

nice NATIONAL INTERVENER CERTIFICATION E-PORTFOLIO

Applying for NICE Certification: Policies and Procedures

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Definitions

National Intervener Certification E-portfolio (NICE) Process

A process an intervener can use to demonstrate attainment of knowledge and skills outlined in the Council for Exceptional Children's "Specialty Set: Special Education Paraeducator Intervener for Individuals With Deafblindness" (CEC, 2015).

NICE Certificate

A certificate awarded by the Paraprofessional Research and Resource (PAR²A) Center to interveners who demonstrate attainment of the CEC knowledge and skills, as assessed by expert reviewers who are members of the NICE Review Board.

Venture

A secure website used to create, share, and review e-portfolios. Within this system, a candidate's portfolio can only be viewed by the candidate, his or her mentor, the assigned reviewers, and system administrators.

Participating Agencies¹

As the managing agency for NICE, the PAR²A Center oversees the NICE Review Board and the review process. The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) develops guidelines and training materials for candidates and mentors in collaboration with the PAR²A Center. NCDB also provides technical assistance regarding NICE to the PAR²A Center, state deaf-blind projects, and college or university programs.

Getting Started

Interveners who are interested in pursuing certification should first notify their state deaf-blind project or college/university program (if they have recently or are currently receiving intervener training through a college or university).² The state project or university partner may assist the intervener in assessing his or her readiness to engage in the certification process and, if the intervener decides to move forward, assign a mentor.

¹ The NICE process and the Venture e-portfolio system are supported by a cooperative agreement through the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, to the National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB), Grant # H326T130013.

² See here, for a list of state deaf-blind projects see this link on [the NCDB website: https://nationaldb.org/members/list?type=State+Project](https://nationaldb.org/members/list?type=State+Project). Potential candidates may also contact NCDB via an online form (<http://nationaldb.org/niceinformation>) for assistance connecting with their state deaf-blind projects.

Mentoring

Every candidate must have a mentor, assigned by a state deaf-blind project or university partner, who provides guidance and feedback during the development of an e-portfolio. Ideally, this is a person from the intervener's home state who has expertise in both deaf-blindness and the role of the intervener. Mentors may be teachers, orientation and mobility specialists, or related service providers who have received training and have significant expertise in deaf-blindness. State deaf-blind project or university partner personnel may also serve as mentors.

Mentors have access to their assigned candidates' e-portfolios in Venture and are required to provide a minimum of three sessions (face-to-face or virtual) for a total of at least six hours to provide feedback and support. Some state projects may offer more than the minimum depending upon the requirements or needs of their programs. Mentors are required to sign a mentoring agreement outlining their roles and responsibilities and share it with the relevant state deaf-blind project/university partner and the candidate, who will review it and sign a statement indicating that he or she has read and understood the content. The purpose of the form is to help the candidate stay on track and ensure that he or she receives the agreed-upon support.

NICE Modules

All potential NICE candidates and mentors must complete the following two online modules that provide information about the NICE process and how to develop an e-portfolio:

- NICE Module 1: Using An E-Portfolio to Demonstrate Competency
- NICE Module 2: Learning to Use Venture

Access to the modules occurs through the relevant state deaf-blind project or university partner. Candidates are required to complete the modules either as individuals or as a cohort of learners, depending on the processes and needs of the state deaf-blind project or university partner.

Cost and Payment

During the first year that NICE certification was available—October 2016 through September 2017—the e-portfolio assessment fee was waived and candidates were only charged a \$40.00 administrative fee, payable to the PAR²A Center. This reduced fee has been extended through June 2018.

After a mentor has been assigned and the candidate has completed the NICE modules, the candidate submits the payment and registers for a Venture account. Registration

instructions will be provided to the candidate by the relevant state deaf-blind project, college/university program, or NCDB once completion of the modules and assignment of a mentor has been verified.

Completion Timeline and Request for Extension

The time required to complete a portfolio varies, but typically takes around 6 months. Highly motivated candidates who already have documentation that provides evidence of their knowledge and skills could potentially submit their portfolios more quickly.

Candidates have 12 months to complete their e-portfolios from the time entry to the Venture website is granted. In the case of extenuating circumstances, an intervener and his or her mentor may contact the PAR²A Center in writing to request a single 3-month extension. If the extension is granted, the candidate will not be charged an additional fee. Candidates who need time beyond the 3-month extension, must re-register and pay the administration fee.

Review Process

E-portfolios are each reviewed by two members of the NICE Review Board, who receive training in the NICE review process from the PAR²A Center. In circumstances where there is less than 80% agreement between reviewers, a third reviewer will be recruited from the Review Board to evaluate and score the portfolio.

It typically takes 2 months for a portfolio to be scored, but may take longer in cases where initial reviewers' scores differ substantially and a third reviewer is assigned.

