

Certified Family Peer Specialist

Candidate Handbook

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FAMILIES

Bringing Lived Experience to Family Support



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PART 1: ABOUT THE CFPS

Congratulations! You've taken the first step toward becoming a Certified Family Peer Specialist (CFPS).™

This handbook contains detailed information about certification and provides a step-by-step guide to the CFPS application process. Let's get started.

What is the Certified Family Peer Specialist (CFPS) Assessment and Certification?

The Certified Family Peer Specialist (formerly Certified Parent Support Provider) assessment and certification is the process of demonstrating your experience, training, learning and supervision to be assessed by a review board. The primary purpose of the certification application review is to be sure that individuals employed as Family Peer Specialists meet the highest standards of knowledge, ethics, and practice in their work with other families and caregivers.

The CFPS certification defines the knowledge, attitudes and skills that are recommended for helping families with children - across their lifespan - who are experiencing, or have experienced emotional, behavioral, mental health, or substance use challenges, and/or intellectual disabilities.

Certification promotes ethical practice and creates employment opportunities for many disciplines across the United States, Canada, and around the world.

Why National Certification?

National certification:

- Ensures uniformity of core knowledge by practitioners
- Endorses continuing professional development and credibility
- Advances uniform standards and scope of practice
- Promotes ethical practice
- Endeavors to protect the consumer

Benefits for the CFPS:

- Increased security and confidentiality for families and CFPSs
- Nationally recognized and reliable examinations
- Increased professional recognition and acceptance
- Job opportunities for holders of the CFPS credential

How was the CFPS created?

The National Federation of Families (formerly the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health) collaborated with family organizations, researchers, and treatment providers to collect and organize information about the role of family support services in systems of care and other settings.

The Parent Partner Assessment Workgroup (PPAW) met regularly in 2009 and 2010. PPAW, through the National Federation then began developing national certification for Parent Support Providers in August 2010 and the first certificates were awarded in June 2012.

A true certification program assesses individuals against peer-developed standards and competencies and provides a credential that is time limited. A standardized certification examination must be independent of any specific course or curriculum. In addition, continued competency is enhanced through ongoing renewal requirements and adherence to the **Code of Ethics**.

CFPS Exam Content Outline Process

To create this exam, a national representative group of volunteer subject matter experts participated in a **Job Task Analysis** study to identify the major categories of information and knowledge, skills, and attitudes within each domain, based on the jobs and tasks a certified individual might perform.

CFPS Exam Content Outline

The CFPS exam questions were developed by considering the importance and frequency of data obtained from the Job Task Analysis study conducted in June 2011. The resulting data were converted to percentages and the percentages were used to determine the number of questions related to each domain (now called Standard of Practice) and competency that should appear on the multiple-choice CFPS™ exam.

The exam specifications in the table below lists how many questions are included in each Domain and Task and the percentage of the exam included in each domain.

The **Core Competencies** include:

- Effecting Change
- Professional Responsibilities
- Systems Knowledge and Navigation
- Wellness and Resiliency
- Resources and Natural Supports

To learn more about the **Core Competencies**, click on this link:

<https://www.ffcmh.org/certification-competencies>

Why become a Certified Family Peer Specialist (CFPS)?

Certified Family Peer Specialists bring personal, lived experience successfully helping their own children, to assist other families/caregivers, in multiple child-serving systems. The purpose is to bring their own family's voice to the planning and evaluation process of public and private services for children - often across the lifespan.

A CFPS uses personal experience, combined with regular supervision and specialized training to help other families with children experiencing emotional, behavioral, mental health, or substance use challenges, and/or intellectual disabilities, to understand their children's wellness and recovery needs.

A CFPS teaches and coaches other families and caregivers to speak for their values, promote the best interests of their children, and become equal partners with professionals in the delivery of services. The overall goal is to decrease the stigma often associated with mental health challenges, and promote effective, strength-based children's services that are family-driven.

What is the definition of "peer support"?

The *focus* of the service is empowering families to advocate for their children. The *scope* of the service involves supporting and assisting families to navigate through multiple agencies and human service systems (e.g., health, behavioral health, education, social services, etc.).

It is strength-based and established on mutual learning from common lived experience and coaching that:

- promotes wellness, trust, and hope
- increases communication and informed decision making and self-determination
- identifies and develops advocacy skills
- teaches or coaches parenting, self-care, and wellness/recovery skills
- increases access to community resources and the use of formal and natural supports
- reduces the isolation that families experience when their children are facing emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges

What is the *primary* qualification for the individual who applies for certification as a Family Peer Specialist?

It is an individual:

- whose primary responsibility is parenting a child with emotional, developmental, behavioral, mental health and/or substance use challenges, and/or intellectual disabilities
- who can articulate the understanding of their experience with another parent or other caregiver

This person can be the:

- birth parent
- adoptive parent
- family member standing in for an absent parent (e.g., aunt, uncle, older sibling, grandparent, etc.)
- person chosen by the family to function in the role of a parent (friend, neighbor, etc.)

How will I demonstrate that I have "lived experience?"

The CFPS application contains questions asking for this information. There, you will describe your experiences in detail, and the lessons learned from those experiences. Also required will be documentation from a supervisor familiar with your ability to articulate parenting lessons learned.

In my state we use a different title other than Family Peer Specialist. Will we have to change the name the organization uses?

Certified Family Peer Specialist is a title used for national certification and is intended to be broad enough to encompass all state and local titles. We know that this work is done under many titles throughout the United States and internationally.

