

- This product was developed by the Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council in Billings, MT. Support for this product was provided by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation® in Princeton, New Jersey.

“Exercise Certification Programs for Tribal Staff: Choosing the Right Program for Your Needs”

Rob Schurrer, PhD

Professor

Black Hills State University

Spearfish, SD 57799-9405

robschurrer@bhsu.edu

TEL 605-642-6169

Background and Purpose

- Discussions with Tribal Health Directors and staff over the past year have generated considerable interest in Exercise Certification.
- The purpose of the paper is to provide information about the many options available for certification to the Tribal Health Directors that will help them choose the best/appropriate training and certification programs for their staff.

Exercise Certification Issues

- Exercise certification provides a measure of competence for professionals and employers in the area health and physical fitness.
- 300+ certification options worldwide.

Exercise Certification Issues

- Wide variance in requirements.
- License is not required to claim one is an Exercise Leader or Exercise Specialist.
- Certifying Agencies can be established by anyone with a typewriter or computer and printer.
- Many one-day certification courses.
- Medically and scientifically sound.

Certification Organization Issues

- Seek out an organization that is respected by the professionals in the area of study, and one that has standards that must be met.
- Most exercise leader or personal trainer certifications use the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) as a guide. ACSM has been certifying exercise professionals since 1975, and is the leader in exercise research

Certification Requirements

- Certifications require knowledge and skills in the areas of:
 - anatomy,
 - physiology,
 - exercise physiology,
 - nutrition,
 - kinesiology,
 - biomechanics,
 - health-related physical fitness assessment and exercise programming.
- The degree to which a person masters these areas determines the level of certification.

Academic Programs

- Academic programs at colleges and universities can be difficult to understand, particularly in the health-related physical fitness and health promotion areas.
- A recent study by Elder et al. examined 235 undergraduate Exercise Science programs and found that 29% followed ACSM guidelines and 33% followed ACSM and National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE).
- Adherence to the areas of exercise physiology, biomechanics, and human anatomy and physiology were good, very little attention was paid to exercise prescription, exercise testing, exercise and aging, or exercise with special populations.
- Most programs also did not require an internship or field experience and place minimal attention to health promotion.
- Look at program first.

Health-Related Physical Fitness

- Health-related fitness focus.
- These certifications place a special emphasis on rehabilitation from or reducing the risk of lifestyle disease such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, and hypertension.
- Exercise and physical activity as a safe treatment option is the hallmark of these certifications
- Focus today is:
 - explanation of accreditation,
 - levels of certification available and the general requirements,
 - recommendations,
 - certifying agencies endorsed by NOCA,
 - and certifying agencies not endorsed by NOCA.

Nothing is free, so what is the best option?

NOCA

- National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA), leader in setting quality standards for credentialing organizations.
- The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) is the accreditation body of NOCA.
- Certification programs may apply and be accredited by the NCCA if they demonstrate compliance with each accreditation standard.
- *NCCA's Standards* exceed the requirements set forth by the American Psychological Association and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

An NCCA accredited certification program must:

- *Conduct certification activities in a manner that upholds standards for competent practice in a profession, occupation, role, or skill.*
- *Include individuals from the certified population on the certification board or governing committee of the certification program.*
- *Establish, publish, apply, and periodically review key certification policies and procedures concerning existing and prospective certificants.*
- *Employ assessment instruments that are derived from the job/practice analysis and that are consistent with generally accepted psychometric principles.*

- *Develop and adhere to appropriate, standardized, and secure procedures for the development and administration of the assessment instruments.*
- *Set the cut score consistent with the purpose of the credential and the established standard of competence for the profession, occupation, role, or skill.*
- *Award certification only after the knowledge and/or skill of individual applicants have been evaluated and determined to be acceptable.*
- *• Establish and apply policies and procedures for secure retention of assessment results and scores of all candidates.*
- *• Demonstrate that its recertification requirements measure or enhance the continued competence of certificants.*

- A complete listing of the requirements can be found at
<http://www.noca.org/ncca/accreditation.htm>.
- A list of the members and disciplines covered by NCCA is listed at:
<http://www.noca.org/about/orgmembers.htm>.

NOCA Organizational Members

- American Academy of Nurse Practitioners 12/31/06
- American Association of Critical-Care Nurses Certification Corporation 3/31/04
- American Council on Exercise
 - Clinical Exercise Specialist 8/31/08
 - Group Fitness Instructor 8/31/08
 - Lifestyle and Weight Management Consultant 8/31/08
 - Personal Trainer 8/31/08
- American Nurses Credentialing Center Commission on Certification
 - Medical Surgical Nurse 3/31/09
 - Nursing Administration 3/31/09
- Commission on Dietetic Registration of the American Dietetic Association 12/31/06
- National Board for Certified Counselors
 - Master Addictions Counselor 11/30/07
 - National Certified Counselor 11/30/07
- National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) Certification Commission
 - Certified Personal Trainer 4/30/08
 - Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist 4/30/08

Best Practice?

