



Certified Health Care Environmental Services **Candidate Handbook**



Introduction

This Candidate Handbook has been prepared by the Association for the Health Care Environment (AHE) of the American Hospital Association (AHA) for environmental services technician candidates working primarily in the Health Care industry. While the curriculum and training for the Certified Health Care Environmental Services Technician (CHEST) is specific to the Health Care industry, the credential may be appropriate for other industries and departments concerned with infection prevention and control, and for employees and representatives of companies who sell products to and work closely with Health Care environmental services.

The handbook is designed to provide candidates with essential information regarding eligibility requirements, the application process, testing information and other important information related to CHEST certification. Technicians and other candidates certified by AHE are referred to as certificants. The period of certification is three (3) years. Certification expires automatically at the end of the certification period unless renewed. Certificants must maintain their certification and must not allow it to lapse to remain certified and to use the CHEST credential

Procedures for Certification Renewal and Maintenance are included in this handbook.

About AHE

The Association for the Health Care Environment (AHE) is a Professional Membership Group of the American Hospital Association. AHE is the organization of choice for professionals responsible for establishing and maintaining health care environments that are free of surface contamination and that support safety, service, and efficient and effective operations.

AHE is the go-to resource for best-in-class tools, products, education and training that raise the standard of the health care environmental services field and shape the future workforce for over 2,300 professionals committed to pathogen free, healing environments across all care settings.

CORE PURPOSE

Commitment to pathogen free, healing environments across all care settings.

MISSION STATEMENT

To advance members' ability to establish and maintain care environments that are free of environmental surface contamination and that support safety, service, and efficient and effective operations.

Oversight

The CHEST program is overseen by a three-person committee composed of dedicated, experienced, and knowledgeable environmental services professionals, appointed by AHE, and approved by the American Hospital Association.

Affiliation

AHE is a membership-based nonprofit organization affiliated with the American Hospital Association (AHA). Membership with the professional organization or its parent company is neither a requirement for, nor an indication of, certification or recertification. Please contact AHE at www.ahe.org if you require information or assistance with membership or CHEST certification.

Program Goals

- Ensure individuals meet predetermined criteria necessary for certification that serve to protect the public.
- Define the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to serve as an environmental services technician.
- Utilize established principles of testing and measurement to test the knowledge, skills, and abilities of environmental services technicians.
- Promote the value of environmental services technicians in the delivery of patient care to the public.
- Provide a high-quality certification program for environmental services technicians.
- Provide leadership and means for the credentialing of environmental services technicians

Credential

- CHEST stands for Certified Health Care Environmental Services Technician.
- CHEST is the registered trademark of the Association for the Health Care Environment.
- CHEST is the credential authorized for use by those individuals who have met the standards, qualifications, and testing requirements established by the Association for the Health Care Environment.
- T-CHEST stands for Trainer of the Certified Health Care Environmental Services Technician program
- Individuals who allow their CHEST national certification to expire may not use the CHEST credential nor may they represent themselves as CHEST-certified environmental services technicians.

Declaration and Statement of Nondiscrimination

The CHEST National Certification Examination is a competency-based examination reflective of knowledge and expertise required to carry out the essential tasks of an environmental services technician.

AHE does not discriminate among candidates with respect to age, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, marital status, and sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity.

Qualifications and Eligibility for taking the CHEST National Certification Examination

Certification examinations are offered to technicians who have successfully completed the CHEST training program, as documented by their CHEST Trainer (T-CHEST).

Requirements to qualify for CHEST training include:

1. Technicians must have a minimum of 6 months health care environmental services cleaning experience in direct patient care in an acute care or continuing care facility OR A minimum of one year experience in health care environmental services without direct patient care (acute care or continuing care facility)

AND

2. Must be able to read and write in English*
**The CHEST curriculum is written at or above the junior high reading level but is suitable for employees with additional education.*

Application Process

Those individuals who meet eligibility requirements wishing to enroll in a CHEST training program should first contact their supervisor to ask if there is a T-CHEST associated with their facility or health system.

If there is a T-CHEST associated with the facility or health system:

1. Get a statement in writing from your supervisor that states you meet the CHEST eligibility requirements and are recommended and approved for CHEST training.
2. Contact the T-CHEST and request to be part of their next training program in your facility.
3. Present the eligibility statement to the T-CHEST.