The NFF certification will be for a **"Family Peer Specialist."** We recommend you refer to the definition of Family Peer Specialist rather than the title your state uses to understand if you are eligible to apply for certification.

What training is required for a CFPS?

The National Federation of Families defines the necessary content and competencies for the CFPS. There is no list of approved trainings or educational programs. Each applicant is responsible for providing documentation to demonstrate which competency was met by a training or educational event, self-study, internship, or mentorship.

You may also refer to your own state's required trainings to help you prepare for the exam. This exam should NOT be a substitute for your state's requirements.

For courses in your area, we recommend checking with your local, family-run organization and/or your county or state department of behavioral health. You may also find courses through our online list of resources:

<https://www.ffcmh.org/overview-of-resources>

Additional Training Topic Suggestions:

- Effective use of lived experience
- Reflective listening skills
- Confidentiality and ethics (including the Code of Ethics)
- Effective, assertive verbal and written communication
- Child and youth development
- Family dynamics
- Introduction to mental and behavioral health disorders
- Introduction to special needs
- diagnoses
- Cultural/religious awareness and sensitivity
- Suicide awareness and prevention
- Crisis counseling
- Substance use among children, adolescents, and young adults
- Effects of trauma and use of a trauma-informed approach
- Social skills training
- Mentoring leadership in others

- Use of family-driven approach to emotional health
- Coaching for personal change and crisis prevention
- Use of community resources, including natural supports
- Advocacy across/within systems (education, health, behavioral health, benefits)
- Child welfare issues
- Juvenile justice issues
- Special education law and rights
- Networking strategies
- Medicaid and HIPAA regulations
- Statistics/data collection, evaluation, and achieving outcomes
- Local, state, and national mental health systems and resources

What benefits can be expected from programs with Certified Family Peer Specialists (CFPS)?

The research-based outcomes of utilizing CFPSs in programmatic settings include parents or other caregivers who will be able to:

- find and collaborate in treatment and educational services for their child
- understand their child’s health and well-being
- respond calmly and feel less stress
- support and increase the resiliency skills of their child
- increase school success and graduation rates
- reduce the need for expensive hospitalization and long-term residential treatment

PART 2: THE CFPS™ CODE OF ETHICS

What is the CFPS Code of Ethics?

The **Code of Ethics** is a series of promises in four areas of professional practice that you will affirm when you apply for the Certified Family Peer Specialist certification. By following the Code of Ethics, you will ensure that the families, parents (or other primary caregivers) you support and the staff you interact with will experience services that meet rigorous, ethical standards.

CODE OF ETHICS for the Certified Family Peer Specialist

*By completing certification as a **Certified Family Peer Specialist** with the National Federation of Families, I pledge to:*

- Share my experience as a parent/caregiver when it may help other parents/caregivers
- Support other families/parents/caregivers as a peer with a common background and history rather than as an expert who has all the answers
- Acknowledge that each family/caregiver's answers may be different than mine
- Take responsibility for clarifying my role as a Certified Family Peer Specialist and as a parent/ caregiver of a child who experienced and/or is experiencing emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges
- Build partnerships with others involved in the care of our children
- Commit to honesty in my interactions as a Certified Family Peer Specialist and expect the same from others
- Commit to a non-judgmental and respectful attitude in my dealings with and discussions regarding families
- Commit to a non-adversarial approach to advocacy in my role as a Certified Family Peer Specialist

In order to fulfill this pledge, the Certified Family Peer Specialist agrees to abide by the following principles, rules, and procedures:

Principle 1 – Integrity

*In order to maintain high standards of competence and integrity as a **Certified Family Peer Specialist**, I will:*

1. Apply the principles of resiliency, wellness and/or recovery, family-driven approach, youth-guided or youth-driven approach, consumer-driven approach, and peer-to-peer mutual-learning principles in everyday interactions with families/caregivers
2. Champion the family's ethical decision-making and personal responsibility consistent with that family's/caregiver's culture, values, and beliefs
3. Champion the family's/caregiver's voice and the articulation of their values in planning and evaluating children's behavioral health related issues
4. Teach, mentor, coach, and support families/caregivers to articulate goals that reflect each family's/caregiver's current needs and strengths
5. Demonstrate respect for the cultural-based values of the family members engaged in peer support
6. Communicate information in ways that are both developmentally and culturally appropriate

7. Understand that not every CFPS can work with every family, and that if it becomes apparent that the working relationship is not a good fit, the CFPS will be receptive to a change
8. Empower families/caregivers I am assisting to be fully informed in preparing to make decisions and understand the implications of these decisions
9. Maintain high standards of professional competence and integrity
10. Abstain from discriminating against or refusing services to anyone on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, religion/spirituality, culture, national origin, age, sexual orientation, marital status, language preference, socioeconomic status, or disability
11. Only assist families/caregivers whose concerns are within my competency as determined by my education, training, experience, and on-going supervision/consultation
12. Abstain from establishing or maintaining a relationship for the sole purpose of financial remuneration to me or the agency associated with me
13. Terminate a relationship when it becomes reasonably clear that the peer relationship is no longer the desire of the family/caregiver

Principle 2 – Safety

In order to maintain the safety of all family members involved with CFPS services, I will:

1. Comply with all laws and regulations applicable to the jurisdiction in which the peer support services are provided, including, but not limited to confidentiality
2. Maintain confidentiality in my personal and professional communication and ensure that families/caregivers have authorized my use or release of any and all information about themselves or family members for whom they have legal authority, including but not limited to verbal statements, writings, or re-release of documents
3. Respect the privacy of the agencies with which I partner, and refrain from distributing internal or draft documents or private or internal conversations
4. Comply with all laws and regulations applicable to the jurisdiction in which the peer support services are provided
5. When complying with laws and regulations involving mandatory reporting of harm, abuse, or neglect, make every effort to involve the families/caregivers in the planning for services and ensure that no further harm is done to them as the result of the reporting
6. Discuss and explain to families/caregivers the rights, roles, expectations, benefits, and limitations of the peer support process

7. Always ensure clarity about my role and the role of families/caregivers
8. Maintain positive relationships with families/caregivers, refraining from premature or unannounced ceasing of the relationship until a reasonable alternative arrangement is made for continuation of similar family support services
9. Abstain from engaging in intimate emotional or physical relationships with anyone engaged in a family support relationship
10. Neither offer nor accept gifts related to the professional service of peer support, including, but not limited to personal barter services, payment for referrals or other remunerations. This also includes participating in personal financial transactions with families/caregivers engaged in a family support relationship

Principle 3 - Professional Responsibility

Through educational activities, supervision, and personal commitment, I will:

1. Stay informed on current research, policy, and developments in the field of family/caregiver support and children's behavioral health which relates to my practice area and children's general development, health, and well-being
2. Engage in helping relationships that include skill-building not exceeding my scope of practice, experience, training, education, or competence
3. Seek appropriate professional supervision/consultation or assistance for personal problems or conflicts that may impair or affect my work/volunteer performance, judgment, or the family/caregiver relationship
4. File a complaint with the NFF when there is reason to believe that another Certified Family Peer Specialist is or has been engaged in conduct that violates the law or this code (NOTE: Filing a complaint to the NFF is an additional requirement, not a substitute for or alternative to any duty of filing report(s) required by statute or regulation.)
5. Refrain from distorting, misusing, or misrepresenting my experience, knowledge, skills, or research findings
6. In the role of a supervisor/consultant, be responsible for maintaining the quality of my own skills as a supervisor/consultant
7. Give credit to persons for published or unpublished original ideas, and take reasonable precautions to ensure that their employer or affiliate organization promotes and advertises materials accurately and factually
8. In the role of a CFPS, maintain the highest level of professionalism as it relates to my virtual presence which includes online meetings and postings on social media and in email correspondence

Principle 4 - Certification Responsibilities

As a Certified Family Peer Specialist or recertification applicant, I will:

1. Remain current on certification fees
2. Comply with the Code of Ethics and re-certification requirements set by the NFF
3. Only use the CFPS (Certified Family Peer Specialist) credential or represent myself as having that credential when in full compliance with credentialing requirements
4. Always utilize the Certified Family Peer Specialist (CFPS) designation appropriately and use the current CFPS logo on any printed materials
5. Cooperate with any ethics investigation by any professional organization or government agency, and truthfully represent and disclose facts to such organizations or agencies when requested or when necessary, to preserve the integrity of the peer support profession
6. Notify the NFF of any legal action with potential impact on the practice of peer support, including but not limited to: the filing in any court of information, a complaint, indictment, conviction, revocation of suspended imposition of sentence, revocation of probation/parole, filing of any charge or action before a state, tribal or federal regulatory agency or judicial body concerning the practice of peer support or related professions, or a matter before another certification body. Such notification shall be made within sixty (60) days of the filing of such charge or action, and they shall provide documentation of the resolution of such action within sixty (60) days of that resolution.

Part 3: PLANNING YOUR CFPS APPLICATION

How do I apply for certification and what is required?

The NFF has gone paperless and only electronic submissions using our online application will be accepted.

Click here for the application: <https://www.fcmh.org/certification-application>

Applicants must document that within the past **five (5) years prior to application** they have accrued:

- **A minimum of 1000 hours of employment or volunteer experience** in the field of family support, without regard to the actual title used in the program where they work. Examples: parent partner, parent advocate, peer navigator, family support specialist
- **A minimum of 88 contact hours of training** in the CFPS “**Core Competencies**”
Click here to view the competencies:

<https://www.ffcmh.org/certification-competencies>

All relevant trainings should be recorded using the online **Certification Training Documentation Form** (a section of the CFPS application).

This form includes fields for you to provide the following detailed information:

- Titles of courses you completed during the past five (5) years
- Course presenters' names
- Dates and number of credit hours earned in each course
- Course descriptions
- Lessons learned
- Name of core competency addressed in each course
- Courses or trainings *provided by* the applicant

(NOTE: A maximum of 20 of the 88 hours may be credited for courses provided *by* the applicant.)

- An internship, mentorship, or on-the-job training period with verification from a supervisor
- A minimum of 20 hours of supervision, consultation, or mentoring
- **You must meet all eligibility requirements** as of the date of your application. CFPS candidates must agree in writing to the terms and conditions as noted in the CFPS application, which includes agreement to abide by the **Code of Ethics**.

When can I apply?

You can apply for certification at any time by completing the online application: Click here for the application: <https://www.ffcmh.org/certification-application>

Do I need to submit my CEUs course completion certificates as proof of course attendance?

There is no current requirement to submit CEUs completion certificates. There is however a training hours documentation form (mentioned above) where you will be able to provide the details of your course work.