- A best practice has not been established for exercise certification.
- The needs of the professional and agency vary.
- One certification does not meet the needs of all people seeking advice and consultation regarding their personal exercise training.

Entry Level Certifications

- Typically require the person to be:
 - 18+,
 - CPR certification,
 - basic exercise physiology and anatomy.
- Largest percentage of certifications.
- Typically do not require formal education or coursework from an accredited college or university, and often are supplied by for profit organizations.

American Council on Exercise (ACE)

- Personal Trainer certification is an entry-level certification designed for trainers providing any form of one-on-one instruction, or in small groups.
- Special attention has been given to injury prevention, emergency techniques and legal issues confronting today's fitness professionals.

American Council on Exercise (ACE)

- Personal Trainer certification requires a basic knowledge of:
 - exercise science,
 - nutrition,
 - fitness assessment,
 - exercise programming,
 - instructional and spotting techniques.AA, AS, or Bachelors degree is not required.

American Council on Exercise (ACE)

- Study materials and workshops are available from ACE to prepare for this exam.
- 150-300 hours of self-study depending on the academic background of the person seeking certification.
- Equivalent of 9 credit hours of course work in the respective areas to achieve minimal competency.

Second Level Health Fitness Instructor (HFI)

- *Health Fitness Instructor (HFI)* certification from the American College of Sports Medicine www.acsm.org is available for anyone with an Associates or Bachelors degree in a health related discipline and certification in CPR.

Health Fitness Instructor (HFI)

- “The ACSM Health/Fitness Instructor® (HFI) is a professional qualified to assess, design, and implement individual and group exercise and fitness programs for apparently healthy individuals and individuals with controlled disease.”

Health Fitness Instructor (HFI)

- Health Fitness Instructor is skilled in:
 - evaluating health behaviors,
 - risk factors,
 - conducting fitness assessments,
 - writing appropriate exercise prescriptions,
 - Motivation
- Focus is on Health Promotion.

Health Fitness Instructor (HFI)

- Most have a Bachelors degree,
- A well-designed associates program can properly prepare students for this exam.
- Twenty to thirty hours of college coursework (1 credit hour usually involves 15 hours of class) in anatomy, physiology, exercise physiology, nutrition, health-related fitness assessment, kinesiology, first aid/CPR, and exercise programming are required for successful completion of this certification exam.

Health Fitness Instructor (HFI)

- Most hospital based Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation programs employ exercise leaders that have the HFI certification, or ask that they attain this certification within a few months.

Third Level Exercise Specialist

- The *Exercise Specialist*® is a healthcare professional certified by the ACSM to deliver a variety of exercise assessment, training, rehabilitation, risk factor identification and lifestyle management services to individuals with or at risk for cardiovascular, pulmonary, and metabolic disease(s).

Exercise Specialist

- These services are typically delivered in cardiovascular/pulmonary rehabilitation programs, physicians' offices or medical fitness centers.
- The ACSM Exercise Specialist® is also competent to provide exercise-related consulting for research, public health, and other clinical and non-clinical services and programs.

Exercise Specialist

- The majority of people seeking this certification have completed graduate degrees in exercise physiology, health promotion, cardiopulmonary rehabilitation, occupational or physical therapy.
- This level of mastery requires hundreds of hours of clinical experience and knowledge of pharmacology, clinical exercise physiology, advanced physical fitness assessment, and advanced exercise prescription.

Fourth Level

Program Director, or

Clinical Exercise Physiologist

- Highest level in Health-Related fitness is:
 - Program Director,
 - Clinical Exercise Physiologist.
- These professionals have usually completed PhDs in Exercise Physiology and are working in clinical settings as clinical directors, or directing research.

Where do we start?

- Wide range of certifications for exercise professionals can be very confusing.
- Many offer a daylong workshop immediately followed by an exam.
- Review courses for rigorous certifications may last for 1-2 days.
- Level of competency is quite low for certifications that teach & test same day.
- The safety & health of all concerned depends on the exercise leader mastering area.

Cost of Certification

- Cost of attaining and maintaining certification can be over two hundred dollars annually.
 - includes annual membership fees,
 - cost of continuing education.
- Rigorous certifications require continuing education to maintain certification.
 - achieved at remote sites through journals and regular notices from the organizations.

American Council on Exercise (ACE)

- The American Council on Exercise (ACE) www.acefitness.org
 - \$200.00 fee for the Personal Trainer Exam,
 - \$300+ for home study course,
 - 15-20 hours of approved CEU / two years.

