

APPLICANT'S MANUAL

Individual Crisis Worker Certification

(Revised 2016)

AAS Individual Certification Committee

American Association of Suicidology

and

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention

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INDIVIDUAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

AAS individual certification is an evaluation process for assessing the qualifications of crisis workers for practice in crisis management. The certification process signifies that individuals practicing crisis management have met the standards and requirements defined by the Individual Certification Committee of the American Association of Suicidology, a national certifying body in the crisis field. Certification means that the certificate holder has met a sufficiently stringent test of knowledge, experience, and ability to perform effectively in the crisis field.

Evaluation for individual certification focuses on the crisis worker's formal preparation in crisis management, and demonstration of practice skills, theoretical knowledge, and attitudes appropriate for crisis workers. Evaluation methods include an online exam, plus a review of documents attesting to crisis training and experience including a formal application, letter of support, and documentation of education.

□ Background and Purpose □

The move toward certification of individual crisis workers began in the 1970's and gained momentum in the 1980's in response to developments in society and the health field. Consumers of health services continue their important role in monitoring the type and quality of service received from health providers. Among providers in the growing crisis field, paraprofessionals comprise the majority of direct service to people in crisis. In spite of their central role, however, these volunteers and staff are often not recognized for their expertise as crisis workers. Certification, therefore, would publicly affirm their knowledge and skill.

Mental health professionals, in addition, while formally credentialed, may not have systematic preparation in crisis work. It is increasingly important to recognize the specialization of crisis work within mental health professionals and to acknowledge the special skills of clinicians who practice crisis intervention.

Individual certification of crisis workers across several practice disciplines is designed to address these issues. It follows the widely utilized credentialing practice of professionals and organizations. The requirements for individual certification are based on the values and beliefs of the Individual Certification Committee:

- Crisis intervention is everybody's business, not the exclusive specialty of a particular discipline.
- Every citizen is entitled to necessary assistance as a basic right during life-threatening or other crises.

- The comprehensive service provided by a certified crisis worker that assures this right can rarely be provided by a single person alone. Therefore, crisis workers must not only work effectively as individuals, but also must collaborate with other groups such as police, emergency medical services, mental health agencies, and self-help groups.
- Formal crisis management comprises a body of knowledge and practice skills that are related to but distinct from traditional counseling and psychotherapy.
- This body of knowledge and practice skills is acquired through a systematic education/training program and supervised clinical practice.
- Individual certification should provide crisis workers a stimulus for self-evaluation and striving for higher levels of functioning.

□ **Advantages of Individual Certification** □

People have been assisting one another during crises in natural social settings since the dawn of humankind. Health and social service professionals have also incorporated elements of crisis work into their practice for many decades. As an organized body of knowledge and practice, however, crisis management is only a few decades old. Crisis workers and their employers cite several advantages of certification:

- AAS individual certification attests that crisis workers have achieved a basic level of knowledge, skill, and experience in the crisis field as defined by national standards.
- Certification offers employing agencies, their policy boards, administrators, funding sources, and professional staff a vehicle by which to evaluate crisis workers against national standards.
- Certification offers recognition to crisis workers, particularly those who do not hold other credentials.
- Individual certification promotes career development for those crisis workers desiring to continue in direct service positions.

□ **Eligibility** □

The following individuals are eligible for crisis worker certification:

- Volunteer or paid paraprofessional workers in crisis centers.
- Any health or human service practitioner desiring to be formally credentialed as a crisis worker (e.g. nurses, police officers, psychologists, psychiatrists, mental health professionals).