Certification Fees

The **total certification fee for the initial three (3) years is \$350.00**. This fee covers the cost of processing the application, providing a secure exam site, on-going monitoring of the security and credibility of the exam items, and monitoring and enforcement of the ethical conduct of individuals holding the CFPS certification. It is a fee similar to other national certifications for similar work.

The **non-refundable** portion is the **\$50.00 processing fee** for the application. Once

the application is complete and the applicant has been approved, an **exam fee** of **\$300.00** must be submitted *prior* to taking the exam. If the applicant receives a passing score, there is no additional fee for three (3) years.

The \$300.00 fee supports the administration of your certification and covers exam and related expenses to ensure a fair and valid exam. It covers **three (3) years**, at which time the CFPS will need to re-certify. **Recertification** will *not* require an exam and will therefore be a lower fee of **\$200.00**. (Recertification is reviewed later in this handbook.)

Fee Payment Options

There are three (3) payment options:

1. Online at www.certification.ffcmh.org/apply
2. Credit card payment by phone, assisted by National Federation staff (240-403-1901)
3. Check mailed to:
National Federation of Families
15800 Crabbs Branch Way, Suite 300
Rockville, MD, 20855

Fees:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| • Initial application processing fee (non-refundable) | \$ 50.00 |
| • Initial Examination/Certification fee | \$ 300.00 |
| • Recertification fee | \$ 200.00 |
| • Re-test or Reinstatement fee | \$ 150.00 |
| • Insufficient funds check or credit card processing fee | \$ 50.00 |

Fee Refunds

The \$50.00 application processing fee is **not** refundable. It is possible to completely withdraw the application before testing or re-testing and receive a partial refund of the 300.00 certification exam fee.

PART 4: READINESS TO APPLY

What are the qualifications and how will I know when I'm qualified and ready to apply?

The **key** eligibility requirement for applying to become a Certified Family Peer Specialist (CFPS) is your “**lived experience**” parenting a child with emotional, behavioral, mental health, or substance use challenges, and/or intellectual disabilities.

Additional requirements include:

- your work as a paid family support staff member or volunteer
- **88 hours** of relevant continuing education credits

To complete the **CFPS application and training documentation form**, you will need to provide documentation about your experience, training, and practice, as outlined below:

1. **Describing your experience in detail** as a parent or **primary** caregiver to a child with mental health challenges, and your work with families who have children with emotional, behavioral, mental health challenges, substance use, and/or intellectual disabilities.

You will need to include:

- a. your family story with relevant details
- b. verification of 1000 hours of practice as a support staff member or volunteer

2. **Training** in the **CFPS Code of Ethics** and **Core Competencies** is required to be sure that you know the most current and successful methods of assisting families/caregivers associated with children experiencing emotional, behavioral health, substance use, or mental health challenges, and/or intellectual disabilities.

This training may include:

- your job in-service sessions
- conferences
- college courses
- workshops
- tutorials especially planned for CFPS applicants
- other meaningful learning experiences that prepare you to complete training and take the CFPS exam

Click here to read the competencies: (<https://www.ffcmh.org/certification-competencies>)

3. **Study on your own**, based on your own needs to learn the concepts, skills, and attitudes in the **CFPS Standards of Practice**.

4. **Supervision** to guide your understanding of your personal experience parenting

and your ability to separate your experiences from the experiences of other families and caregivers. This supervision, required of all CFPS applicants and CFPS certificate holders is key to ensuring that all families/caregivers receive objective, appropriate, and compassionate guidance as they navigate the child-serving systems.

5. Your CFPS Application and Certification Training Documentation Form - a written record of your journey to the CFPS, allowing you to present your personal experience and learning accomplishments, and to demonstrate your readiness for the CFPS exam.

6. Your supervisor's form (submitted separately by your supervisor)

7. Appropriate certification fee

PART 5: STEPS TO SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

What will I need to send with my CFPS application?

NOTE: All applications must be submitted using the NFF CFPS online application. Click here to access the application: <https://www.fcmh.org/certification-application>

CFPS APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Below is a checklist of items to be included in your CFPS online application:

- ✓ **Application** - completed and signed
- ✓ **Certification Training Documentation Form** (with all fields answered)
- ✓ **Code of Ethics** (signed, indicating that you have read and understand its contents)
- ✓ **Supervision Verification Form***
- ✓ **Application fee** of \$50.00 (The additional \$300.00 exam fee may be paid either at the time of application or upon being approved for the exam.)

*(The Supervision Verification Form is submitted separately by the applicant's supervisor.)

PART 6: APPLICANTS WITH SPECIAL REQUESTS OR CIRCUMSTANCES

Can I request CFPS exam accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

If you have a disability covered by a national disabilities program (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act), and you wish to request an accommodation for a qualified disability, please complete our “**ADA Request for Accommodations Form:** <C:\Users\Leann\OneDrive - National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health\CERTIFICATION\ADA\ADA Accommodations Request Form Dec. 2020.pdf>

The information you provide, along with any documentation regarding your disability and your need for exam accommodations is strictly confidential. Documentation is sufficient if it substantiates that the individual has a disability, and needs the reasonable accommodation requested.

Sufficient medical documentation should describe the nature, severity, and duration of the impairment, the activity, or activities that the impairment limits, the extent to which the impairment limits the employee's ability to perform the activity or activities and should substantiate why the accommodation is needed.

NOTE: The exam site nearest you may be unable to provide special accommodations. Depending upon your request, you may need to travel to a different site than the one nearest you, and some accommodations may require an additional fee.