ACSM

- ACSM:
 - annual dues of \$190.00
 - a four-year time frame for recertification
 - <http://www.acsm.org/certification/requirements.htm>.
 - \$60.00 fee for recertification.

Recommendations

- Exercise certification of any degree is worthwhile and beneficial to the professional, the facility, the program and most of all the client or participant.

“Why don’t we develop our own certification program”?

- Why spend the time and effort to do this when viable, appropriate programs already exist.

Benefit of Organizations

- Outside certifying agencies gives your staff & program legitimacy.
- ACE & ACSM support their programs with rigorous review and valid testing.
- More cost effective if the money is spent on staff education and training to achieve the certifications that are already recognized by the nationally recognized organization who certify testing programs.

<http://www.noca.org/ncca/accreditation.htm>.

Benefit of Organizations

- Continuing education is vital to the effectiveness of a health-related physical fitness program.
- Exercise is an essential treatment modality when working with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity and hypertension.
- To afford participants maximal benefit from their exercise program the exercise leader must know what is appropriate, and what is a “best practice.”

Benefit of Organizations

- Professional certification programs seek and support this goal.
- Professional exercise leaders and trainers must constantly review the latest scientific literature and expand their knowledge of ways to improve their client or patients exercise training.
- Entry-level certifications such as the ACE Personal Trainer certification program is an excellent starting point for staff education, & certification.

Safety & Maximum Benefit

- Many problems associated with exercise training can be avoided or prevented if the exercise specialist or leader knows how the patient will respond to various modes of exercise.
- The goal of exercise training is to enhance the functional capacity of the individual, and in doing this we usually observe a decreased risk for lifestyle disease such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and stroke.

Safety & Maximum Benefit

- Since all people are neither capable of nor interested in the same exercise program, a competent skilled exercise specialist can adapt the exercise-training program to best fit the needs of the individual.

Leadership Role

- After achieving the knowledge base that would allow an exercise specialist to pass the ACE Personal Trainer exam, the next step would be to prepare for the ACSM Health Fitness Instructor certification.
- This is a natural progression as the knowledge, skills and abilities required for this exam ask the fitness professional to take more of a leadership role.

Leadership Role

- Common for the exercise specialist who holds the HFI certification to play a role in the continuing education of the client or patient.
- The addition of these educational classes for the participants is very beneficial in terms of exercise compliance, and adherence to positive health behaviors, both of which will improve the quality of life for the participant.

NOCA Approved Credentialing Organizations

- ACE (approved)
- NSCA (approved)
- NASM (member, not approved)
- ACSM (seeking membership)

American Council on Exercise (ACE)

- Founded in 1985,
- >200,000 professionals worldwide,
- ACE - one of two organizations recognized
- The National Strength and Conditioning Association is the other specializing in sports related training.

American Council on Exercise (ACE)

- Personal Trainer Certification is designed for trainers providing any form of one-on-one instruction, demonstrating a basic knowledge of basic exercise science, nutrition, fitness assessment, exercise programming, and instructional and spotting techniques.

American Council on Exercise (ACE)

- Group Fitness Instructor certification:
- teaching any form of exercise in a group setting.
- Passing the ACE Group Fitness Instructor certification exam means that you have demonstrated your knowledge of anatomy, kinesiology, exercise physiology, instructional techniques and injury prevention.

American Council on Exercise (ACE)

- Clinical Exercise Specialist: advanced personal trainer certification for special populations.
- Baccalaureate degree in a health related field, or current ACE Personal Trainer Certification or other ACE-approved certification (ACSM, NSCA, NASM).

National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA)

- Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS),
- Certified Personal Trainer (CPT).
- Both certifications are very rigorous,
- Most professionals holding these certifications have graduate degrees in an exercise science related area, such as Exercise Physiology or Physical Therapy.

National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA)

- NSCA's mission is to serve as a worldwide authority on strength and conditioning with a special emphasis on athletic performance.
- Health-Related Physical Fitness: American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) or American Council on Exercise (ACE).

American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)

- 50th anniversary 2004,
- ACSM began in 1954 with eleven physicians, educators and physiologists with the expressed interest in safe physical activity.
- The ACSM MISSION STATEMENT: ACSM advances and integrates scientific research to provide educational and practical applications of exercise science and sports medicine.
- Focus: promoting healthy physical activity.

American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)

- ACSM has had a significant impact on exercise certification and credentialing over the past several decades.
- Many professionals consider the ACSM certification to be the gold standard in exercise certification, even though they are not accredited by NOCA.

ACSM Committee on Certification and Registry Boards Mission Statement:

- To develop, provide, and market high quality, accessible, affordable credentials and continuing education programs for health and exercise professionals who are responsible for preventive and rehabilitative programs that influence the health and well-being of all individuals.

