

A large decorative graphic on the left side of the cover consists of several concentric, curved lines in white, yellow, orange, teal, and blue, resembling a stylized rainbow or a series of overlapping arcs. A smaller version of this graphic is positioned to the right of the main one.

# **RAC-CT Candidate Handbook**

Your Reference for Details on Achieving the Resident Assessment  
Coordinator-Certified (RAC-CT) Credential

## **Disclaimer**

AANAC certifications and education were developed to serve as programs and references for long-term care. To the best of our knowledge, they reflect current federal regulations and practices. However, they cannot be considered absolute and universal. The information in these courses must be considered in light of the individual organization and state regulations.

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This handbook reflects the policies and procedures as of January 2018. All policies and procedures are subject to change. If you have any questions or require further information, visit [www.AANAC.org](http://www.AANAC.org) or contact AANAC staff toll-free at (800) 768-1880.

## **Statement of nondiscrimination**

The opportunity to earn the RAC-CT credential is available to all candidates who meet the minimum criteria. AANAC does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual preference, or disability.

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## **Accreditation statement**

AAPACN is accredited by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

# Resident Assessment Coordinator–Certified (RAC-CT) Candidate Handbook

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## **Welcome**

Congratulations on taking the first step toward earning the Resident Assessment Coordinator–Certified (RAC-CT) credential. The American Association of Nurse Assessment Coordination (AANAC) established the certification program in 1999 to promote the highest standards for clinical assessment and care planning in the long-term care profession. Reviewing this handbook is the first step toward joining long-term care professionals who have distinguished themselves with certified knowledge of the Resident Assessment Instrument/Minimum Data Set (RAI/MDS 3.0) process.

## **About AANAC**

AANAC is a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to supporting long-term care professionals who provide quality care for nursing facility residents across the nation. AANAC has earned the reputation as the premier resource and network for long-term care professionals involved in the RAI/MDS process. Committed to the success of the entire interdisciplinary team, AANAC delivers accurate and timely information, educational opportunities, advocacy in legislation, and a peer community of support.

AANAC certification and education set the standard in the long-term care industry. The organization has been a trusted provider of MDS information since 1999 and has grown to be the go-to source in survey management, leadership, Medicare, and more. Whether you're looking to earn AANAC's respected certification or just want to brush up your knowledge by taking a course or two, AANAC keeps you up-to-date and makes the complexities of long-term care regulation easy to understand.

AANAC is accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation (ANCC).

## **How to use this Candidate Handbook**

This handbook is intended to help you understand the policies and procedures for RAC-CT certification and the steps required to earn and maintain your credential. This handbook is also intended to help you learn about RAC-CT education. Once you decide to pursue the RAC-CT credential, this Candidate Handbook will be a useful reference to you as you:

- Review the RAC-CT Body of Knowledge
- Assess your knowledge and professional experience of the content
- Identify gaps in knowledge and develop a personal course of study
- Study, prepare for, and take the RAC-CT examinations
- Maintain your credential through recertification

AANAC's educational materials are reviewed and updated by a team of experts to ensure you receive the most up-to-date information related to this complex body of knowledge. No document can address the comprehensive list of potential questions, policy details, or future program changes. You are encouraged to use this handbook as a supplement to the program information listed on the [AANAC website](#), as well as information provided by AANAC staff, whom you can contact at (800) 768-1880.

## **Overview**

### **What is the purpose of RAC-CT certification and education?**

RAC-CT certification and education have long set the national standard for knowledge of the Skilled Nursing Facility Prospective Payment System (SNF PPS) and MDS 3.0. AANAC serves the public interest by developing, administering, and reviewing a certification process that reflects current standards of competent performance in clinical assessment and care planning using the RAI/MDS process. Whereas the fundamental concept of the RAI/MDS process is to promote quality of care and quality of life for residents in skilled nursing facilities, the goal of RAC-CT certification and education is to establish that nurses have the knowledge and skills necessary to demonstrate competence in this area.

