

WAC 296-15-360 Qualifications of personnel—Certified claims administrators. (1) **What is a certified claims administrator?** An experienced adjudicator who has been certified by the department to meet the requirements of WAC 296-15-350(2).

(2) **How do I become a certified claims administrator for self-insured claims?**

(a) Under the mentorship of a certified claims administrator, have a minimum of one year of experience in the administration or oversight of claims under Title 51 RCW. The experience must have occurred within the five years immediately prior to your filing of the application to take the "self-insurance claims administrator" test.

(b) Have completed:

(i) A comprehensive goal-oriented curriculum approved by the department and resulting in a worker's compensation professional designation; or

(ii) An approved training program within the department.

(c) Take and pass the department's "self-insurance claims administrator" test. The department will provide annual reports to stakeholders. The department will report the results, identify and consider feasible alternative methods of test delivery, make any recommendations for improvements if appropriate and seek comments from stakeholders.

(i) If you have the requisite experience under (a) of this subsection, you may take the test without completing the training required under (b)(i) or (ii) of this subsection. The provision to take the test for certification without completing the requisite training will expire January 1, 2022.

(ii) If you have already passed the test and are a certified claims administrator, you will maintain your certified claims administrator designation without completing the training required under (b)(i) or (ii) of this subsection, and you will need to fulfill the continuing education credits under subsection (6) of this section.

After passing the test, you are designated a certified claims administrator. This is a lifetime certification, provided that continuing education requirements are met.

(3) **How do I receive approval to take the test?** To be approved to take the "self-insurance claims administrator" test, you must apply using the department's online database.

The department will review your application and determine if you meet the minimum requirements to take the test. The department will respond to your application no less than fourteen days prior to the next scheduled test date.

(4) **What happens if I fail the test?** You may retest after the failed test.

If you are a certified claims administrator and you fail the test, your certification will be terminated until you retest and pass.

(5) **What must a department-approved comprehensive goal-oriented curriculum for a worker's compensation professional designation include?** The curriculum must include:

(a) All phases of basic, intermediate, and advanced claim validity issues, including injury during the course of employment, occupational exposure and illness or disease, causal relationship of injury or illness, prima facie consideration, and submittal of claims to department;

(b) All phases of basic, intermediate, and advanced medical benefit management, including treatment authorization, surgery approval,

aggravation of conditions, segregation of conditions, use of consultations and independent medical examinations (IMEs), and department medical guidelines;

(c) All phases of basic, intermediate, and advanced compensation management, including determining the wage as the basis of compensation, payment of temporary total disability payments, permanent partial disability payments, and loss of earning power compensation; and

(d) All phases of basic, intermediate, and advanced work disability prevention, including worker-centric return to work practices, modified or light duty jobs, other vocational recovery interventions, and medical provider collaboration on return to work, activity prescription forms, and job analyses.

(e) Training must include at least seventy-two credit hours as provided in subsection (6)(b) of this section.

(f) Curriculum submitters must provide their written core curriculum plan to the department with a table of contents listing the courses in the curriculum, and a detailed description of the content for each course. The curriculum advisory committee will review the submitters' proposed curriculum content and advise of any recommended adjustments, and the department will determine and provide notice of approval or denial within ninety days, or extend the time for approval or denial of the plan for another ninety days. The department may request additional materials, and require adjustments in the core curriculum plan prior to approval, as it deems necessary.

A department-approved curriculum must be reapproved every three years.

(6) How does a certified claims administrator maintain their certified status? A certified claims administrator may maintain certified status by earning the required continuing education credits as outlined in this subsection.

(a) You must earn forty-five credits every three years.

Credits earned within five years prior to the effective date of this rule may be carried forward and applied toward meeting the required continuing education credits for three years following the effective date of this rule up to a maximum of forty-five credits.

Credits may be earned in the following areas:

(i) Instruction on relevant workers' compensation subjects that help injured workers heal and return to work, and focus on areas of recovery such as, but not limited to, medical benefit management, payment of compensation, and vocational services;

(ii) Instruction on existing or historical workers' compensation statutes, case law, rule, or departmental policy, which may assist with managing claims, answering questions, and addressing concerns in accordance with WAC 296-15-350(5);

(iii) Instruction on new developments in workers' compensation such as, but not limited to, changes in statute, case law, rule, or departmental policy, which may assist claims management personnel in remaining current in accordance with WAC 296-15-350(5); or

(iv) Credits may also be earned in injury prevention and safety, in addition to credits for injury recovery and claims administration, but not to exceed five of the forty-five credits in three years.

The forty-five credits must include any training designated as mandatory by the department. All training must be specific to Washington law, or describe in detail how the training is relevant to administering Washington law. If you fail to earn sufficient continuing education credits, you will be required to retake the written test to maintain your certified status.

(b) Continuing education providers must submit a training plan with a detailed outline of each area of training to the department when courses are offered. The curriculum advisory committee will review the submitters' proposed training plan and advise of any recommended adjustments, and assignment of course credit will be determined by the department as follows: A maximum of one credit per hour of training will be awarded. Credit will be assigned based on 0.5 increments; no credit will be awarded for increments less than 0.5.

(c) Department-approved continuing education courses must be re-approved biannually (every two years).

(d) You must track and report earned credits at the department's online database. You must obtain and retain signed verification of courses attended. Verification of earned credits must be received by the department by the date the certified claims administrator's certification expires. Extensions will not be granted. If your certification lapses, you will not need to complete the comprehensive goal-oriented curriculum if you apply for reinstatement within two years of the lapse, and then take and pass the department's "self-insurance claims administrator" test.

(e) The department may audit the reported credits of any certified claims administrator at random, or "for cause." Falsification of reported credits will result in revocation of the individual's certified claims administrator status, and may result in the department's refusal of future applications to take the self-insurance claims administrator test.

(7) **How often must certified claims administrators notify the department of changes to their contact information?** Certified claims administrators must notify the department within thirty calendar days of the effective date of a change in mailing address, work location, or name. Changes must be reported using the department's online database.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 51.04.020, 51.32.190 and 2020 c 277. WSR 21-11-083, § 296-15-360, filed 5/18/21, effective 7/1/21. Statutory Authority: RCW 51.04.020. WSR 19-01-095, § 296-15-360, filed 12/18/18, effective 7/1/19. Statutory Authority: RCW 51.04.020, 51.14.030. WSR 14-02-121, § 296-15-360, filed 1/2/14, effective 2/2/14; WSR 12-03-088, § 296-15-360, filed 1/17/12, effective 2/17/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 51.04.020, 51.14.020, 51.32.190, 51.14.090, and 51.14.095. WSR 07-17-162, § 296-15-360, filed 8/22/07, effective 10/1/07; WSR 06-06-066, § 296-15-360, filed 2/28/06, effective 4/1/06.]