NOTE: Applicants for individual certification must be actively engaged in providing direct service to people in crisis at least part-time. However, staff who exclusively serves as trainers and/or supervisors are eligible for certification providing they have completed the required direct service experience.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CRISIS WORKER CERTIFICATION

1. Minimum age 21.
2. Successful completion of a training course based on AAS core competencies, (as outlined below) or similar education and training.
3. A minimum of two years full-time experience as a crisis worker, or a total of 500 hours completed.
4. A sponsoring letter from someone directly acquainted with the applicant's work, accompanying your application. The letter should specifically address the applicant's knowledge and skills as a crisis interventionist, as well as other professional strengths.
5. Satisfactory evaluation of crisis work training and experience as outlined in the completed application, by a member of the AAS Individual Certification Committee.
6. Successful completion of the online exam.

CORE MATERIALS

□ Essential Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills □

The following paragraphs on Core Content provide a framework for certification applicants to evaluate their formal preparation and experience in crisis theory and practice in relation to national standards, and prepare accordingly for the certification examination.

The notion of Core Content can be used in several different contexts. In formal pre-serviced professional programs such as nursing, medicine, social work, and psychology, Core Crisis Content would be part of a total curriculum, the complex array of learning activities or courses organized to achieve specific educational goals. Core Curriculum encompasses those courses required of all students graduating from the institution, without which the educational goals would not be met.

At the crisis course level, Core content refers to the knowledge, attitudes, and skills essential to any person practicing as a crisis worker, regardless of the setting or framework in which he or she learned this essential content. The concept of Core Content is important for several reasons. First, it emphasizes what every worker needs for managing complex crisis situations and avoiding inadvertent collusion in the process of double victimization. Second, it corrects the assumption by many professionals that traditional curricula are enough without formal attention to recently developed crisis content. Third, mastery of Core Crisis Content enhances communication between various crisis service agencies and training units. Trainers can thereby avoid duplication of training and augment the trainees' sense of accomplishment around knowledge and skills already mastered.

Core Crisis Content can be divided into three categories: A. Knowledge; B. Attitudes; and C. Skills. For example, an applicant for individual certification can identify the steps of the crisis management process (knowledge); demonstrate in role play a non-judgmental and empathetic (attitude); and apply the techniques of lethality assessment in a real or simulated case situation (skill).

A. Knowledge: The Knowledge component of Core Crisis Content can be acquired through a basic crisis course that includes reading at least one good textbook and key references identified by the instructor. In general, the knowledge element of Core Content is the easiest to master. Essential concepts that crisis workers must master include:

1) Crisis theory and principles of crisis management.

- Origins and development of crises.
- Manifestations of crisis: emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and biophysical.
- Duration and outcomes of crisis, including effective and ineffective crisis coping.
- Steps of the crisis management process: Engagement, Rapport Building, Assessment, Planning, Problem Solving, Implementation, Evaluation,

Follow-up

- Application of the crisis management process to special groups at risk for crisis; e.g., drug abusers, victims of abuse, the chronically mentally ill.
- 2) Suicidology; especially risk assessment, including lethality assessment and intervention strategies.
- 3) Victimology, including assessment of assault potential and victimization.
- 4) Principles of communication, including active listening and interviewing techniques.
- 5) Death, dying and grief work.
- 6) Ethical and legal issues regarding suicide, crime, and victimization.
- 7) Voluntary and involuntary hospitalization criteria.
- 8) Identification and use of community resources in crisis work.
- 9) Team relationships in crisis work.
- 10) The consultation process and its place in crisis management.
- 11) Principles and structures for record keeping.

B. Attitudes: The Core of crisis content includes the following attitudinal approaches to people in crisis:

- 1) Acceptance of and non-judgmental response to persons different from self and toward controversial issues; e.g., not discussing suicide or abortion with a person in terms of its moral rightness or wrongness.
- 2) Balanced, realistic attitude toward oneself in the helper role; e.g., not expecting to “rescue” or “save” all people who are potentially suicidal, or to solve all the problems of the person in crisis; e.g., expecting a battered woman to leave her abuser in spite of the fact that she may not yet be ready because of obstacles she cannot overcome.
- 3) A realistic and humane approach to death, dying, self-destructive behavior, victimization, and other human issues; e.g., not asking questions like, “What did you do to provoke the beating?” or to a rape victim, not implying that she is at fault for having hitch-hiked.