### **What are the benefits of certification?**

Upon completion of the 10 RAC-CT courses, and after passing the exams with a score of 80% or better, you will be allowed to use the initials RAC-CT to designate your status. This designation indicates you have met a nationally recognized standard of expertise in SNF PPS and MDS 3.0 assessments. RAC-CT is a registered trademark owned by AANAC.

Both individuals and employers can benefit from an individual's receiving RAC-CT certification.

<p>Individual professional benefits can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Verification by an independent organization of your mastery of the knowledge required to perform your job well</li><li>• Professional growth and development</li><li>• Enhanced job opportunities</li></ul>	<p>Organizational benefits can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased productivity, as the RAI/MDS process is properly implemented</li><li>• Less training time needed to educate employees on the complex Medicare regulations and procedures</li><li>• Accurate billing, leading to full receipt of Medicare funds for services provided</li></ul>
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### **Who is eligible to take the exams?**

AANAC encourages all members of the interdisciplinary team to seek RAC-CT certification: RNs, LPNs, LVNs, nurse assessment coordinators, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, social workers, health information professionals, dietitians, and administrators.

AANAC recommends that individuals have at least six months of experience with the RAI/MDS process before beginning the certification process. If you have less than six months of experience, consider the [New to MDS Resources](#) and also gaining practical experience in your long-term care facility.

### **How do I register for certification and education?**

To purchase RAC-CT exams and education in the format most beneficial to you, visit the [AANAC website](#).

## How much does certification, recertification and education cost?

The RAC-CT program consists of 10 educational courses, offered in several formats to support various learning styles. The RAC-CT Recertification program consists of 2 courses.

- Online plus PDF
  - Per course: \$65 Member / \$130 Non-member
  - Full 10-course set: \$617.50 Member / \$1,235 Non-member (a 5% discount)
- Printed manual
  - Per course: \$85–\$105 Member / \$150–\$195 Non-member
  - Full 10-course set: \$826.50 Member / \$1,467.75 Non-member (a 5% discount)
  - Shipping and handling is additional
- Live three-day RAC-CT workshop
  - \$575 Member / \$775 Non-member

### Recertification

- Online plus PDF
  - Per course: \$80 Member / \$160 Non-member
- Printed Manual
  - \$100 Member / \$180 Non-member
  - Shipping and handling is additional
- RAC-CT Recertification virtual workshop
  - \$180 Member / \$360 Non-member
- Live two-day RAC-CT Recertification workshop
  - \$200 Member / \$400 Non-member

AANAC membership costs \$124 annually / \$217 for two years, and the benefits are substantial. Immediate benefits you'll receive from AANAC include:

- Synthesized and well-explained updates on complex CMS regulations and requirements, as well as need-to-know information on the changing long-term care landscape
- 24/7/365 advice from peers and experts in a members-only online forum/community setting
- Access to the career center, where you can find your next dream job or hire a new team member
- Membership with an established, nationally recognized professional association
- Up to 50% discounts on certification and educational opportunities, and conference registration

Long-term benefits you'll receive from AANAC include:

- A way to grow your career through speaking engagements, writing and blog submissions, and a mentoring program
- An established support system and network of like-minded professionals
- The opportunity to play a role in the future of long-term care by participating in advocacy efforts and volunteering

## Getting Ready for the Exams

### **RAC-CT Body of Knowledge**

AANAC undertook a rigorous process with numerous experts in the profession to determine the domains and tasks within the RAC-CT Body of Knowledge, in terms of both criticality and importance. The domain emphasis reflects the percentage of questions that come from each domain.

The 10 RAC-CT examinations, and associated education, are designed for long-term care professionals with at least six months of experience with the RAI/MDS process. Candidates who complete all 10 courses earn 25.4 hours of continuing education credit. Candidates who attend the three-day workshop earn 22.5 hours of education credit. Candidates who attend the two-day recertification workshop earn 15.0 hours, and those who take the recertification virtual workshop receive 4.3 hours.

