Frequently Asked Questions. Activity Profession and MEPAP Training
Natalie B. Davis ACC MEPAP Instructor

The Activity Profession

What is an Activity Professional?
An activity professional is a person that plans, implements and evaluates the program of activities in a long term care setting. The activity professional is responsible for establishing a program to meet the physical, social, cognitive, and emotional needs of the residents. The program is specifically developed based on the interests, preferences, habits and lifestyle routines of the residents who live within the care setting. The activity professional completes an activity assessment or profile of each resident, develops an individualized plan that is carried out and evaluates the outcomes of this plan. The activity professional is responsible for the ongoing operations of the department and is a department manager.

What are the typical duties?
- Duties of the job may be categorized as follows:
  Delivery of activity service: large group events, small specialized groups, 1 to 1
  Planning and operations: calendar, policy and procedures, meetings, regulatory compliance, department management
  Documentation and records: assessments, care plans, attendance response, progress notes, reviews
  Volunteer management: recruitment, training and supervision
  Community and staff support: networking, communication and resource utilization

Where do activity professionals work?
Activity professionals work in different practice settings along the continuum of care: independent living/retirement or CCRC, assisted living, nursing and rehab, memory care, or day services. The titles vary, the position may be called Life Enrichment Coordinator, Activity Program Director, Activity Specialist or Lifestyle Coordinator.

How much paper work is involved?
The required record keeping varies with the practice setting. The most intensive paper work is required in licensed nursing facilities.

What are the typical working hours?
The position requires the implementation of programs 7 days a week and holidays. It is up to the individual activity professional and the company to determine how this is implemented. Support from other facility staff members is important.
Are there organizations that I can join to become involved?

There are local, state and national organizations that support the activity profession. These are organizations that provide continuing education hours, networking opportunities, and a venue for sharing of your skills and expertise.

What training do I need?

The training/educational requirements vary across the continuum of care. In Texas, to be QUALIFIED to hold the position of activity director in a nursing facility, assisted living Alzheimer’s facility or day service program, minimum standards must be met. These include a degree in Therapeutic Recreation or Occupational Therapy OR completion of an approved course for activity professionals through an accrediting body such as NCCAP.

Do I need to be CERTIFIED?

While certification is not mandatory at this time, it is looked upon favorably and is one of the ways in which to be considered qualified by the federal government. Some jobs require a person be certified for employment, however it also elevates the field and credibility of the profession for you to join the thousands of certified across the country.

What is the difference between certified and qualified?

A person in Texas upon successful completion of the state requirements is considered QUALIFIED and is eligible to apply for their national credentials at some level. CERTIFICATION is a process that involves submitting to the national organization verification of academic education, experience and continuing education and the MEPAP course. A credential is then issued to the applicant.

Certification within the Activity Profession

How do I become certified?

National certification can be obtained through the National Certification Council for Activity Professionals, NCCAP. The website is very detailed and explains the process, standards, and levels of certification and the requirements of each.

In Texas, The Consortium for Therapeutic Recreation and Activities Certification is also an option. The website also explains the process.

What are the benefits of national certification?

Benefits include more recognition, increased continuing education, pay increase, access to updated information and flexibility for national employment.

How long does it take to become certified?

The minimum work experience in the field of activities is 4000 hours (2 years) to become a ADC activity director certified.

Are there different levels of certification?

There are 3 levels of certification available through NCCAP.
Activity Assistant Certified AAC  
Activity Director Certified ADC  
Activity Consultant Certified ACC

For each level there are different “tracks” or pathways to get there. Each level however requires completion of the Modular Education Program for Activity Professionals MEPAP 2nd Edition.

