

Frequently Asked Questions: Provisional Certification Updates

Overview

What is changing with provisional certification?

Effective October 1, 2026, NHA is extending the provisional certification period from 12 months to 18 months for the following certifications:

- Certified Clinical Medical Assistant, or CCMA
- Certified Phlebotomy Technician, or CPT
- Certified Medical Administrative Assistant, or CMAA
- Certified EKG Technician, or CET
- Certified Electronic Health Records Specialist, or CEHRS
- Certified Billing and Coding Specialist, or CBCS
- Certified Patient Care Technician/Assistant, or CPCT/A

NHA is also introducing a 12-month provisional certification pathway for ExCPT Pharmacy Technician candidates.

When will these changes take effect?

The changes will take effect on **October 1, 2026**.

Why is NHA making this change?

The updated timelines are intended to better align certification with high school, career and technical education, and program completion timelines. The changes will give eligible students additional time to complete their high school diploma or equivalent requirements while supporting earlier entry into the workforce.

Eligibility

Who is eligible for provisional certification?

Provisional certification is intended for candidates who have not yet completed high school or an equivalent credential but expect to complete it within the applicable provisional period.

Eligible candidates must indicate their status during exam registration and provide proof of high school or equivalent completion within the required timeframe to maintain their certification.

How long is the provisional certification period?

The provisional period is:

- **18 months** for CCMA, CPT, CMAA, CET, CEHRS, CBCS, and CPCT/A
- **12 months** for ExCPT Pharmacy Technician

When does the provisional period begin?

The provisional period begins on the candidate's exam date after the candidate passes the exam.

Does a candidate need to request provisional certification?

Yes. Candidates who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent at the time of registration must provide accurate information when answering the eligibility questions during the registration process. Their answers will determine whether provisional status applies.

What questions will candidates be asked during registration?

Candidates will first be asked whether they have completed high school or an equivalent credential.

If they answer no, they will be asked to confirm that they expect to earn their diploma or equivalent within the applicable provisional period:

- 18 months for CCMA, CPT, CMAA, CET, CEHRS, CBCS, and CPCT/A
- 12 months for ExCPT Pharmacy Technician

What happens if a candidate does not expect to complete high school or an equivalent credential within the provisional period?

The candidate is not currently eligible to apply for certification. The candidate may apply after earning a high school diploma or equivalent, or when the candidate reasonably expects to complete that requirement within the applicable provisional period.

Proof of Completion

What must a provisionally certified candidate do?

A provisionally certified candidate must provide proof of high school or equivalent completion within the applicable provisional period to maintain the certification.

What happens if proof is not provided within the provisional period?

If the candidate does not provide proof within the applicable timeframe, the certification will not remain active. The candidate will need to follow the applicable NHA process for meeting the eligibility requirements and maintaining or reinstating the certification.

Changes to ExCPT (Pharmacy Technician)

What is changing for ExCPT Pharmacy Technician candidates?

Eligible ExCPT Pharmacy Technician candidates will be able to receive a 12-month provisional certification period if they request provisional status during registration and meet the applicable eligibility requirements.

Will candidates who registered for ExCPT before October 1, 2026, be moved into provisional status?

No. The ExCPT provisional pathway will not be applied retroactively to candidates who registered before the effective date.

Current Provisional Candidates

Will candidates who are already provisionally certified receive additional time?

No. Candidates who are already in the provisional certification process when the change takes effect will remain under the provisional period that applied when they tested and passed the exam.

The new 18-month period applies prospectively beginning October 1, 2026. It will not add time to an existing candidate's provisional period.

What happens if a candidate passes an exam before October 1, 2026?

Candidates who pass before October 1, 2026, will remain subject to the provisional certification rules that were in place on their exam date. They will not automatically receive additional time when the new policy takes effect.

Does this change remove any certification eligibility requirements?

No. Candidates must continue to meet all applicable eligibility requirements. Provisional certification provides eligible candidates additional time to submit proof of high school or equivalent completion. It does not eliminate the education requirement.