The trainer will enroll you in training and purchase training materials; T-CHESTS are the only individuals who can purchase books for CHEST training.

There are no application fees required of the candidate, however, the sponsoring facility or health system will be accountable for the training fee, which includes CHEST certification and the exam.

Candidates will be required to establish an online profile account with the American Hospital Association (AHE's parent company) before training begins. T-CHESTS will walk trainees through this process on or before the first scheduled day of training.

If there is not a T-CHEST associated with the facility or health system:

1. Get a statement in writing from your supervisor that states you meet the CHEST eligibility requirements and are recommended and approved for CHEST training.
2. Contact AHE at ahe@aha.org or 312-422-3860 to declare your interest in CHEST certification.
3. Follow the instructions of the AHE representative.

AHE will make every effort to connect you with a nearby training, but does not guarantee availability or approval.

Content Delivery

CHEST certification training is comprised of 24 hours of classroom instruction. The content covered during the workshops is based on the seven domains shown below. The amount of time allocated to each domain was determined through a nationwide job analysis of environmental services tasks:

- Infection Prevention 20%
- Cleaning and Disinfection 20%
- Communication 20%
- Safety 15%
- Waste Handling 10%
- Linen Handling 10%
- Floor Care 5%

Each domain is covered in a series of 10 modules which are built around a typical day in the life of an environmental services technician: Infection Prevention and Control, Assignments with Supervisor and Other Staff, Cart Setup and Handling Chemicals, Occupied Room #1, Unoccupied Discharge or Transfer Room, Isolation Room, Occupied Patient Room #2, Common Area, Specialty Areas, Uncommon Situations, Wrap up and Review, and Additional Practice. Each module has its own set of distinct learning objectives.

The content may be delivered over three consecutive days, or it may be spread out over several weeks; the format of content delivery in each facility is determined by the T-CHEST from that facility.

CHEST National Certification Examination

The CHEST exam consists of about 50 multiple choice questions, covering the seven environmental services domains mentioned above. Each domain has a set of associated tasks, which the course content and exam questions were built around. The number of questions per domain is equivalent to the percentage of content per each domain.

Generally, the CHEST Examination questions are categorized by the following cognitive levels:

- **Knowledge:** The ability to recall or recognize previously learned information
- **Comprehension:** The ability to demonstrate understanding of the facts
- **Application:** The ability to apply knowledge to real-world situations

The CHEST exam is structured so that approximately 38% of the questions pertain to Knowledge, 38% pertain to Comprehension, and 24% are Application-based.

Infection Prevention

- 20% of content/exam

TASKS

- Follow Standard Precautions to prevent patient and technician exposure to blood and other potentially infectious material (OPIM).
- Follow Standard Precautions for proper hand hygiene techniques.
- Follow Standard Precautions for appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Follow Standard Precautions for proper respiratory etiquette/cough hygiene.
- Report Blood and Body Fluid exposures.
- Follow CDC Transmission Precautions recommendations for, entering and exiting and cleaning/disinfecting isolation rooms.
- Demonstrate required procedures for cleaning and disposing of blood or body spills in accordance with facility policy.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- 20% of content/exam

TASKS

- Select and properly use the correct cleaning supplies and prepare solutions according to labeling.
- Perform cleaning and dusting tasks from top to bottom and cleanest to dirtiest.
- Disinfect the defined high-touch surfaces daily and other areas as appropriate.
- Clean and disinfect restrooms.
- Restock consumables.

Communication

- 20% of content/exam

TASKS

- Greet and welcome, patients, visitors, and staff.
- Display sensitivity and respect for the needs of patients, staff, and visitors.
- Follow facility customer service policies.
- Respond to needs as communicated by patients, visitors, family, or staff.
- Act as a positive and professional point of contact for patients, visitors, and staff.
- Respond to The Joint Commission or other surveyor questions as requested.

Safety

- 15% of content/exam

TASKS

- Identify potential problems or hazards impacting customer service, equipment, and/or safety.
- Report any customer service, equipment, or safety problems or hazards.
- Resolve common customer service, equipment, and safety problems or hazards as appropriate.

Waste Handling

- 10% of content/exam

TASKS

- Remove solid waste on a daily basis or more frequently if needed.
- Clean, disinfect, and line waste receptacle.
- Transport waste to designated location.
- Dispose of regulated medical waste (RMW) (e.g., biohazard and sharps containers).
- Dispose of hazardous materials.
- Dispose of recyclables.

