors must document and maintain records that include information, such as:

1. Dates, times and locations of training events and college courses, along with the name and qualifications of the presenter, agendas and learning objectives
2. Names of online courses, learning objectives, length of time to complete learning module, including dates and organization that provided the course. If possible, include the URL.
3. Copy of the training/instruction or job tools/aids they developed, including why, time spent and dates
4. Copy of published articles/books, including why they wrote them, intended audiences, time spent and dates
5. Copy of professional papers delivered, why they were written, intended audiences, outcomes, time spent and dates
6. Description of quality-improvement projects in which they participated, their role in the projects, why they agreed to participate, what changed and time spent, including dates
7. Description of data-analysis/research projects, their role in the projects, why they agreed to participate, results/outcomes, time spent and dates
8. Identify topics researched/evaluated, explain why they wanted to learn more about the topics, what/how they conducted the research/evaluations, lessons learned and time spent, including dates
9. Name of the qualified candidates/certified assessors they coached, the types of information they shared, how they approached their role as an advisor, evaluations from candidates/assessors or comments about what they learned and the time spent, including dates
10. Dates and times of certified assessor community of practice meetings, approximate number of attendees, new practice information gained, practice information they shared.
11. Dates and time spent, including agenda, when participating as an active member of a professional board connected to long-term services and supports

NOTE: A cover sheet to help provide the information is available on MnCHOICES CountyLink. You are not required to use this document. It is for your convenience to help support your memory in the event of an audit. If you decide to use it, attach one to each CLU in your portfolio.

**Timelines**
The typical certification/recertification process is simple:

1. Become a certified assessor and note the end date on the certificate.
2. During the three-year certification period, complete, record and document at least 45 CLUs.
3. In the month before the end date on the certificate, create a new certificate and present to designated agency administrator along with portfolio.
4. Obtain co-signature and start three-year process over.

**Exceptions**
There may be situations that complicate the typical process and need additional clarification to the process. These situations may be related to the first recertification and/or extenuating circumstances.

**First launchers**
Some lead agency staff did not have access to online Step 3 training and learning labs. Assessors in those agencies received a manually issued certificate as opposed to one issued electronically by TrainLink. Assessors who received a manually issued certificate have two options:

1. Use the end date of your manually issued certificate as the date by which you need to complete your first 45 CLUs and obtain recertification by completing the process above; or
2. Participate in and complete Step 3 training, including parts 1, 2 and 3. Take the Step 3 Test and obtain a new three-year certificate from TrainLink. A MnCHOICES mentor/supervisor can provide the necessary links and materials to complete Step 3 training.

**Completed vs. documented**
Situations may arise in which a certified assessor has completed the required learning activities but has not yet recorded them in TrainLink. If an assessor has not recorded the learning activities, he or she cannot obtain the new certification. If this happens:
1. On or before the expiration date of the current certification, the assessor must organize and provide his or her portfolio of documentation to the designated agency administrator with a note indicating that the learning activities are complete but not yet recorded.

2. The designated agency administrator will check the portfolio to determine if the assessor completed the required continued learning to maintain certification.
   a. If satisfactorily completed, give the assessor a timeframe, not to exceed 30 calendar days, to document the CLUs in TrainLink and produce the new certificate.
   b. If not satisfactorily completed, alert the person that he or she may not practice as a certified assessor until he or she can attain status as a certified assessor.

**Early completion**

Some assessors complete the recertification process before the end of the three-year period. This is not a problem. When creating the new certificate, the assessor is asked to enter the beginning and ending dates on the certificate last issued. The new certificate begins on the date the previous certificate ends. This provides the assessor with continuous certification.

CLU's should be documented within the date span noted on the certificate/recertification.
Getting re-certified after loss of certification

When an assessor does not complete the recertification process within required statutory timelines, he or she loses certification.

To become recertified, the noncertified assessor must take and pass, with at least 80 percent proficiency, a recertification test that includes knowledge about steps 1, 2 and 3 of MnCAT. The assessor may take the test as often as needed until he or she passes. The assessor may choose to review some, or all, of MnCAT to help him or her pass the test and reacquire certification.

