

# Pharmacy Technician Accreditation

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## General Information

### 1. What is accreditation?

Accreditation is a system for declaring that a program or institution meets established quality standards to provide assurance and confidence to the public.

In the United States, accreditation is a voluntary, non-governmental, peer review process which provides a means of evaluating a program or institution (e.g. training program, school, college, hospital, etc.) against a set of established standards set by a profession or industry.

Accreditation seeks to enhance the quality of a program/ institution by promoting self evaluation; encouraging quality improvement; and providing public accountability by ensuring specific criteria are met.

**Accreditation in education includes two types of accreditation:** institutional and specialized or programmatic accreditation.

- **Institutional accreditation** evaluates overall institutional quality that provides education. (i.e., faculty/personnel, administration, finances, facilities, etc.).

Examples of institutional accreditors include regional accreditation of colleges and universities: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges, Western Association for Schools and Colleges (WASC); and career college accreditors: Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT).

- **Specialized/programmatic** accreditation focuses on specific programs of study, rather than an institution as a whole. The focus is on the particular curriculum, faculty, evaluation, and training related to the specific field of study. Specialized /programmatic accreditors require the institution to be accredited by an institutional accreditation, and only look at the specific training in their defined practice area.

Many of these accreditation programs are conducted by the specific profession (e.g. dentistry, nursing, pharmacy) primarily to provide the public with assurance of the quality of the educational preparation of individuals that work within that profession.

In pharmacy there are two major specialized/programmatic accreditors that review pharmacy education programs:

- **The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE)** accredits the Doctor of Pharmacy degree program for pharmacists, as well as continuing education program providers for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians' continuing education.
- **ASHP and the Commission on Credentialing (COC)** accredits pharmacy technician training programs and pharmacy residency programs that are postgraduate training programs for pharmacists.

## 2. What is ASHP's role in accreditation?

The American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists (ASHP) is a professional membership organization with over *35,000 members that include pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who practice in inpatient, outpatient, home-care, and long-term-care settings, as well as pharmacy students.* (ASHP, [www.ashp.org](http://www.ashp.org)) ASHP has taken responsibility for accrediting pharmacy residencies and pharmacy technician training programs for the pharmacy profession. ASHP's Commission on Credentialing is the designated body of the ASHP Board of Directors responsible for recommending standards, comparing programs to the standards, and recommending accreditation status.

The ASHP Commission on Credentialing (COC) has representation from various components of the pharmacy profession to ensure the accreditation standards and processes provide quality training that meets the needs of the pharmacy profession. Members of the Commission include representatives from the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP), the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP), the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACCP), as well as a dedicated pharmacy technician educator.

ASHP is the only nationally recognized non-governmental, non-profit pharmacy association that has been accrediting pharmacy residencies since 1962 and pharmacy technician training programs in the United States since 1983.

The Accreditation Services Division (ASD) of ASHP is responsible for conducting the site surveys and all of the administrative activities related to the process of accreditation of pharmacy residency and pharmacy technician training programs. You may contact the Division with questions at [asd@ashp.org](mailto:asd@ashp.org) or by calling 301-664-8858/8645.

## 3. Is accreditation the same thing as certification?

No. **Accreditation** is the process whereby a *program* providing the education and training is reviewed against quality standards and fulfills the requirements designated by the accreditation organization. **Certification** is the process by which a non-governmental association or agency grants recognition to an *individual* who has met certain predetermined qualifications specified by that association or agency.

## Pharmacy Technician Training Program

### **1. Who can we speak to about seeking accreditation for a pharmacy technician training program that we are developing?**

Please contact any member of the ASHP Accreditation Services Division who will be happy to speak to you about the accreditation process for your program. You may email the Division at [asd@ashp.org](mailto:asd@ashp.org) or call 301-664-8858/8645.

More information regarding pharmacy technician accreditation regulations, standards, processes and procedures can be found at: <http://www.ashp.org/accreditation-technician>

### **2. How long does a pharmacy technician training program need to be in order to become accredited and how should it be structured?**

Pharmacy technician training programs seeking accreditation must be a minimum of 600 hours of training (contact) time, extending over a period of 15 weeks or longer. The period of training must include time allocated for didactic, laboratory, and experiential training. Some programs may need to lengthen training schedules to provide more in-depth coverage of educational goals and objectives to meet the market needs of the pharmacy community. Appropriate laboratory exercises (e.g., extemporaneous compounding, sterile product preparation, unit dose drug distribution, filling of outpatient prescriptions), including computerized application of record keeping and drug distribution systems, shall be used to reinforce classroom instruction before onsite experiential training begins. Laboratory exercises should be adequate in scope to prepare the trainee for practice in a variety of pharmacy settings, e.g., acute care, ambulatory care, chronic care. The trainee's experiential activities should be performed in at least two different practice settings, e.g., acute care, ambulatory care, chronic care.

### **3. What educational goals and objectives are typically taught in a pharmacy technician training program and how can our program teach them?**

The training program shall be based on 35 goals that reflect current and future pharmacy technician functions and responsibilities. The list of [educational goals](#) can be found on page 5 of the accreditation standard.

The *Model Curriculum for Pharmacy Technician Training, 2nd Edition* provides sets of instructional objectives identified for achieving each of the goals required to be taught by the accreditation standard. In addition, the model curriculum provides guidance for grouping and sequencing instruction. It is recommended as a guide for meeting the standard and for training. [View the resources >>](#)

Educational goals and objectives can be taught in didactic education sessions, in laboratory exercises, and in experiential activities. A crosswalk grid created by ASHP allows you to visualize and plan for teaching all the goals and objectives in [each of these 3 main areas](#).