- 4) Coming to terms with one's own feelings about death, dying, and potential for violence, insofar as these feelings might deter one from helping others.

However, without certain skills, non-judgmental attitudes and thorough knowledge of concepts are not enough. They must be accompanied by the ability to use knowledge and appropriate attitudes in a systematic, effective approach to particular people in crisis. That is, a certified crisis worker should be able to demonstrate in the examination the process of helping a person in crisis toward a resolution of crisis consistent with the individual's values and meaning system. At the same time, a skilled crisis worker will be able to help distressed people avoid negative outcomes of crisis such as violence, alcohol and other drug abuse, or chronic emotional or mental disability.

C) Skills necessary to work effectively with people in crisis include:

- 1) Application of the techniques of formal crisis management: Engagement, Assessment, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation--including assessment of victimization and risk of suicide and/or violence toward others.
- 2) Communication: listen actively, question discretely, respond empathically, advise and direct appropriately, summarizing the feelings and presenting problems of a person in crisis.
- 3) Efficient and effective mobilization of community resources, e.g. engaging the rescue squad within 15 minutes of receiving a suicide attempt call; collaborating with the police in a violent situation without escalating the crisis and precipitating more violence; making an appropriate referral for follow-up counseling or therapy.
- 4) Accurate and efficient record-keeping and policy implementation; e.g., recording essential notes in succinct form within the same work shift so that they are useful to the next crisis worker.
- 5) Implementing the procedures for voluntary and involuntary hospitalization when indicated.
- 6) Use of the consultative process; i.e., knowing who to call under what circumstances, and in fact doing it.
- 7) Carrying out these crisis management steps while withholding judgment on controversial behaviors and not imposing one's values on the person in crisis and his or her family.

□ Required Training Time □

The minimum number of hours recommended for achieving the above mentioned essential knowledge, attitudes, and skills is 40, including 32 hours of classroom instruction plus eight hours of supervised practice. This number of training hours is similar to that required in training programs conducted by AAS accredited crisis services.

□ Selected Bibliography □

Applicants are encouraged to read at least one basic text on crisis intervention and suicidology. Some texts are listed below.

Lester, D. (Ed.) (2002) Crisis Intervention and Counseling by Telephone. Springfield, Thomas.

Hoff, L. (1995). People in crisis: Understanding and Helping. New York: Jossey-Bass.

Joiner, Thomas (2010) Myths about Suicide Harvard University Press

Joiner, Thomas (2006) Why People Die by Suicide Harvard University Press

Klepsies, Phillip M. Ed (2009). Behavioral Emergencies: An Evidence-Based Resource for Evaluating and Managing Risk for Suicide, Violence, and Victimization.

Linn-Gust, Michelle (2010) Rocky Roads: The Journeys of Families through Suicide Grief, Chellehead Works

Wolfalt, Allan (2000) Healing your Grieving Heart for Kids, Companion Press

Wilson, KJ (2005). When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Violence. Hunter House.

We also recommend that you attend the preparation webinar available on the AAS website. It can be purchased through the AAS store, and then a link will be sent via e-mail. <http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/store>

□ Approved Training Courses □

Applicants must provide evidence of completing a minimum of 40 hours of training in the Core

Content discussed. The evidence presented by applicants of an approved training course will be evaluated in relation to national standards and the Core Content cited previously. Experience may not be substituted for requisite training. Approved training courses may include one or more of the following:

- 1) College-based courses at an accredited college.
- 2) Crisis intervention training program provided by an AAS-Accredited center, or a center whose training is similar in scope and content.
- 3) Continuing education training offered through in-house training, professional institutes, or conferences.

THE EXAMINATION

□ Examination Content □

The online exam has 75 questions. Each online test is different but similar in categories tested and degree of difficulty. Two hours are allowed for the exam.