Where can I go for further information?
www.nccap.org

The Modular Education Program for Activity Professionals

What is the MEPAP?
In 1994, NCCAP adopted a Modular Education Program for Activity Professionals as the accepted curriculum. The plan was first presented in 1991 by the National Association of Activity Professionals (NAAP) and The National Certification Council for Activity Professionals (NCCAP). Since July 1, 2002 the MEPAP Part 1 has been a required component for certification for all activity professionals. To continue to meet the needs of the profession and prepare students to become an activity professional, the NCCAP board, curriculum committee, and strategic planning committee have worked together to “reengineer” the modular program. The MEPAP second edition consists of 20 learning modules, with detailed core content areas for each. The second edition prepares students to meet the STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION IN ACTIVITY SERVICES that was adopted by the NCCAP Board in 2003.

| STANDARD 1 | Foundation Understandings |
| STANDARD 2 | Activity Services Practice Infrastructure |
| STANDARD 3 | Activity Services Clinical Practice |
| STANDARD 4 | Activity Services Management |
| STANDARD 5 | Activity Service Field Experience |

The MEPAP is 180 hours of educational learning and 180 hours of experiential learning (practicum). The MEPAP is divided into 2 teaching portions of 90 hours each. Part 1 prepares students for the basic functions and duties of an activity professional: to design, deliver and evaluate activity services for older adults across the continuum of care. Part 2 prepares students to apply principles of management in their role as activity professional: to provide service through leadership, using principles of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling

What topics are studied in the class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1</th>
<th>Part 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Activity Service Practice Settings</td>
<td>Unit 1: The Art and Science of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Gerontology and Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>Unit 2: Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 3: Governmental and Social Systems</td>
<td>Unit 3: The Planning Function of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 4: Professional Framework: The Role of the Activity Professional</td>
<td>Unit 4: The Organizing Function of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 5: The Adult Client Population</td>
<td>Unit 5: The Staffing Function of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 6: Professional Approach to Care: Care Planning Practices</td>
<td>Unit 6: The Directing Function of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 7: Activity Service: Design, Development and Evaluation</td>
<td>Unit 7: The Controlling Function of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit 8: Communication and Colloquy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How long is the course?
Each course is 90 contact hours of classroom/online learning and 90 hours of practicum work. The 90 hours is divided into 15 weeks of sessions totaling 6 hours per week.

What are the requirements for completion?
Each student must complete the all requirements of the online sessions and the practicum assignments to receive a certificate of completion. Each week the following will be required for the classroom 90 hours (6 per week)
- Assigned reading from the required text 1 hour
- Online reading from assigned sites 1 hour
- Completion of assigned learning activities (introductory exercises into the unit, comprised of quizzes, self-assessments, scavenger hunts, hands-on activities) 1 hour
- Completion of the power point lecture 1 hour
- Completion of discussion questions for the unit. 1 ½ hours
- Posting and sharing 3 activity ideas on assigned weekly topic. ½ hour

Is there a text book?
Yes Essentials for the Activity Professional in Long-Term Care by Susan Lanza

What skills should the online student have?
It is essential that the student have the time required to read each assignment thoroughly. The ability to write concisely and express ideas in paragraph format is essential.

What is a practicum?
"A practicum is any experience wherein students learn by taking on responsible roles as workers in organizations and observing and reflecting on what happens while they are there. Expected outcomes of such experiences include increased self-esteem and personal growth derived from successfully meeting new interpersonal and intellectual challenges, acquisition of particular skills and knowledge, exposure to various work roles and career choices, and service to a particular community”


How much time is spent on a practicum?
The minimum number of hours to be spent on practicum responsibilities is 90 hours.

How do I find a practicum site?
It can be any of the care options on the continuum of care. However, the student will be responsible for understanding the regulations and documentation for all care options. For those currently working in a care facility, the facility can serve as the practicum site.
What kinds of assignments will be required?
You will have specific class assignments including direct observation of resident groups, individual visitation with residents, direct leadership of resident groups, communication with facility personnel (administrator, nursing department), weekly dialogue with the activity director regarding facility policies, procedures, department organization, and documentation procedures. You may perform duties assigned to volunteers of the facility. You will also be asked to provide copies of calendars, forms (documentation forms used), job descriptions, and facility publicity materials.

The practicum will require 2 weekly reports.
Each week you will receive the specific required assignment that must be written and submitted as well as the practicum summary form that will list the specific activities that were observed or lead, specific approaches that were successful, meetings that were attended and a summary of the discussion with your advisor. This format will be the same each week. This is a journal format.

How much time do I need to meet with the PA?

It is recommended that a time to meet with your PA be established on a weekly basis, ranging from 20-30 minutes. This time should be used to ask questions to complete class assignments, discuss problems, and review the weekly journal.

Do I need an agreement form?
Yes, this will be coordinated through the college.