ACSM Support

- (www.acsm.org)
- More information on the ACSM certifications can be found on page 322 of the ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription, 6th edition.
- Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins publishing (www.lww.com)

ACSM Certification

- 20,000 professionals since 1975,
- Support their certification through continuing education, publications, position stands, workshops, and professional meetings.
- Each certification has a minimum level of experience, or education required for a person to attempt the exam, and requires continuing education to maintain certification. Resources provided by ACSM are scientifically sound and are accessible twenty-four hours a day via the Internet providing tremendous resources to its

ACSM Certification

- Resources provided by ACSM are scientifically sound and are accessible twenty-four hours a day via the Internet providing tremendous resources to its members.
- ACSM professionals at universities and hospitals around the world generally conduct research concerning exercise.

OTHER OPTIONS ?

- Several hundred options.
- Volume of literature promoting various programs and courses of study.
- Many certification programs will come to your facility to hold workshops and exams.
- Many require a substantial cost.
- Compare the benefits of each.

Aerobics and Fitness Association of America (AFAA)

- Claims to be the largest fitness educator worldwide, issuing more than 155,000 certifications to fitness professionals from 73 countries around the world since 1983. AFAA holds more than 2,500 workshops, often hosted by health clubs and studios.
- AFAA offers certification for Personal Trainers, Kickboxing, Step and several other specific activities.
- Cost for Personal Trainer Certification is \$498.00, a home study course, now offered online.
- Not recognized by NOCA.

American Fitness Professionals and Associates (AFPA)

- Founded in 1994.
- Claim to have certified 50,000 certified fitness professionals worldwide.
- AFPA has numerous online services and tends to specialize in specific activities.
- **AFPA** certification is approved and accepted by the US Department of Defense, YMCA/YWCA, Curves for Women, Bally's Fitness, LA fitness and other fitness centers.

American Fitness Professionals and Associates (AFPA)

- www.afpafitness.com certification options and fees.
- Primary goal is to offer an *affordable educational experience that is both practical & functional for the fitness professional and the general public.*
- AFPA's Personal Trainer certification costs \$292.95.
- CPR & First Aid certification are not required.
- AFPA claims to be certified by NOCA, but according to the NOCA website, AFPA is not one of the organizations recognized.

Exercise Science Alliance (ESA)

- Founded in 1984.
- Certified 56,000 trainers and fitness leaders worldwide.
- California based, they mainly provide specialty certifications in the areas of Aquatic Fitness, Personal Training & Strength Training, Aerobic Certification, Pilates, Corefit, and Cardio Kickbox Specialist.

Exercise Science Alliance (ESA)

- ESA's Personal Training and Strength Training Certification cost about \$370.00 and involves a 16-hour workshop.
- <http://www.esafit.com/main.php>.
- Exercise Science Alliance is not recognized by NOCA.

Health and Fitness Institute

- Founded in 1983.
- Primarily suited for group exercise leaders.
- Everything is included in their package, instruction, resource materials & the certification testing.
- Cost is \$349.00 for the Personal Trainer certification & involves a 20-hour workshop prior to the exam.
- <http://www.healthandfitnessinstitute.com>.
- Not recognized by NOCA.

Exercise Safety Association

- Established in 1978, based in Orlando, FL.
- Two programs of certification and two sub specialty certifications. (1) SAFE EXERCISE LEADER (primary), Personal Trainer, Nutrition Specialist, Pilates, Yoga, Kickboxing, Safe Step, Aquatics, Senior Adult, Lateral Slide and, (2) Integrated Fitness Counselor.
- Costs were not available. They offer this in a home study course.
- Not recognized by NOCA.

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance. (AAHPERD)

- Founded in 1885,
- Umbrella organization of six national associations with six district associations & fifty state organizations.
- Majority of AAHPERD members teach Health & Physical Education in the public schools.
- AAHPERD does not offer any certifications, but does evaluate and endorse academic programs in the area of health and physical education. www.aahperd.org.

National Endurance and Sports Trainers Association (NESTA)

- Several certifications including a *Personal Trainers* certification.
- Cost is approximately \$200.00, includes a home study course that NESTA recommends you complete in 2-4 weeks.
- <http://www.nestacertified.com>.
- NESTA is not recognized by NOCA.

The Cooper Institute

- Founded in 1978.
- Primary mission of research & education relating to living habits & health.
- Offers over twenty certifications including five home study programs.
- Cost of their Physical Fitness Specialist (PFS) is \$695.00 plus travel & expenses for the five-day workshop & exam.

The Cooper Institute

- The Cooper Institute maintains a website for their certification graduates, and their certifications are good for three years.
- Continuing education and certification is available for a fee.
- Not recognized by NOCA.

Final Recommendations

- ACE
- ACSM

- Organization
- Support
- Cost