The exam was designed to evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of crisis workers as outlined in this Manual, and in keeping with the purposes and advantages discussed. The exam was developed by the Individual Certification Committee of AAS, consisting of recognized crisis experts. Validity studies were performed on the exam using a national panel of experts, while inter-rater reliability studies are ongoing. Procedures are in place for updating the exam in accordance with the development and refinement of crisis theory and practice.

□ The Examiners □

The examiners are crisis professionals who meet the upper level requirements for trainers and clinical supervisors as defined in the Certification Standards Manual. They are recognized for their knowledge and clinical expertise in the crisis field, and selected as examiners through a screening process directed by the Individual Certification Committee. As expert crisis clinicians and trainers, they participated in the validity and reliability studies carried out to develop the certification examination, and hold a degree in a clinical mental health field.

□ Pre-Examination Screening □

Formal Examination is preceded by a two-step screening process designed to reduce the probability of failure and to offer direction to applicants who may not be ready.

Step 1: In the first screening step, applicants do a self-evaluation of their readiness for examination by assessing their course work and clinical experience in relation to Core Content and national training standards.

Step 2: In the second step, the Individual Certification Committee evaluates the applicant using the same standard, plus the reference submitted. If with either screening steps applicants are found to be unready, consultation is offered to assist the applicant to obtain the necessary training or clinical experience before being approved to take the exam.

□ Examination Locations □

Exams may be taken in the applicant's hometown if a proctor for the exam has been approved. The proctor application can be found in the appendix of this manual. Once the proctor is approved it is up to the applicant and proctor to schedule the exam and to find a suitable location for the exam.

□ Assessment of Examination Performance □

Passing score on the exam is 75 percent. Applicants will be informed of exam results immediately online. Individuals will receive a certificate if they pass or a breakdown of their results if they fail within two weeks. Applicants who do not pass the exam may re-take the exam one time without an additional fee any time within the next twelve months. Applicants interested in reexamination must notify the Director of Crisis Services Accreditation & Certification joanwright@suicidology.org.

RECERTIFICATION

To maintain AAS crisis worker certification it must be renewed every 5 years. It is the responsibility of the crisis worker to renew no reminders will be sent. Certification will be renewed when documentation of the following is received:

- 1) Participation in continuing education programs in the crisis field for at least **12 hours per year.**
- 2) Continued active work in the crisis field, including supervising and/or training crisis workers. If there is a change in the certificate holder's work status or location, the Individual Certification Committee must be notified to assure continued certification.
- 3) Payment of the re-certification fee of \$35 for AAS/CASP members, \$45 for non-members.

- 4) Completion of the re-certification form which is attached to this document

GLOSSARY

Examination for individual certification presumes the following definition of terms in the crisis field (Wells & Hoff 1984, Hoff & Miller 1987, Hoff 1989):

Certification:

The process by which the AAS Individual Certification Committee grants recognition to an individual who has met the predetermined requirements for crisis work.

Client:

A term designating a person who uses the service provided by a crisis program. The client, for example, may be a brief “caller” a long term, chronically mental ill “patient”, a victim of crime, or a battered woman who is homeless. Sometimes the term “client” is used interchangeably with “consumer.”

Crisis:

An acute emotional upset arising from situational, developmental or social sources and resulting in a temporary inability to cope by means of one’s usual problem-solving devices.

Crisis Intervention:

That aspect of the crisis management process which focuses on resolution of the immediate problem through the use of personal, social, environmental, and sometimes material resources. The process is carried out by a crisis worker--nurse, police officer, physician, psychotherapist, counselor, volunteer or minister. Crisis intervention is related to but differs from psychotherapy.

Crisis Management:

The entire process of working through a crisis to its endpoint of crisis resolution. It includes activities of the person in crisis as well as those of people helping him or her, e.g. a family member or formal crisis worker.

Crisis Program:

A generic term describing the various organized agencies that provide services: i.e. emergency services of community mental health centers, suicide prevention centers, crisis hotlines, psychiatric or behavioral sections of emergency medical services, shelters for runaway teens, rape crisis centers, battered women’s programs, and services for other victims of crime.