If you have questions about your special accommodation needs, please contact the NFF at the earliest possible date before submitting your application.

Will I be considered for CFPS certification if I have a police record?

Applications with the following criminal or regulatory violations history will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and the applicant may be allowed to participate in the exam if the individual:

- Has a conviction for violation of any law, statute, or ordinance (other than minor traffic or moving violations), or
- Has or had a professional license or certification revoked, suspended, or voluntarily relinquished, or
- Is the subject of an open child protection case investigation resulting in a finding of child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment

Applicants who have not completed parole, probation, or any other terms or conditions imposed by any court in conjunction with a conviction, a suspended

imposition of a sentence or other sentencing alternatives will not be allowed to participate in the exam.

Is the exam offered in languages other than English?

Currently, the exam is available in English only. A candidate may arrange for a translator. The costs associated with a translator will be the responsibility of the candidate.

CFPS Quality Assurance Policies

The NFF is committed to protecting and defending the CFPS credential. Every applicant and CFPS certified through the NFF must adhere to the CFPS Code of Ethics. When it is believed that an applicant or a CFPS has violated the Code of Ethics, a supervisor may complete the **Ethics Complaint Form**. The form may be obtained by contacting the NFF. A person using the Ethics Complaint form should attach all necessary documentation in support of this complaint. Upon receipt, the NFF will determine whether to investigate the inquiry.

[Click here for the form:](#)

The NFF Ethics Committee has the power to but is not obligated to investigate all allegations of unprofessional and unethical conduct that may be harmful to the public, colleagues, or that otherwise may be contrary to the objectives of the CFPS Code of Ethics. If, during the course of its investigation, the Ethics Committee determines that there may be additional violations of the code, the Ethics Committee may investigate and determine the remedy for the violation.

Matters involving fraudulent use of the credential will be investigated and aggressively pursued by the National Federation of Families to protect the credibility of the CFPS.

The Ethics Committee reports its findings to the Executive Director of the NFF and determines candidate status.

PART 7: APPLICATION REVIEW PROCEDURES

What happens to my application packet once I submit it?

Applications received with all required documentation, meeting all eligibility requirements, and for which payment has been received, will be processed, and then reviewed by the NFF review board.

NOTE: To avoid delay of your application, please be sure to complete all sections on the required forms. Incomplete applications or non-payment will delay the application review process. (This will not disqualify applicants from taking the exam later.) CFPS candidates must agree to the terms and conditions as noted in the CFPS application, which includes agreement to the CFPS Code of Ethics.

When the NFF review board has approved your application, you will be eligible to take the exam. The CFPS exam, combined with your application materials will demonstrate that you have mastered the information required to become a Certified Family Peer Specialist.

Is an exam required?

Yes, passing the national CFPS exam is required for certification. You will be authorized to take the computer based CFPS exam once you have met the eligibility criteria of lived experience, training, work experience, and agreement of adherence to the Code of Ethics.

When is the exam available?

The exam is available year-round at sites throughout the United States and its territories, Canada and internationally. Click here to view the Pearson VUE website and learn more about the exam process and locations:

<https://home.pearsonvue.com/cpsp>

How will I know that I've been approved to take the exam?

Once the NFF review board approves your application, an NFF staff member will notify you via email whether your application has been approved and if you are eligible to take the CFPS exam.

How long does the review process take?

The review process can take 4-6 weeks, with an average of one month.

NOTE: Applicants must take the exam **within 6 months of being approved.**

How do I register for the exam?

Below are the steps:

1. Once your application is approved, a NFF staff member will notify you by email that your application has been approved and will ask you to confirm your contact information, also by email. *
2. Once that information is received and the exam fee of **\$300.00** is paid, a NFF staff member will email you to confirm your contact information. When that information is confirmed, you'll be registered with the **Pearson VUE** test center.
3. Within a few days of your having been registered with Pearson VUE, you will receive an eligibility status email from Pearson VUE providing a unique candidate ID number and test registration instructions. The email notification includes the ID number and contact information for scheduling your exam at a Pearson VUE test center location, date, and time convenient for you. It will also include a phone number for scheduling the exam. (Please see below for

Pearson contact information.)

(* **IMPORTANT:** The contact information you provide to the NFF must match **EXACTLY** what is on your photo ID that you plan to present at the test center. If the information does not match, you run the risk of being denied entrance to the exam.

Be sure to notify the NFF of any name or contact information changes. Click here for our change of address form: <https://www.ffcmh.org/change-of-information-form>)

You can schedule your exam by phone or online:

- **Phone:** 1-877-839-7768 (Ask for CFPS [or CPSP].)
Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Central Time
- **Online:** www.pearsonvue.com/cpsp

NOTE: You will need to establish an account with Pearson VUE using the candidate ID provided.)

SUMMARY OF APPLICATION & EXAM REGISTRATION STEPS

1. Complete, sign and submit all NFF online application forms.
(The supervision form is submitted separately by your supervisor.)
2. The application approval process can take 4-6 weeks. Once a candidate is approved, the NFF staff member will send the applicant an email indicating the applicant's approval status.
3. If the application is approved, next the NFF will email the applicant to request contact information confirmation to be used for the exam registration.
4. Once the contact information confirmation is received, the NFF staff member will register the applicant with the Pearson VUE test center.
5. Within 2-3 days, the applicant will receive a confirmation email from the Pearson VUE test center including detailed information and a phone number and website address for scheduling an exam.
6. The applicant should then contact the Pearson VUE center to schedule an exam and notify the NFF of the date.
(**NOTE:** If the Pearson notification email does not arrive within a few days, please check your Spam/Junk box.)