Linen Handling

- 10% of content/exam

TASKS

- Distribute clean linen.
- Remove damaged or stained linen.
- Safely collect soiled linen.
- Clean, disinfect, and make the bed.
- Transport soiled linen to a designated collection point.

Floor Care

- 5% of content/exam

TASKS

- Dust mop the hard floor.
- Wet mop the floor using the appropriate solution, from the furthest point in the room towards the entrance/exit.
- Vacuum carpeted floors.

Testing Procedure

1. The examination is available online only and is administered by a T-CHEST at the trainer's health care facility.
2. Once training is completed, the T-CHEST notifies AHE that a candidate is ready to sit for the CHEST National Certification Exam.
3. The candidate and T-CHEST schedule the exam at a mutually agreeable time.
4. On the day of testing, candidates will show up at the assigned time and location given them by their trainer, log in to a computer using the unique identification they established when setting up their AHA online profile, and sit for the proctored online exam.
5. Candidates are allowed two (2) hours to complete their exam.

Test Scoring

The CHEST National Certification Examination is designed to assess knowledge required for essential environmental service tasks. A candidate must obtain a score equal to or higher than the "passing score" to pass the test. The passing score is determined by a panel of environmental services content experts using psychometrically accepted standard-setting methodology. Candidate's performance on the examination is not compared to the performance of others taking the examination.

How CHEST Examination Passing Score is Set

The methodology used to set the initial minimum passing score is the Angoff method in which content experts estimate the passing probability of each question on the CHEST Examination. These ratings are averaged to determine the preliminary minimum passing score (i.e., the number of correctly answered questions required to pass the examination). This method takes into account the difficulty of the CHEST Examination. The preliminary minimum passing score is validated by the test performance of candidates. The passing standard is applied consistently across all CHEST candidates who take the same form of the Examination. When new forms of the Examination are introduced, a certain number of CHEST Examination questions in the various content areas are replaced by new CHEST Examination questions. These changes may cause one form of the CHEST Examination to be slightly easier or harder than another form. To adjust for these differences in difficulty, a procedure called "equating" is used. For equated CHEST Examinations that have different passing scores, the equating process helps ensure that the levels of CHEST examinee knowledge are equivalent on the various Examination forms.

Passing the CHEST Examination

An eligible candidate who passes the CHEST Examination is awarded the CHEST credential. Generally about five or six weeks after the candidate passes the CHEST Examination, AHE mails in a sealed packet, each individual candidates' certificate (which verifies their credential), a pin, a score report, and information about CHEST certification renewal requirements. The name on the certificate will be the same as per the registration information provided to AHE. ***It is the candidate's responsibility to keep their information updated with their AHE user log in.*** AHE reserves the right to publicly recognize any candidate who has successfully completed the CHEST Examination. Scores are never reported.

Candidates will be able to view a brief overall Pass or Fail status report on the computer upon completion of the test. The examination is electronically scored.

A candidate's examination scores are considered confidential information and will not be disclosed to anyone other than the candidate. AHE will not release test scores to anyone without specific written instructions from the candidate indicating to whom and why the information is to be disclosed.

Failing the CHEST Examination

If a candidate does not pass a CHEST Examination, the score report is mailed out to him or her. If a candidate wishes to retake the exam, he or she can reschedule the exam with their facility's T-CHEST. There is no limit to the number of times a technician may retake the CHEST Exam. If a technician fails the exam three times, he or she is encouraged to repeat the CHEST training program.

Following the CHEST Examination

Examination Score Reports are issued by AHE. Scores are reported in written form only. Examinees will receive an online score immediately after submitting their exam. AHE will mail score reports, in a sealed package to the CHEST participant. Scores are not reported over the telephone, by electronic mail or by fax. The score report indicates a "Pass" or "Fail," which is determined by the raw score on the CHEST Examination. A raw score is the number of questions answered correctly. Responses to individual CHEST Examination questions will not be disclosed to a candidate.

CHEST Examination Score Confidentiality

Pass and Fail scores are considered confidential. It is the CHEST candidate's responsibility to abide by their employer's requirement to disclose their pass or fail status, with or without disclosure of their actual score. AHE will keep all scores confidential, unless specified by the CHEST candidate. If you do NOT wish to have this information shared, please opt out by contacting your facility's T-CHEST.