Crisis Worker:

A person working on a paid or volunteer basis who has acquired specialized knowledge and skills in crisis work (including suicide and assault prevention); who adheres to the

technical and ethical standards of the field; and who spends at least part of his/her time providing crisis intervention services. Crisis workers may include but are not limited to those who possess a professional mental health degree, e.g. psychiatric nurse, psychiatrist, psychiatric social worker or clinical psychologist.

Emergency Psychiatry:

That branch of medicine that deals with acute behavioral disturbances which suggest severe mental or emotional disturbance. It may overlap with crisis intervention but also implies the need for distinct medical intervention such as with drugs or admission to an inpatient psychiatric service.

Suicidology:

A research and service specialty whose focus is life-threatening and self-destructive behavior. Its primary, but not exclusive, concern is one of studying, intervening in, and preventing suicide. The service aspect of suicidology is an integral part of the field of crisis intervention and emergency mental health practice.

Victimology:

An interdisciplinary field that focuses on the needs of victims, including advocacy, crisis intervention, and follow-up care, research, and public policy affecting victims and their families.

The American Association of Suicidology
INDIVIDUAL CERTIFICATION APPLICATION FORM
(Please print clearly or type)

NAME: _____ BIRTHDATE: _____

***HOME ADDRESS:**

Street Address _____ City _____
State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

*Exam results will be sent to home address.

WORK ADDRESS:

Street Address _____ City _____
State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

HOME/CELL PHONE: _____ WORK PHONE: _____

*EMAIL _____

EDUCATION: (Post High School. Begin with most recent.)

<u>INSTITUTION</u>	<u>CITY, STATE</u>	<u>DATES</u>	<u>DEGREES/CERTIFICATES ATTENDED</u>
--------------------	--------------------	--------------	--

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

(Use separate page as necessary).

CRISIS COURSES & CLINICAL TRAINING: (Include all relevant workshops, conferences, and seminars relevant to Core Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes)

<u>COURSE/WORKSHOP</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>#HOURS</u>
------------------------	-------------	---------------

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE IN DIRECT CRISIS WORK:

Please complete the following information for every volunteer and/or paid position(s) you have held to calculate your total hours performing crisis intervention. Copy this form for additional space as needed.

1. Agency: _____ Title: _____
City/State/Province: _____

Beginning Date: _____ Ending Date: _____ No. Of Weeks: _____
Hours/Week Doing Crisis Intervention: _____

Number of weeks x hours/week doing crisis intervention = Total Hours Performing Direct Crisis Work at this Position: (1) _____

2. Agency: _____ Title: _____
City/State/Province: _____

Beginning Date: _____ Ending Date: _____ No. Of Weeks: _____
Hours/Week Doing Crisis Intervention: _____

Number of weeks x hours/week doing crisis intervention = Total Hours Performing Direct Crisis Work at this Position: (2) _____

3. Agency: _____ Title: _____
City/State/Province: _____

Beginning Date: _____ Ending Date: _____ No. Of Weeks: _____
Hours/Week Doing Crisis Intervention: _____

Number of weeks x hours/week doing crisis intervention = Total Hours Performing Direct Crisis Work at this Position: (3) _____

4. Agency: _____ Title: _____
City/State/Province: _____

Beginning Date: _____ Ending Date: _____ No. Of Weeks: _____
Hours/Week Doing Crisis Intervention: _____

Number of weeks x hours/week doing crisis intervention = Total Hours Performing Direct Crisis Work at this Position: (4) _____

(Add other agency listings as needed)

TOTAL HOURS OF CRISIS INTERVENTION EXPERIENCE (Add lines 1, 2, 3, 4 &?): _____

SPONSORING LETTER

Please indicate below the person from whom you have requested a sponsoring letter. This person must be someone who is acquainted with your work. This letter must be received prior to sitting for the exam.