Click on the ASHP (DOC) next to “Courses, labs, experiential rotations grid matched to ASHP Goals” found in the sample training forms listing.

#### **4. How do we apply for accreditation of our pharmacy technician training program?**

View the guidelines for applying, the application form, the academic and professional form for the program director, and the accreditation fee schedule. [View all forms >>](#)

Application for accreditation may be made as soon as a student has begun training, but not sooner. Accreditation status is retroactive to the date the application form is received at ASHP once the program is granted accreditation by the Commission on Credentialing.

#### **5. How soon can we expect an accreditation survey team to come to our site after we apply?**

An accreditation survey team consisting of a lead surveyor from the Accreditation Services Division of ASHP along with a guest surveyor who has experience in pharmacy technician education will be scheduled in advance to come to the site in 6-12 months after receipt of the application. The onsite survey typically takes one day. [Review the regulations >>](#)

#### **6. How do we prepare for an accreditation survey?**

[View information on preparation for an accreditation survey.](#)

The lead surveyor assigned to your program will also be in contact with you prior to your survey to assist with any questions, concerns, and itinerary finalization.

#### **7. When will we know if our program is accredited?**

After an onsite survey has taken place, a written report will be sent to the site within 30 days of the visit. The site has an additional 45 days to respond to the report. The survey report and the response from the site are submitted to the Commission on Credentialing (COC) meeting it is assigned to. Upon review, a decision will be made by the COC to either withhold or offer accreditation up to a maximum of 6 years. The recommendations made by the Commission on Credentialing are then ratified by the ASHP Board of Directors. At the longest, it may take up to 9 months to receive an accreditation determination following a site survey. However, accreditation, once granted, is retroactive to the date of receipt of the application in Accreditation Services.

#### **8. How do we post information about our program on the ASHP website directory?**

Programs who are in the accreditation process may post information to the ASHP Technician Training Program Directory by contacting a member of the Accreditation Services Division staff by emailing [asd@ashp.org](mailto:asd@ashp.org) for more details. Programs not seeking accreditation do not have access to post information on the Directory.

## Pharmacy Technician Trainee

### **1. How can I find an ASHP accredited pharmacy technician training program?**

The Accreditation Services Division publishes and maintains an online directory of pharmacy technician training programs that are in the accreditation process and are arranged by state, alphabetically. [Access the directory >>](#)

Programs provide information related to their training programs: didactic (instruction hours), laboratory hours, and experiential training hours. Program accreditation status, contact information, location, description, tuition costs and fees, and admission requirements are also listed.

### **2. What does application submitted mean?**

This designation means that the program has applied for accreditation and is in the process of becoming accredited; however they are not yet accredited. Once the program has had an onsite survey, and their site report and response have been reviewed and accepted by the ASHP Commission on Credentialing and the ASHP Board of Directors, accreditation can either be granted or it can be withheld.

### **3. I don't see a program's name listed on the directory. Is it ASHP accredited?**

If the program you are interested in attending is not listed on the ASHP online directory of pharmacy technician training programs, it is not accredited by ASHP.

### **4. Can I complete an ASHP accredited pharmacy technician training program through a correspondence course or online?**

No, you cannot fully complete an ASHP accredited program totally by a correspondence course or online. ASHP accredited programs involve a combination of didactic (classroom, online, correspondence), laboratory (hands-on), and experiential training (working experiences in an actual pharmacy).

ASHP accredited programs must be a minimum length of 600 hours extending over 15 weeks or longer. Some of the didactic portion of accredited programs may be taught online or through a correspondence course, however, to complete an accredited ASHP program there must be contact experience.

There are many programs advertised on television, in magazines, or online that claim you can become a pharmacy technician simply by reading their programs and taking tests. To become a competent pharmacy technician requires both knowledge (which may be obtained on line) and skills that must be developed through actual work site experience.

### **5. Does the state I live in require that I graduate from an ASHP accredited program in order to work?**

Each state has different requirements, controlled by the Board of Pharmacy in that state. Not all states require pharmacy technicians to complete an ASHP accredited educational program. However, many states have begun altering their board of pharmacy regulations to require formalized training and accept ASHP accredited programs as meeting that requirement. Some state boards of pharmacy require both formal training and national certification (passing of an examination) in order to become registered or licensed to work. To find contact information about your specific board of pharmacy to determine the requirements for a pharmacy technician in your state you can search for your board of pharmacy contact at the [National Association of Boards of Pharmacy® \(NABP\) website](#).

ASHP strongly encourages educational training in a specialized/programmatic accredited program to become a pharmacy technician irrespective of your state board of pharmacy requirements. Patients are depending on you and the pharmacist to help them with their medication needs and to ensure their safety in this process. An ASHP accredited training program helps you become a competent pharmacy technician as you perform many complex tasks as a pharmacy technician.

#### **6. Is accreditation the same thing as certification?**

No. Certification is the process by which a non-governmental association or agency grants recognition to an individual who has met certain predetermined qualifications specified by that association or agency. Pharmacy technicians who complete their education through an accredited training program often sit for an examination through the [Pharmacy Technician Certification Board](#).

The Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) develops, maintains, promotes, and administers a high-quality certification and recertification program for pharmacy technicians. Individuals who meet all eligibility requirements and who successfully pass the national Pharmacy Technician Certification Examination may use the designation "CPhT" after their name. PTCB's certification is a national certification that is valid nationwide. PTCB certification is not a substitute for registration or licensure by your state board of pharmacy. PTCB is currently the only certification program endorsed by NABP, the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), and the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP). Recently, the NABP *Task Force on Standardized Pharmacy Technician Education and Training* has issued a recommendation that was approved by the Executive Committee of the NABP that all boards of pharmacy require pharmacy technicians to be certified by 2015.