Renewal of CHEST Certification

CHEST certification is valid for three (3) years. Certification expires automatically at the end of the 3-year period and must be renewed prior to the expiration date. A renewal application will need to be submitted, as well as records documenting five (5) hours of Continuing Education Units (CEU) earned per year, for a total of 15 CEU hours during the certification period.

Certificants can also renew their CHEST credential by retaking the CHEST certification exam. To retake the exam, certificants must contact their T-CHEST and schedule the exam.

- Certificants are responsible for notifying AHE of changes to their contact information.
- Failure of a certificant to receive their renewal notice does not relieve the technician of his or her professional responsibility for renewing their National Certification prior to their expiration date.
- AHE is not responsible for financial or other damages occurring with respect to expiration of a certification due to lack of notification of a change to their contact/email information.

Test Security

Candidates who apply and sit for the CHEST National Certification Examination must acknowledge that they understand the following:

- The CHEST National Certification Examination is the exclusive property of the Association for the Health Care Environment of the American Hospital Association.
- Federal copyright law protects the CHEST examination and the items contained therein;
- The retention, possession, copying, distribution, disclosure, discussion or receipt of any CHEST certification examination question, in whole or in part, by written, electronic, oral or other form of communication, including but not limited to texting, emailing, copying or printing of electronic files, and reconstruction through memorization and/or dictation, before, during or after the examination is strictly prohibited.
- Theft or attempted theft of examination content is punishable as a felony;
- Candidate participation in any irregularity occurring during or after this examination such as giving or obtaining unauthorized information or aid, as evidenced by an observation or subsequent statistical analysis, may be sufficient cause to terminate participation, invalidate the results of the examination, or necessitate other appropriate action; and
- Incidents regarding test security or examination administration will be reported to the CHEST Oversight Committee. Grounds for sanction may be undertaken with AHA legal counsel.

Professional Standards of Conduct

- A certificant who is awarded certification by the AHE agrees to conduct himself/herself in an ethical and professional manner. By accepting certification, the certificant agrees to: Maintain competence; demonstrate work behavior that exemplifies ability to perform safely, competently, and with good judgment; conduct technician activities with honesty and integrity; avoid discriminating against any individual based on age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, or marital status; abide by rules and regulations governing programs conducted by the AHE; not misrepresent the credential and to adhere to the guidelines for use of the Certification Marks as posted on the AHE website.

Violation of the *Professional Standards of Conduct* is misconduct for which granting of a certification or renewal of a certification may be delayed or denied, or for which a certification may be revoked by the AHE.



CHEST Certification Application

A candidate is eligible for CHEST Certification if employed by a hospital facility setting with at least 6 months experience cleaning **within** patient room, or 1 year experience in hospital facility settings.

Applicant Information

Last Name

First Name

Middle Initial

Street Address

Unit/Apt #

City

State

Zip

Preferred Phone

Preferred Email Address

Title & Name of Hospital/Organization

Name of TCHEST trainer

Name as you wish it to be printed on certificate

Application Status

Check on of the following:

I am applying as a new candidate.

I am applying as a re-applicant; i.e., to retake the examination.

I am applying for renewal of certification.

Demographic Information

How many years of experience do you have in environmental services (operations related to environmental sanitation, waste management and textile management)?

6 months-1 year 2-4 years 5 or more years

How many years have you worked in health care, cleaning patient rooms/areas?

6 months-1 year 2-4 years 5-7 years

7-10 years 10-15 years More

Do you require special disability related accommodations during testing? If yes, please contact the T-CHEST at your facility at least 45 days prior to the testing date.

No Yes

I certify that I have read all portions of the CHEST Candidate Handbook and Application and agree to abide by regulations contained therein. I certify that I am eligible to take this CHEST Examination and the information I have submitted in this application is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that, if the information I have submitted is found to be incomplete or inaccurate, my application may be rejected or my CHEST Examination results may be delayed or voided.

Signature

Print Name

Date



**CONTENT IN THIS HANDBOOK, INCLUDING POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND FEES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE MOST RECENT VERSION OF THE HANDBOOK ONLINE AT WWW.AHE.ORG.**

Revised April 2019