NAME: _____ POSITION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____ LETTER IS ENCLOSED: _____

FEES

Certification Fee:		Re-certification Fee:	
AAS/CASP Member:	\$55.00	AAS/CASP Member:	\$35.00
Non-Member:	\$85.00	Non-Member:	\$45.00

AAS Accredited Centers:

5-10 applicants: \$45.00

10 + applicants: \$40.00

These fees only apply if the manual is taken off the AAS website. There will be a \$15 charge for copying and mailing a hard copy of the manual.

PLEASE NOTE who your proctor will be _____ and their
EMAIL: _____

Send form and check (U.S. funds, payable to AAS) to:

Certification Coordinator
American Association of Suicidology
5221 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20015

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SUICIDOLOGY
CRISIS WORKER
**RE-CERTIFICATION
APPLICATION**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Date certification expires: _____

List below all of the continuing education hours you have taken in the crisis work field since your last certification began. You must have accumulated 60 hours of crisis intervention learning.

NAME OF COURSE

HOURS

List below your work responsibilities since your last certification. You must show that you have continued to be clinically active in crisis work. Start with your most current work.

<u>NAME OF WORK</u>	<u>YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES</u>	<u>DATES</u>
-------------------------	----------------------------------	--------------

My signature testifies that all that I have submitted above accurately represents my clinical activities and training.

Signature

Date

Return this form and a check for re- certification (\$35 for AAS members, \$45 for non-members) to:

**Certification Coordinator
American Association of Suicidology
5221 Wisconsin Avenue NW
Washington, DC 2001**

American Association of Suicidology
Proctor Application
For
Individual Crisis Worker Certification Examination

DESCRIPTION

The proctor is designated by the Director of Crisis Services Accreditation & Certification (Coordinator) for the American Association of Suicidology to administer the Individual Certification Exam under circumstances that facilitate the time and cost factors of taking the exam, but do not compromise the standards set by the Board of Crisis Worker Examiners.

REQUIREMENTS OF PROCTORS

1. Must already have taken and passed the examination; or have no intention of ever taking the exam.
2. Must maintain absolute confidentiality of the examination content, both during and after administering the exam.
3. Must be familiar with the requirements regarding the specific procedures for administering the exam, e.g., length of time, suitable setting for exam, etc. that are itemized on the following page of this document

I would like to be certified as a proctor for the Individual Certification exam.

_____ I have no intention of ever taking the AAS Individual Certification exam.

_____ I have already taken and passed the AAS Individual Certification exam.

_____ I understand the conditions set forth above and agree to abide by them

Name _____ Date _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____ City, State and Zip _____
(Do Not Use PO Box)

Work Phone _____ Home/Cell Phone _____

*Email Address _____

Who you are proctoring _____

Return this form by email to Joan Wright, Certification Coordinator for the American Association of Suicidology

Email: joanwright@suicidology.org

**Instructions for Those Proctoring
The Crisis Worker Examination
for
The American Association of Suicidology**

ONLINE EXAM

1. The AAS certification coordinator will furnish you with the website and password for each participant. The name must be entered exactly as specified.
2. You need not stay in the room if you have removed cell phones and all extraneous material.
3. Time the exam. They **will be allowed 2 hours**. Remind them of time left on the exam. Make sure the room is comfortable and quiet. There are 75 questions on the online exam. Each exam is different. The system saves answers as they are answered.
4. Encourage them to flag questions that they are unsure of. The computer program tracks the flags so they can easily go back for a review.
5. When they are finished they need to hit the “Submit” button. They should not use that button until they are done. If they hit it by mistake sooner the test will be lost.
6. The computer will score the test immediately. The test taker will get a formal letter from AAS confirming the results and sending a certificate in the case of a passing exam. Their performance in each of the 5 categories will also be reported in that letter if they fail.

IMPORTANT RE Browsers: Internet Explorer and Chrome are preferred.

Basically the system supports all browsers as long as cookies are enabled.

