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New Definition

• **Karen Zander RN, MS, CMAC, FAAN: Editor**

Why Become Certified in Case Management?

Certification is generally thought to indicate expertise as either a staff case manager, or in the case of the (CMA-C) Case Management Administrator-Certified™, as a leader or administrator of case management programs including Inpatient and Outpatient, and Transition Case Managers. The exam is also geared to case management administrators on the payer-side of the industry.

Certified case managers are becoming more in demand than ever. Ethics and quality measurement functions are emphasized in case management practice more than ever. Case managers certified by the Commission of Case Management Certification number more than 40,000 today, and the percentage of employers that require board-certification is growing: from 25.9% in 2004 to 40.2% in 2014. In addition, more employers offer additional compensation for board-certification: 20% in 2004 to 30% in 2014.¹ True, these are not significant gains, but gains nonetheless.

The CCM® exam began in 1992, and is practice-based, meaning all questions are based around knowledge that an experienced case manager should know and understand. CCM provides a glossary, practice exams, study materials, workshops, and a suggested reference list.

The American Case Management Association also provides an exam. Here are their statistics²:

- As of Sept, 2016, over 4,500 health delivery system case managers have earned the ACM™ Credential.
- 98% of ACM™ Credentialed professionals feel that certification is applicable to their case management practice.
- 47% of ACM™ Credentialed professionals indicate the certification has increased their professional standing with their direct supervisor, coworkers, and increased their professional knowledge and competency.
- 66% of case management departments report that case management certification is influential in hiring decisions, and over half prefer the ACM™ credential
- 90% of ACM™ Credentialed professionals would recommend the certification to others.

What do ACM™ Credentialed Professionals Say?³: “Credentialing and being a certified case manager defines a devotion to our profession, sets the bar high, and recognizes the value that case managers bring to our patients. Sentara Healthcare definitely validates the importance of certification, requiring it for both case managers and social workers, as soon as they are able. Within our system, our care coordinators and social workers take pride in being certified, are truly valued by the nursing peers, and are integral parts of our nursing Magnet journey to excellence. Our outstanding and hardworking teams have one thing in common; they make a difference with our patients, on day at a time, one patient at a time.” Source: Teresa Gonsalvo RN, MSN, MPA, CPHQ, ACM; Vice-President and Nursing Executive for Care Coordination, Sentara Healthcare.

The ACM™ Certification was created by ACMA in 2005, and is designed specifically for health delivery system and transitions of care (TOC) case management professionals. This certification is unique among Case Management certifications because the examination:

- Specifically addresses Case Management in health delivery system settings
- Tests core Case Management knowledge that is shared by Nurse and Social Work Case Managers, as well as competency in the individual skills of each professional background
- Utilizes clinical simulation testing methodology to test “competency beyond knowledge” – testing critical thinking skills and the ability to use knowledge in practical situations.⁴

The exam consists of two components. The first contains core case management questions that test the knowledge skills and abilities of registered nurse or social work Case Managers working in a hospital/health system. The second component is comprised of discipline specific clinical simulations. This discipline specific testing method reflects ACMA's respect for the different roles practiced by registered nurse and social work case managers. A passing score on both the core and the discipline specific portions will entitle individuals to the ACM™, (Accredited Case Manager) credential. ACMA provides a certification study guide and self-assessment exam.⁵

ACMA Position Statement: Nurses and Social Workers with two or more years of hospital/health system experience should have their Accredited Case Manager credential, ACM, by December 31, 2016 to practice Hospital/Health System Case Management. Thereafter, because new hospital case managers need 24 months of hospital/health system Case Management experience to be eligible to take the ACM exam, certification should be achieved by the 36th month of practice. Approved on December 7, 2012.⁶

According to the ACMA website, certification demonstrates your engagement, strengthens the profession's image, validates your accomplishments, builds self-esteem, and provides recognition.⁷

It should be noted that no test can really test performance. Exams can only test knowledge and situational problem-solving (to a point.) The CMA-C test includes graphs and charts for interpretation/decision-making where possible.

Why take the CMA-C exam? The Case manager administrator exam tests for leadership knowledge and abilities. It is the only certification exam that measures the management of a staff/department of case managers and social workers employed in any model on the payer and provider side of healthcare, and demonstrates tangible examples of commitment to healthcare. Initiated in 1997 by the Credentialing Advisory Board for Case Management Administrator Certification and supported by The Center for Case Management, Inc., this certification demonstrates professional recognition of the knowledge required to be a case/care management administrator, director, manager, educator, or supervisor of any case management service or independent practice throughout the continuum of healthcare. It was specifically designed for individuals that are not front-line case managers but rather for those that are responsible and accountable for meeting the fundamental goals of case management services through others.

Case Management Administrators and faculty lead organizations in the development and implementation of strategies to achieve clinical quality, financial, and satisfaction outcomes. Their activities may include education, program design and collaboration, direct supervision, consultation and evaluation. The duties of a Case Management Administrator are mirrored in the five updated (in 2015) content categories of the certification exam:

- I. Management, Leadership
 - Collaboration with the Executive Team
 - Human Resource Management
 - Change Management
- II. Health care laws and regulations
 - Compliance, laws, and regulatory organizations
 - CMS Conditions of Participation
 - Legal Considerations for patient care related to Case Management
- III. Development of a Continuum of Care
 - Service gap analysis
 - Risk-based contracting/bundled payment
 - Assessment of at-risk populations
 - Improving population health programs of care
 - ACOs
 - Functions of ED Case Management
 - Medical Homes and Medical Specialty “Neighborhoods”
 - SNFs—short and long-term
 - Homecare and Hospice
 - OP services of physical and mental health
 - Community services and resources
 - Roles to manage patients across the continuum
 - Care plans and paths to manage patients across the continuum
 - Skills need by professionals in the continuum
 - Trends towards consumerism
- IV. Tools of clinical case management practice
 - Case management-related software
 - Information technology
 - Assessment and intervention tools
- V. Using data to create information, understanding, and improvement
 - Data that is publically-available
 - Payer mix data
 - Quality data
 - Satisfaction data
 - Financial data
 - Physician utilization data/Practice profiles and feedback methods
 - Visual data displays
 - Using dashboards for case management services
 - Principles of Performance Improvement/CQI

The exam is administered by the Professional Testing Corporation (PTC), New York, NY, by computer in twice-yearly testing periods, scheduled at your convenience. The non-refundable fee is \$375.00. Re-certification is required every 5 years to maintain CMAC, and may be accomplished through either re-testing or submission of applicable continuing education or teaching hour credits following payment of the fee. An up-to-date bibliography is provided in the materials sent from PTC.

Endnotes

- 1 From *www.ccmcertification.org*; retrieved 11/8/16
- 2 From *www.acmaweb.org*; retrieved 11/8/16
- 3 IBID
- 4 IBID
- 5 IBID
- 6 IBID
- 7 IBID