Until an assessor is once again certified, he or she may not create, conduct or complete an assessment in MnCHOICES or a CSP. The agency must take immediate steps to revise the decertified assessor’s security access to MnCHOICES.

Purpose

To describe the requirements to reinstate a certified assessor if he or she does not become recertified in a timely manner according to the process established in the MnCHOICES Certified Assessor Training (MnCAT) Step 4: Recertification.

Background

The certification and recertification of MnCHOICES assessors is designed to allow for a continuous certification from one three-year period to the next three-year period. Only certified assessors are to use MnCHOICES to conduct assessments and develop community support plans (CSPs). Lead agencies and certified assessors need a method to recover the certification for an assessor if the dates of certification become disrupted and are not continuous.

Lapse

A lapse in certification occurs if there is a gap between the expiration of one certificate and the begin date of a new certificate. For example, if the previously issued certificate expires on Oct. 31, 2016, and the assessor does not complete all the requirements to obtain a new certificate through MnCAT Step 4 that begins on or before Nov. 1, 2016, there is a lapse in certification. In order to be reinstated as a MnCHOICES certified assessor, the assessor must meet certain requirements.
Reinstating a lapsed certification
The steps an assessor takes to be certified are dependent upon the number of days lapsed.

The assessor completes the Step 4 documentation of CLUs, launches the Recertification Certificate TrainLink module and enters the dates from his or her current certificate. Rather than TrainLink providing the certificate, it will inform the assessor that the certification is expired and prompt the assessor to complete:

Certification lapses of 31 to 365 days require assessors to:
- No longer complete assessments or CSPs
- Complete their Step 4 CLUs
- Complete a test: Whenever a certified assessor has a lapse in certification, he or she may become reinstated as a MnCHOICES certified assessor by passing a test with at least 80 percent proficiency.
  - 31-90 days: 15-question test
  - 91-365 days: 30-question test

The test consists of a pool of randomly selected questions and answers taken from throughout MnCAT steps 1, 2 and 3. Those taking the test may use any resources they choose to help them answer the questions. They may take the test as many times as needed. They are likely to be given different questions each time they try.

Assessors whose lapse in certification is greater than 365 days have to retake the MnCAT process.

Certified assessors
If you are not able to complete the recertification process in a timely manner, resulting in a lapse of your certification, there are steps you need to take:

- Inform your supervisor. Some, or all, of your work may need to be reassigned to a different certified assessor.
- Inform your mentor. Your security access may need to be revised.
• Complete the MnCAT Step 4 process. When you have enough qualifying CLUs, follow the Pathlore instructions to obtain your certificate.
• Your certificate will be created after completing the process Pathlore provides for you. After you pass the test, you will be able to complete the process to issue your new certificate.

**Lead agency supervisors who monitor assessor certification**

Lead agencies are responsible to closely monitor the certification status of their MnCHOICES certified assessors. You should have your own reference system available to verify certification periods for each of your assessors. [Statewide List of Certified Assessors](#) is a tool on CountyLink to help you with this requirement. It lists all people in the state who, according to records in TrainLink, completed the training to become a MnCHOICES certified assessor. DHS updates the list quarterly. The assessors’ expiration dates are highlighted in:
- Green: Up-to-date
- Yellow: Valid for less than three months

Lapsed assessors move to the lapsed tab of the document. Supervisors should work together with assessors who have three months or less left in their certification period to assure they meet the recertification requirements in a timely manner. If an assessor does not complete the recertification process, work together with the person to determine if he or she will take the necessary steps to complete or regain certification:

• Discuss the issue with the person to determine why he or she is no longer certified.
• Together with the person, decide how much time he or she needs to complete the recertification requirements.
• If the lapse will be 31 days or more,
  - Take steps to reassign work to another certified assessor as soon as possible.
  - Update the person’s security access to the MnCHOICES assessment so he or she no longer has access to edit assessments and instruct the assessor to no longer complete CSPs.