IMPORTANT: Exam scheduling will be available for 6 months from the receipt of the Pearson email. Scheduling after the 6-month period will require prior approval from the Certification Commission for Family Support.

PART 8: TAKING THE CFPS EXAM

Where are the exam centers located and when are exams available?

The national CFPS exam is administered through **Pearson VUE** test centers, located worldwide, and available year-round at testing sites in both urban and rural areas. In some locations, the site is only available during standard 9-5 work hours. Some sites have evening and weekend hours. When you call or schedule your exam online with the test center, you will have the opportunity to select a test center location nearest you.

What happens on the day of the CFPS exam?

Candidates should report to the Pearson VUE test center at the address they chose and are advised to make sure they know the exact location prior to the exam date to prevent getting lost and arriving late. Allowing extra time for a traffic delay, a flat tire or poor weather conditions is also strongly recommended. **Plan to arrive at least 30 minutes before your appointment.**

Candidates will also be required to provide a signature and may have their digital photo taken when checking in. Some sites require fingerprints.

While not required, the NFF advises that the exam taker bring their email confirmation to the test center. However, it is sufficient to have the valid ID mentioned above with the name and address on the ID matching the information on the scheduling confirmation email you will receive.

NOTE: Candidates must check in using **TWO (2) forms of valid ID, one of which must be a government-issued photo ID with signature** (driver's license, government-issued photo ID, or passport).

Hazardous Weather or Local Emergencies

In the event of hazardous weather, or any other unforeseen emergencies occurring on your exam day, Pearson VUE will determine whether circumstances require rescheduling of the testing date and time. Every attempt will be made to administer the exam as scheduled.

Examples include:

- Disaster resulting in an officially declared "local state of emergency"
- Sudden illness or injury (A doctor's verification may be required.)
- Death of immediate family member within two (2) business days prior to the exam date (A copy of the death certificate or obituary may need to be provided for consideration of the cancellation and rescheduling fee to be waived.)

Rescheduling Process

Candidates who inform the Pearson Vue test center at least one business day before their scheduled exam may be able to postpone their exam until a later time within the next 30 days.

No-Shows or Late-for-Appointment Policies

Candidates who are late or do not arrive for the testing appointment, or who do not cancel or reschedule their testing appointment, will lose the fees submitted. They will be required to complete and submit a retest application along with the retest fee to the NFF.

PART 9: EXAM RESULTS

When will I receive my exam results?

A score report will be provided at the test site upon completion of the exam. Your overall score will only be either “Pass” or “Fail” - not a numerical score.

Additionally, you will be provided with a “Pass” or “Fail” as a summary for each information domain of the exam. You will not be told how many actual questions you passed or failed. No results will be provided over the phone.

The following information appears on a score report:

- Candidate Name
- Candidate ID
- Exam Title
- Minimum Passing Score (69 percent)
- Exam Date
- Result (Pass/Fail)
- Test Site

When will I receive my CFPS credentialing certificate?

Generally, you can expect to receive your certificate within 7-14 business days after having received your *official* score. *

***NOTE:** At the end of each month, Pearson VUE test center emails the NFF its official monthly report listing the test candidates from that month and their pass/fail status. (The NFF is proud to be a good steward of the environment and has gone paperless, so certificates will be emailed.)

What if I do not pass the CFPS exam?

If you do not pass the exam, you may be eligible to take the exam two (2) more times. A retest will be allowed by submitting a **Test-Retest Request Form** and retest fee.

Click here for the retest form: <https://www.ffcmh.org/exam-retake-request>

Once the Retest Application is complete, an authorization ID number will again be provided for scheduling another exam through: www.pearsonvue.com/cpsp

NOTE: There is a minimum waiting period of **60 days** before retaking the exam. You are allowed **90 days** from the retest approval notification to complete the retest.

After three (3) unsuccessful attempts, you must wait **six (6) months** before starting the application process again. This period allows you time to prepare adequately for the retest and prevents over-exposure to the exam.

Name, Address, Email, Phone or Other Contact Information Changes

Candidates and those already certified should be sure to notify the NFF of any contact information changes while maintaining certification. This is the only way that the certification office can notify you about important certification and recertification information.

Click here for the contact information update form:

<https://www.ffcmh.org/change-of-information-form>

What if I think the CFPS exam was not fairly administered?

Appeal Policies

Appeals of the denial of initial certification can be made for:

- The technical accuracy and grading of questions
- Fairness of the execution of the certification testing procedures

NOTE: Requests for an appeal must be made no later than **thirty (30)** days after the applicant is denied certification.

Exam Security

All exam materials are the property of the NFF. Removal of any material from the exam room by unauthorized persons is prohibited. Any attempt to reproduce or memorize all or part of the exam is prohibited by law. Breach of exam security by an applicant will be considered a violation of the CFPS Code of Conduct.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

The National Federation of Families does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.

Confidentiality

The NFF follows required best practices concerning confidentiality of candidates,

certificate holders, score results, and all certification related materials, except those considered public information.

Information about candidates and their exam results is confidential. Studies and reports concerning candidates will contain no information identifiable with any candidate, unless authorized by the candidate.

All personal data including applications, payments, scores, and contact information maintained by the NFF or its testing partners is stored in confidential electronic and hard copy files with access limited to authorized and designated staff.