If you have less than six months of experience, consider the [New to MDS Resources](#) and also gaining practical experience in your long-term care facility.

- Domain 1 – MDS 3.0 Coding for OBRA and PPS (Domain Emphasis: 22%) (Online course CE: 5.0 hours)
  - Perform an accurate assessment using the Resident Assessment Instrument (RAI) process and the Minimum Data Set (MDS). Understand the intent of each MDS item as it relates to effective care planning, accurately code each item of the MDS, and understand the effects of inaccurate MDS coding.
  - Tasks:
    - Demonstrate an understanding of the background of the regulatory requirement and the purpose of the RAI/MDS process
    - Section A: Identification Information
    - Section B: Hearing, Speech, and Vision
    - Section C: Cognitive Patterns
    - Section D: Mood
    - Section E: Behavior
    - Section F: Preferences for Customary Routine and Activities
    - Section G: Functional Status
    - Section GG: Functional Abilities and Goals
    - Section H: Bladder and Bowel
    - Section I: Active Diagnoses
    - Section J: Health Conditions
    - Section K: Swallowing/Nutritional Status
    - Section L: Oral/Dental Status
    - Section M: Skin Conditions
    - Section N: Medications
    - Section O: Special Treatments, Procedures, and Programs
    - Section P: Restraints and Alarms
    - Section Q: Participation in Assessment and Goal Setting
    - Section V: Care Area Assessment Summary
    - Section X: Correction Request
    - Section Z: Assessment Administration
- Domain 2 – Accurately assessing functional status and the MDS 3.0 (Domain Emphasis: 7%) (Online course CE: 2.0 hours)
  - Utilize the Minimum Data Set (MDS) screening tool to accurately assess a resident’s functional status, determine a resident-directed approach to care planning, and ensure the resident attains and maintains his or her highest level of function.
  - Tasks:
    - Identify the components of overall functional assessment
    - Accurately code MDS Section G: Functional Status

- Implement the process of determining an appropriate, resident-directed approach to care planning for functional status
    - Understand how functional status is used in the survey process to trigger further investigation of decline in residents
- Domain 3 – OBRA timing and scheduling for the MDS 3.0 (Domain Emphasis: 9%) (Online course CE: 2.0 hours)
  - Understand the requirements for scheduling and timing OBRA-required MDS assessments.
  - Tasks:
    - Understand the timing of OBRA-required assessments
    - Differentiate between and accurately manage assessment time frames
    - Accurately conduct Significant Change of Status Assessments (SCSA)
    - Accurately conduct Significant correction to prior comprehensive assessments
    - Accurately conduct Discharge assessments, Entry records, and tracking records
- Domain 4 – PPS timing and scheduling for the MDS 3.0 (Domain Emphasis: 12%) (Online course CE: 2.0 hours)
  - Understand timing and scheduling requirements for the Skilled Nursing Facility Prospective Payment System (SNF PPS) for payment under Medicare Part A.
  - Tasks:
    - Accurately set the assessment reference date (ARD) for a SNF PPS assessment
    - Accurately manage the time frames for scheduled assessments
    - Accurately manage the PPS Part A Discharge Assessment
    - Accurately manage the time frames for unscheduled assessments
    - Distinguish challenges for both scheduled and unscheduled assessments
    - Understand the assessment-claim connection
    - Accurately conduct Discharge assessments and Entry records
    - Accurately correct Medicare PPS Assessments
- Domain 5 – Resource Utilization Groups IV (RUG-IV) and the MDS 3.0 (Domain Emphasis: 10%) (Online course CE: 3.0 hours)
  - Focus on the RUG-IV classification system used in the Medicare Skilled Nursing Facility Prospective Payment System (SNF PPS) to accurately incorporate the RUG-IV classification system into the case-mix payment calculation.
  - Tasks:
    - Understand the background of the RUG-IV classification system
    - Differentiate the components of the RUG-IV classification system
    - Apply RUG-IV 66-group model calculations, including any of the specific levels PA1–RUX
    - Determine the appropriate RUG-IV from among the eight major categories
- Domain 6 – Care Area Assessments (CAAs) and the MDS 3.0 (Domain Emphasis: 9%) (Online course CE: 2.0 hours)
  - Implement the process of the CAAs, the 20 care areas, CAA documentation requirements, timing requirements for completion, and related MDS items.
  - Tasks:
    - Understand the role and process of CAAs
    - Conduct CAAs