Reviewers are volunteers who have the following prerequisite knowledge, skills, experiences, and interests:

- Expertise in training, preparing, or mentoring interveners who work in educational, community, or home settings
- Experience evaluating, supervising, mentoring, or supporting interveners, instructional assistants, direct service personnel, teachers, or related service providers who serve individuals who are deaf-blind
- At least 7 years' experience in the field of deaf-blindness as a technical assistance provider, university faculty member, teacher, interpreter, intervener, related service provider, trainer, parent adviser, or consumer leader
- Invested interest in national intervener certification and recognition of the intervener practice

Reviewers sign impartiality and confidentiality agreements indicating the following:

- They agree to notify the PAR²A Center if they have trained, mentored, advised, or observed a candidate whose portfolio they have been assigned to review, so the candidate's portfolio can be assigned to a different reviewer.
- They recognize that e-portfolios must be reviewed confidentially and agree not to share any information about the contents of a candidate's portfolio or talk about the portfolios they review with any persons other than PAR²A Center staff (this includes no communication about the portfolio with the candidate or mentor).
- If they download portfolio materials to their own computers, they will delete them at the completion of a review.

Scoring

To obtain a certificate, candidates must receive an overall passing score of 75% or greater. Portfolio scores and reviewer comments will be provided to candidates by the PAR²A Center. Candidates who do not pass may revise and resubmit their portfolios (repayment of the administrative fee will be required).

All communication about scores and certification decisions come directly to the candidate from PAR²A Center staff. The information is not shared with anyone other than the candidate. The PAR²A Center will share summarized evaluation data regarding certification results with NICE reviewers and advisers and in reports (e.g., to the Office of Special Education Programs), but this information will not include information that can be used to identify candidates, without their explicit written permission.

NICE Advisers

In addition to the Review Board, NICE also has a group of advisers consisting of individuals who:

- Have been members of a consumer, family, university, or professional organization for at least 3 years (e.g., National Family Association for Deaf-Blind, the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation, DeafBlind Citizens in Action, American Association of the DeafBlind, Council for Exceptional Children).
- Have direct experience working with, training, or observing interveners in home, community, or educational settings.

Advisers provide input regarding the overall NICE process based on the needs of the deaf-blind community (e.g., they may make recommendations regarding ways that

interveners from diverse backgrounds can participate more effectively). Advisers attend some Review Board meetings, but do not review portfolios or see submitted portfolios.

Duration of Certification

Certificates are valid for five years. After five years, an intervener may submit documentation of ongoing professional development and apply for re-certification. The PAR²A Center and NCDB are currently in the process of developing recertification requirements and instructions.

Media Permissions

Candidates must obtain signed media releases for all individuals represented in photos or videos (this form can be downloaded from NICE Module 1). This includes students or clients if they can sign the form for themselves. A parent or guardian must also sign for students who are less than age 18 or under guardianship. Candidates should check with their schools or agencies to obtain information about procedures for obtaining permission for students/clients and staff. Candidates must also submit media releases for themselves.

The PAR²A Center or NCDB may ask successful candidates for permission to use specific examples from their portfolios to train new NICE Review Board members, mentors, or future certification candidates. The decision to give permission is up to the candidate, who has the right to decline the request.

Honesty

All work within a portfolio must represent a candidate's *own* work. Candidates are required to sign an agreement indicating that all submitted content for their portfolio was derived from their own practice and learning experiences and that they will not share their portfolio materials with other NICE candidates.

Any use of words, phrases, ideas, or documents from other sources (e.g., articles, websites, books) must be credited. Although the use of these types of resources is not required for e-portfolio development, if you do use content from another source, be sure to provide a complete citation (e.g., title, author, year of publication, publisher, website).

Cases of cheating or plagiarism are handled by administrators at the PAR²A Center and may involve a candidate being disqualified from the certification process.

Confidentiality

NICE candidates, mentors, and reviewers are all required to sign and abide by confidentiality agreements. Requirements for reviewers are described above. Candidates and mentors agree that they will not share videos, photos, or other materials in which students, clients, or other participants are depicted or referred to with anyone who is not authorized to view them as indicated by the NICE Media Release (PAR²A Center staff, the candidate, their mentor, and reviewers) or who has official authorization from another source (e.g., a classroom teacher would likely have permission to review a video clip of a student and intervener).

Mentors further agree:

- Not to share or use any content from a candidate's portfolio with anyone other than the candidate and PAR²A Center staff.
- Not to communicate about a candidate with NICE Review Board members who are functioning in a review capacity for the candidate.

Removal Policy

All participants in the NICE system (both the learning modules and the Venture website) are expected to treat other participants with courtesy and respect. Candidates who act disrespectfully or break confidentiality may be removed and lose any progress they have made in their e-portfolios.

Who to Contact for Assistance

Candidates who have questions about the NICE process or their own portfolio development, should contact their mentors.

Candidates or mentors who have concerns or questions about a candidate-mentor relationship, should contact their designated state deaf-blind project or university partner or NCDB.

Questions about the NICE review process should be directed to Ritu Chopra (ritu.chopra@ucdenver.edu) at the PAR²A Center.

Questions, comments, or concerns about policies and procedures presented in this document should be directed to Ritu Chopra at the PAR²A Center or Kristi Probst (kristi.probst@hknc.org) at NCDB.

Reference

Council for Exceptional Children. (2015). *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Professional Ethics and Standards*. Arlington, VA: CEC. [Available at: https://www.cec.sped.org/Standards/Paraeducator-Preparation-Guidelines](https://www.cec.sped.org/Standards/Paraeducator-Preparation-Guidelines)



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