Information that is considered public and subject to release upon a written request includes:

- whether the individual is an applicant or holds the CFPS credential
- the expiration date of the individual's CFPS credential
- whether or not the individual's CFPS credential is in good standing
- whether the individual's CFPS credential has been suspended, revoked, and there is a public recommendation for remediation to good standing

PART 10: Recertification

What is the Recertification process?

Recertification is required within **three (3) years**. Recertification does *not* require taking a second exam. It does require providing documentation of continuing education or training and on-going mentorship or supervision.

The recertification fee for a **three-year (3-year)** period is **\$200**.

Recertification requirements include submission of these items:

- **Recertification Application** <https://www.ffcmh.org/recertification>
- **Training Hours Documentation Form** showing **44 contact hours** of training (continuing education credits) related to the CFPS competencies
- Your signature indicating that you have read and understand the CFPS **Code of Ethics**
- Disclosure of any current or past criminal or regulatory violations
- **Recertification fee** of 200.00

PART 11: Invoking Inactive Status

A Certified Family Peer Specialist whose certification is in good standing with the National Federation and is in good standing with his or her employer or volunteer agency may request inactive status for **up to three (3) years** if unable to meet the requirements of certification due to, but not limited to, the following:

- A decline in physical health and/or mental health
- Extenuating personal circumstances
- “Loss of” or “Change in” employment/volunteer status
- Birth of a child
- Military deployment
- Other extenuating employment/volunteer circumstances

Inactive status will *not* be granted for failure to comply with the ongoing education guidelines of certification or reported violations of the Code of Ethics.

When you petition for a reinstatement of active status, you will be required to document a minimum of 44 contact hours of training, demonstrate continued good standing with the Code of Ethics, and pay the re-certification fee of \$200. During the inactive status period, you will be restricted from utilizing the term “nationally Certified Family Peer Specialist” in any manner until you return to active status.

To invoke inactive status:

- Complete the Invoke Inactive Status Form
- Sign and date the form, requesting inactive status

Click here to access the Invoke Inactive Status Form:

<https://www.ffcmh.org/invoke-inactive-status>

PART 12: COMPLAINTS & CERTIFICATION REVOCATION

An individual and/or agency may file a complaint against either a Certified Family Peer Specialist or CFPS applicant, and the National Federation of Families may deny, suspend, or revoke a certification on several grounds.

For more information, please refer to the Certification Revocation Policies Form, CFPS Complaint Form, and Certification Revocation Appeal Form here:

- [Certification Revocation Policies Form](#)
- [CFPS Complaint Form](#)
- [Certification Revocation Appeal Form](#)

PART 13: CERTIFICATION & EXAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is certification?

Certification is the process through which an individual voluntarily submits his/her credentials for review based upon clearly identified competencies, criteria, or standards. The primary purpose of certification is to ensure that individuals employed in any state in this field meet the highest standards of performance.

Why national certification?

Some states offer certification for individuals providing family/caregiver support. National certification is necessary to provide portability throughout all the states. National certification:

- Ensures uniformity of core knowledge by practitioners
- Endorses continuing professional development and credibility
- Advances uniform standards and scope of practice
- Promotes ethical practice
- Endeavors to protect the consumer
- Provides recognition of specialty certification, such as wraparound, youth-in-transition to adulthood, and cognitive disabilities

What is a "Certified Family Peer Specialist?"

A Certified Family Peer Specialist™ can articulate lessons learned from his/her own “lived experience” parenting a child with an emotional, behavioral, mental health and/or substance use challenge. This individual has specialized training to assist and empower families with children experiencing emotional, developmental, behavioral, mental health, substance use and/or disabilities challenges. A Certified Family Peer Specialist partners with child and family-serving systems to improve family outcomes and strives to eliminate stigma and discrimination.

What training is required?

Training is available at the local and state level. The following continuing education credit hours across the **5 core competency domains** are required:

- **Certification:** 88 hours
- **Recertification:** 44 hours

Each applicant is responsible for completing the online training hours documentation form showing which competency was met by a training or educational event.

In my state we use a different title than Family Peer Specialist. Will we have to change the name the organization uses?

Certified Family Peer Specialist is the title used for national certification and is intended to be broad enough to encompass all state and local titles. Few states use the name Certified Family Peer Specialist. We know that the work is done under many titles throughout the United States and internationally. With national certification, workers will still be able to use the local or state title. The national certification will be for a Certified Family Peer Specialist.

What is the definition of “family/caregiver support?”

The *focus* of the service is empowering families/caregivers to advocate for their child with emotional, developmental, behavioral, mental health, or substance use challenges, and/or intellectual disabilities.

The scope of the service involves assisting and supporting families/ caregivers to navigate through multiple agencies and human service systems (e.g., basic needs, health, behavioral health, education, social services, etc.). It is strength-based and established on mutual learning from common lived experience and coaching that:

- promotes wellness, trust, and hope
- increases communication and informed decision making and self-determination
- identifies and develops advocacy skills
- teaches or coaches parenting, self-care, and wellness/recovery skills
- increases access to community resources and the use of formal and natural supports
- reduces the isolation that family members experience and the stigma of emotional behavioral and mental health disorders

What is the definition of a “parent” for the person who applies for a peer support specialist certificate?

A “parent” (or other primary caregiver) is an individual whose primary responsibility is/was parenting a child with emotional, developmental, behavioral, mental health, or substance use challenges, and/or intellectual disabilities (including across the lifespan) and can articulate the experience of parenting that child. This individual

teaches and coaches others to feel empowered and capable of advocating for themselves, their family, and their child's needs.