- Apply CAA documentation requirements, including assessment findings and date requirements for Section V: Care Area Assessment Summary
- Domain 7 – Care planning and the MDS 3.0 (Domain Emphasis: 9%) (Online course CE: 2.0 hours)
  - Develop an individualized, interdisciplinary care plan designed to address the resident’s specific problems, risk factors, and complications, with the goal of attaining and maintaining the highest practicable physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being for the resident.
  - Tasks:
    - Understand the purpose and foundation of the care planning process to effectively apply critical-thinking skills
    - Develop a care plan
    - Apply appropriate time frames and allow updates and revisions to the care plan according to the resident’s changing needs
- Domain 8 – Quality Measures and the MDS 3.0 (Domain Emphasis: 7%) (Online course CE: 2.9 hours)
  - Understand the Quality Measures, including how they are calculated; identify the MDS items that drive the Quality Measures; and accurately code the MDS to improve the quality of care in nursing facilities.
  - Tasks:
    - Demonstrate an understanding of the role and objectives of the Quality Measures in the Nursing Home Quality Initiative and for the survey process
    - Demonstrate an understanding of Quality Measure concepts, assessment definitions, and components of the calculation
    - Manage the Quality Measures with effective processes to achieve high-quality resident care and competitive QM scores
- Domain 9 – The Five-Star Quality Rating System (Domain Emphasis: 7%) (Online course CE: 2.0 hours)
  - Understand how the Five-Star Quality Rating System is designed to help individuals, family members, caregivers, and the public find and compare the quality of nursing facilities; identify how to improve the rating for your facility.
  - Tasks:
    - Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose and background of the Five-Star Quality Rating System
    - Demonstrate an understanding of the Survey star rating
    - Demonstrate an understanding of the Staffing star rating
    - Demonstrate an understanding of the Quality Measures star rating
    - Identify how to proactively manage and improve your facility's Five-Star rating with the goal of improving resident care
- Domain 10 – Introduction to Medicare Part A (Domain Emphasis: 8%) (Online course CE: 2.5 hours)
  - Understand Medicare Part A coverage and the facility’s responsibilities for managing the Medicare benefit, making appropriate coverage decisions, and maintaining compliance as a Medicare provider; understand the facility’s responsibility when a resident is denied coverage.
  - Tasks:
    - Demonstrate an understanding of Medicare Part A coverage, managing the Medicare benefit, and making appropriate coverage decisions
    - Demonstrate an understanding of the medical review process and procedures for managing claims

## **What is the format of the exams?**

All exams are completed online, accessed through your AANAClassroom account on the [AANAC website](#). Each exam is in an objective, multiple-choice question format. The questions are designed to test your recall of specific knowledge, as well as your ability to analyze and apply that knowledge to example situations. The number of questions on the final exam varies per course. It is not a timed test. The questions test knowledge of the domains and tasks in the RAC-CT Body of Knowledge. The domain emphasis reflects the percentage of questions that come from each domain. You will be asked to select the correct or best answer from a selection of four options. Only one answer is correct for every question.

## **How do I prepare for the exams?**

Content for examinations is not obtained from any one particular source. The RAC-CT Body of Knowledge should be a guideline for study preparation. The educational materials from the online curriculum, as well as live workshops, provide a basis of knowledge for exam preparation. You should also utilize current journals, textbooks, source documents like the [MDS 3.0 RAI User's Manual](#), and other reference material related to the subjects listed in the Body of Knowledge as supplemental preparatory materials for the exam.

