

Preparing for the Prevention Specialist Examination

Step 1: Register for the Online Examination

- Candidates must be **pre-registered** for their exam by their board. Candidates will then schedule their exam directly with the testing company.
- Contact information for the Massachusetts Board of Substance Abuse Counselor Certification can be found [here](#)
- The examinations are all **150 multiple choice** questions. These examinations allow up to 3 hours to complete.
- Exams are **computer based**, and offered on an on-demand basis, year round. Candidates can choose the testing site that is closest for their travel.
- **Massachusetts no longer offers paper and pencil exams**, with exception for those who cannot work with computers due to disability.

Online Exam (continued)

- **No books, papers, or other reference materials** may be taken into the exam room.
- **No materials you receive on the day of the exam** may be taken from the room.
- **No questions** concerning the content of the exam may be asked during the exam period.
- **Official scores, and notification** of certification will follow from the board certifying the professional. Preliminary scores are available after a candidate completes the exam.
- Candidates who **cancel or reschedule** their exam less than five days prior to their scheduled date may be charged the full testing fee. Candidates who cancel or reschedule more than five days before their scheduled date may be charged a cancellation/reschedule fee.
- Candidates failing the exam can **retest after a 60 day wait** period from date of last taking the exam. Candidates will be sent retest instruction from their board.

Special Administration

- Individuals with disabilities and/or religious obligations that require modifications in exam administration may request specific procedure changes, in writing, to their board no fewer than 60 days prior to the exam date. With these written requests, the candidate must provide official documentation of the disability or religious issue. Candidates should contact their board on what constitutes official documentation. Appropriate modifications to the exam process will be provided when documentation supports the need for them.

Step 1: Review the Job Analysis

- Updated every 5 years by a cross-section of subject matter experts certified as prevention specialists
- Lists the knowledge and skill areas a prevention professional should have acquired before taking the exam
- Is the basis for all exam questions
- Has six domains or content areas
- Located on the IC&RC website

The Job Analysis: Example

Domain 1: Planning and Evaluation

Task 1 Determine the level of community readiness for change

- **Knowledge of:**

- information gathering and data analysis techniques
- stages of community readiness

- **Skill In:**

- collecting, organizing, and interpreting data
- assessing and building community resources and readiness
- identifying and engaging key stakeholders

Step 2: Study the References

- All exam questions are derived from the resources listed in the IC&RC Candidate Guide (pages 18-19).
- All references are re-examined at the most every five years.
- In nearly all cases, no references are older than ten years.
- Most references can be accessed via the Internet and/or are free materials.
- Text: IOM Preventing Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders Among Young People (2009)
- Prevention Code of Ethics and Prevention Ethics Course

Step 3: Prepare for the Exam

- **Review the Candidate Guide** which includes the Job Analysis (i.e., the domains, knowledge and skill areas for each domain), as well as sample exam questions and the list of references. It is free of charge and can be downloaded from IC&RC's website.
- **Use the Study Guide** which includes the job analysis, test taking tips and a sample exam with explanations for the correct answers. It is also free and available on the IC&RC website.
- **Consider Taking a Practice Exam**, also available through the IC&RC website cost \$49.95. Practice Exams were developed in conjunction with IC&RC's testing company to mimic the exact look and feel of IC&RC's Computer Based Testing (CBT) platform. Each practice exam has 50 questions, which candidates have 60 minutes to complete. After completing the practice exam, candidates will receive a score report identifying their areas of strength and weakness.

The Prevention Specialist Exam

- Total number of examination questions: 150
- Total Number of pretest questions: 25 (embedded in the 150 questions and not scored)
- Total time to complete the examination, Paper & Pencil: 3 ½ hours
- Total time to complete the examination, Computer Based: 3 hours

The Exam: Domains and Their Weight

• Domain	Weight on Exam
• Planning and Evaluation	30%
• Prevention Education and Service Delivery	15%
• Communication	13%
• Community Organization	15%
• Public Policy and Environmental Change	12%
• Professional Growth and Responsibility	15%

Scoring & Passing Point Information

- **Scoring**

- IC&RC exam scores are reported on a scale of 200 to 800 for all international exams. Candidates must achieve a score of 500 in order to pass the exam. The score is determined by the number of questions correctly answered.
- IC&RC's testing company will score all exams. Scores will be broken down by category (domain) so that candidates can see areas of strength and weakness.

- **Passing Point**

- The passing point is determined by a criterion-referenced approach called the Angoff Modified Technique. Criterion-referenced exams are quota-free with regard to passing percentages.
- The passing point is fixed to assure that all candidates must achieve the same score to be granted certification.