The individual parenting a child can be someone other than the biological or adoptive parent, and might also be a:

- family member standing in for an absent parent (e.g., aunt, uncle, grandparent, etc.)
- person chosen by the family or youth to function in the role of a parent (e.g., neighbor, friend, non-family godparent, etc.)

Who is eligible to apply?

Basic eligibility includes:

- “Lived experience” of parenting a child with emotional, developmental, substance use, behavioral, or mental health challenges and/or intellectual disabilities
- 88 contact hours of relevant continuing education credit trainings
- 1,000 hours of work experience (paid or unpaid) delivering peer level support to other similarly situated parents/caregivers and their families

Certification Exam FAQs

Is an exam required?

Yes, passing the national exam is required for certification. You will be authorized to take a written computer-based examination once you have met the eligibility criteria of lived experience, training, work experience, and agreement of adherence to the **Code of Ethics**. The exam is available year-round at sites throughout the United States and its territories, Canada and internationally through www.pearsonvue.com/cpsp

What is the certification fee? Why is there a certification fee?

The **total** certification fee for the first three (3) years is **\$350.00**. This is the cost of processing the application, provision of a secure test site, on-going monitoring of the security and defensibility of the exam items, and monitoring and enforcement of the ethical conduct of individuals holding the CFPS certification. It is a fee consistent with other national certifications for similar work.

Of the \$350.00, \$50.00 is paid upon time of the application, and the remaining \$300.00 is paid if and when the applicant is approved to take the exam. The fee supports the process of your certification and covers testing and related

administrative expenses, including subcontracts to psychometricians for essential tasks and built-in securities to ensure a fair and valid exam. The non-refundable payment portion is the **\$50.00** fee for processing the application.

(NOTE: The applicant has the option to pay the full \$350.00 at the time of application.)

If the applicant receives a passing exam score, there is **no additional fee for three (3) years**, after which time the CFPS will need to re-certify. **Recertification will not require a test and will therefore be a lower fee of \$200.00.**

The development of the exam or the preceding research was paid for by the National Federation of Families and seed grants from SAMHSA, the American Institutes for Research, Magellan Health, Optum Health, and other supporting individuals.

How long does it take to learn if my application has been approved?

Applicants who meet eligibility criteria will receive an approval email from the NFF, which can take 4-6 weeks.

Following approval, an email will be sent to the applicant from **Pearson VUE Professional Testing** with contact information and instructions on how to schedule the exam. The authorization allows the applicant to schedule the test at a place, date, and time of their choosing **within six (6) months of the email date.**

When is the application due and how often is the exam given?

The applications can be submitted at any time because the test is available year-round and upon request.

Where will the test be given?

The exam is available at testing sites in both urban and rural areas. In some areas, the exam sites only offer the exam during daytime working hours. Some sites offer evening and weekend hours. When the applicant receives a test verification email from the Pearson VUE test center, the applicant can then contact the center to schedule an exam at a location nearest them.

How many questions are there and how long is the test?

There are **120 questions** on the exam. **Two hours and fifteen minutes (2.25)** are allotted to allow candidates time to review the Non-Disclosure Agreement and Training Tutorial before the exam begins.

Where and how can I find training venues?

Trainings are available through a variety of agencies and online resources. You may also find available courses by contacting some of the resources listed on our website. Click here to view resources: www.ffcmh.org/resources

Is there a practice test with sample questions?

Our website offers a short list of sample questions:

Click here to view the sample test: <https://www.ffcmh.org/certification-practicetest>

Will I be able to see my score?

Scores are provided as pass/fail only.

How long does it take to receive *official* notification of pass/fail test status?

Pearson VUE sends the NFF its official test results report at the end of each month.

Are there any other study guides besides the NFF 12-question practice test?

The practice test is the only guide provided by the NFF, but other guides may be available online. We suggest that you check with your place of employment, as well as city, county, or state departments of behavioral or mental health for additional options.

Are there special accommodations for persons with disabilities?

Special accommodations are provided in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Click here to view the accommodations request form:

<C:\Users\Leann\Desktop\ADA Accommodations Request Form.pdf>

What happens if I don't pass the exam?

Candidates who do not pass the national exam may retake it two additional times, with a minimum period of sixty (60) days *between* exams. There is a retest fee of **\$150**. Once approved to retest, authorized candidates have *up to sixty (60) days* to take the exam.

After three test attempts, the individual must wait a period of six (6) months before restarting the application process. This period allows the applicant time to adequately prepare for the retest and prevents overexposure to the exam. Candidates must meet all eligibility requirements in effect at the time of any subsequent application.

Click here to access the retake exam request form:

<https://www.ffcmh.org/exam-retake-request>

To help you prepare to retake the exam, we recommend that you review the practice test available here: <https://www.ffcmh.org/certification-practicetest>

How long can I use “CFPS” after my name? Will I need to recertify?

Certification is valid for three (3) years. Recertification does not require taking a second exam. It does require providing documentation of **44 hours** of continuing education or training according to the required competencies and on-going peer services supervision. **Recertification fee for a three-year (3-year) period is \$200.00.**

Are there any NFF scholarships available for certification/recertification?

Currently, there are no scholarships available through the NFF. We suggest researching scholarship opportunities in your area.

If you have any additional questions regarding certification or recertification, please contact our main office at 240-403-1901 / lsheerman@ffcmh.org

We wish you the best of luck with your CFPS application.