After reviewing the Body of Knowledge, you can plan your exam preparation based on your level of general understanding and working knowledge of the subject areas. For example, because of daily use at your current job, you may have a good understanding and working knowledge of some of the domain areas—these areas may need only a quick review as you prepare for the test. For areas with which you are less familiar, you may decide you need more in-depth study or training before completing the exam(s); you can allocate your study time appropriately.

You should also consider what percentage of the test questions will cover each major content area; this information is listed as the domain emphasis percentage in the Body of Knowledge section of this handbook. By focusing your studies, you can spend extra time as needed to thoroughly understand the most significant sources of content area on the exam. Sample exam questions and answers are listed in the Resources section of this handbook as an additional study aid.

## **How are reasonable accommodations made?**

If you require reasonable accommodations to complete the exams for the program, please contact AANAC at (800) 768-1880, or by email at [education@AANAC.org](mailto:education@AANAC.org).

## **Taking the Exams**

### **What are the requirements during the exams?**

AANAC assigns you a user name and password as a key control in monitoring and verifying user identity in the AANAClassroom area of the [AANAC website](#). This log-in information helps ensure that each user's information is available only to the authorized user. As a user of AANAClassroom, it is important that you do not share this user name and password with anyone. You should be the only one to access and complete your course materials and exams in your AANAClassroom account.

Each learning module comes with a pretest and an exam. You are encouraged to utilize the pretest and quizzes for each course as learning tools before attempting the exam. You may complete the pretest as many times as you like before taking the exam. When you are comfortable with the test format and computer-testing process, you may quit the pretest and begin the exam.

Once you begin the exam, you may complete it either in one sitting or in sections. It is an open-book format, so you may use reference materials when you take the exam. However, you cannot seek assistance from other individuals while completing the exam. The exam is offered on an honor-system basis that assumes you will act in good faith to ensure your performance is an accurate representation of your own personal knowledge and skills related to the subject matter.

AANAC does not tolerate cheating or any breach of academic or professional ethics that may compromise the security or integrity of its exams. All incidents of reported cheating will be investigated. Discussing content found on exams is strictly prohibited; any such posts on AANACConnect community discussion boards will be removed. Anyone found compromising the security of the exams by attempting to copy, record, or distribute questions in any manner will be permanently excluded from the certification process.

### **How much time do I have to take an exam and course?**

- **Online exam and course** – When you enroll in an online exam and course (including the recertification virtual workshop), you will complete material through your AANAClassroom account. You have 90 days to complete the exam and course once it is launched. The exam itself is not timed, and you do not have to complete it in one sitting. An exam and course is considered launched once it is opened for the first time. After 90 days, the exam and course will expire if not completed. Exams and course material purchased but not launched will not expire.
- **Workshop and online exam** – If you attended a live workshop, you will take the exams separately through your AANAClassroom account. Once you launch an exam, you have 90 days to complete it. The exam itself is not timed, and you do not have to complete it in one sitting. After 90 days, the exam will expire if not completed.
- **Printed manual and online exam** – If you purchase a printed manual, you will take the exam separately through your AANAClassroom account. Once you launch an exam, you have 90 days to complete it. The exam itself is not timed, and you do not have to complete it in one sitting. After 90 days, the exam will expire if not completed.
- **Exam attempts** – You have three attempts to pass each exam with a score of 80% or better. If you do not pass after three attempts, you may purchase three more attempts for \$45. If you do not pass after six attempts, you must wait one year before taking the exam again. In the case of an extenuating circumstance, you can submit a formal, written appeal to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AANAC Education department at [education@AANAC.org](mailto:education@AANAC.org).

## **After the Test**

### **How is my information kept confidential?**

Information about candidates and their examination results is confidential. AANAC carefully protects your data from loss, misuse, unauthorized access or disclosure, alteration, or destruction. Within the company, data is stored in password-controlled servers with limited access. Your personal information is never shared outside the company without your permission, unless required by law to comply with a current judicial proceeding, court order, or legal process. If AANAC is required by law to release your confidential information, you will be notified by email, unless prohibited by law.

