

## **CERTIFICATION: THE COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE**

### **What is Certification?**

Professional certification is the formal process by which a certifying agency, such as the American College of Health Care Administrators (ACHCA) validates an administrative leader's knowledge, skills, and abilities in a specialty area of practice such as nursing home (CNHA) or assisted living administration (CALA). Both of ACHCA's certification exams include two levels of testing: generalist LTC and specialty practice exams. Both the CNHA and CALA have unique eligibility requirements (to read the requirements, click [here](#) or visit [www.achca.org](http://www.achca.org) and click on certifications to access the handbook).

Certification is recognized by 22 state licensure boards for licensure endorsement fast tracking .

### **Why become professionally certified?**

To provide the best care possible to older adult and other compromised individuals, leaders within LTC settings should be educated and professionally certified in their area (s) of practice. However, fewer than one percent of U.S. LTC administrators are certified in either nursing home or assisted living administration (ACHCA, 2008).

### **The Value of Professional Certification**

#### **The Value of Certification to Administrators**

Professional certification validates specialized knowledge, indicates professional growth, and enhances professional credibility as well as providing intrinsic rewards of personal satisfaction and accomplishment. Certified administrators have reported in the ACHCA member satisfaction survey an increased access to job-related authority and better professional opportunities in their workplace. Furthermore, the recognition of administrators' knowledge and expertise is associated with feelings of empowerment.

Finally, in some LTC settings, professional certification may result in higher salaries and benefits.

#### **The Value of Certification to Administrative Leaders**

Corporate encouragement of professional certification demonstrates support for advancement and professional growth. Promotion of certification can be accomplished by reimbursing the exam and continuing education fees, as well as listing certification credentials on a facility name badge or business card. This support for education and professional certification are positively associated with retention and reduced turnover rates. In addition, LTC corporations that encourage professional certification have described this as an effective tool for administrative recruitment.

Marianna Grachek, President and CEO of the American College of Health Care Administrators, states: "*Professional Certification provides administrators with a strong*

*foundation to practice administration in LTC. This knowledge base allows administrators to provide valuable comprehensive input into every aspect of organizational management. Professionally certified administrators are valuable resource to everyone on the LTC team."*

Progressive corporate leaders and facility owners embrace the value of professional certification. When hiring new administrators, leaders should express a preference for applicants who are already professionally certified.. By undertaking the certification process, these administrators have shown a commitment to excellence in their profession and to providing a higher quality of care to the populations they serve.

Achieving national certification can be the external benchmark of the organization's effectiveness in implementing culture transformation and to meet accreditation requirements of the Joint Commission.

### **The Value of Certification to Recipients of Care**

Residents/Patients and their families expect knowledgeable organizational leadership. Professional Certification verifies to the public that administrators are highly skilled and possess the knowledge needed to strive toward excellence in organizational leadership. When compared to non-certified administrators, ACHCA certified administrators oversee facilities with:

- Higher Quality of Care**
- Fewer Deficiencies**
- Higher Medicare & Private Pay Mix**
- Residents with Greater Functional Dependency**

### **Professional Certification: Support of Mission and Vision**

The professional certification process prepares administrators to apply strategies that are congruent with an organization's mission, vision, and values. This leads to excellence in care and service, which in turn, meets an organizational goal of promoting a positive work experience.

*"LTC corporations and owners must be dedicated to holding their administrators in the highest regard, while fostering individual development in a professional practice environment. One of the strategies used to encourage individual development is supporting administrators who wish to become professionally certified. Corporate leadership must believe that certification for administrators enhance their practice with up-to-date knowledge and skills learned through the certification journey. When administrators become certified, it is important to recognize and celebrate their accomplishments and acknowledge their commitment to administrative excellence.*

*Corporate leadership and owners must be committed to providing quality, relationship-centered care through shared decision-making and evidence-based practice. Leadership,*

*expertise, pride, respect and compassion are principles that combine to ensure our residents/patients experience quality of care and quality of life."* - Steve Esdale, CNHA, FACHCA– ACHCA Board Chair