### **How are the exams scored?**

The RAC-CT exams, as well as RAC-CT courses and workshops, set a standard of basic levels of knowledge that can reasonably be expected of long-term care professionals involved in the RAI/MDS process. Your performance on the exams will be measured against this predetermined standard to assess your competency in these subject matters. Your performance will not be measured against other candidates taking the certification exams; your individual performance will determine whether you meet the knowledge standards required to pass.

### **What information will I receive about my score?**

Once you have completed the examination, you will be presented with the percentage of questions correctly answered. Based on the percentage, your exam results will indicate “pass” or “fail.” You must achieve a score of 80% or better to pass the exam.

You will not see the correct answers to missed questions on the exam results. To protect the confidentiality of the exam content, and to maintain the value and integrity of the certification, AANAC does provide task level feedback. The exam is intended to measure proficiency in the subject and to determine whether an individual has the knowledge necessary for certification.

### **When will I receive my score?**

The exams are self-scoring and provide immediate feedback. Upon completion of the exam, your computer screen will display the percentage of correctly answered questions and indicate “pass” or “fail.” You may access this information at a later date by logging into your AANAClassroom account and clicking on My Transcript.

Once you have passed all 10 exams, you may begin using the initials RAC-CT to designate your status as a certified Resident Assessment Coordinator. Credentials are awarded for a two-year period.

### **Can I retake an exam(s) if I don't pass?**

You have three attempts to pass an exam with a score of 80% or better. If you do not pass after three attempts, [you can purchase an additional three attempts for \\$45 per course](#). If you do not pass after six attempts, you must wait one year before taking the exam again.

In the case of an extenuating circumstance, you may submit a formal, written appeal to AANAC to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AANAC Education Department at [education@AANAC.org](mailto:education@AANAC.org).

### **Is there an appeals provision?**

AANAC works diligently to provide top-quality course materials and exams using a standardized process of question development and validation. AANAC also affords candidates a high level of flexibility in completing the exam. Due to these policies and procedures, an appeal will be heard only in the case of an extenuating circumstance. In this case, you may submit a formal, written appeal to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AANAC Education Department at [education@AANAC.org](mailto:education@AANAC.org).

## **Recertification: Certification Maintenance**

### **When do I need to recertify?**

The RAC-CT certification is valid for two years from your certification completion date. Your credential expires at the end of the month in which you completed your exam requirements. You will have a one-month grace period beyond your certification expiration date to complete the recertification requirements.

Due to regular updates to the curriculum, you are encouraged to begin your recertification no sooner than six months before your certification expiration.

### **What are the recertification requirements?**

To maintain your RAC-CT certification, you must recertify every two years. To recertify you must take and pass two recertification exams and courses: *RAC-CT 3.0 Recertification: MDS 3.0 Updates and PPS Scheduling Challenges*, and *RAC-CT 3.0 Recertification: MDS 3.0 Common Coding Errors and Quality Measure Pitfalls*. Alternatively, you can complete the 10-course RAC-CT program again.

Each recertification exam requires a passing score of 80% or better.

Purchasing recertification courses does not extend the expiration date of your credential. The expiration date for your credential remains the same, regardless of when your course materials expire.

### **How much does RAC-CT recertification and education cost?**

All pricing can be found online at the above link.

**What if I let my certification lapse?**

If you do not complete the recertification requirements within the one-month grace period of your certification expiration date, you will no longer be entitled to use the RAC-CT credential. If you miss your grace period, you must take and pass the 10 required exams and courses for the RAC-CT program.

In the case of an extenuating circumstance, you can submit a formal, written appeal to AANAC to request an exception to the policy. To find out how to submit an appeal, contact the AANAC Education Department at [education@AANAC.org](mailto:education@AANAC.org).