

2005 DEP Area Meeting Questions and Answers

Q. Some dietetics education program directors have indicated that their institutions are no longer permitting social security numbers to be used in college/university records, including transcripts. How will CDR track students without requiring Social Security Numbers (SSN)?

A. CDR's Legal Counsel has provided the following response to questions raised regarding ADA/CDR use of the social security numbers.

The Privacy Act of 1974 that gave rise to the limitations regarding the collection and use of the SSNs. Specifically, that Act is applicable to federal, state and local government agencies, and also to school boards and school districts. All such entities are precluded from denying benefits or rights to individuals on account of their refusal to provide the SSN. The federal, state and local government agencies are also prohibited from requesting that an individual disclose his or her SSN unless the individual is advised whether the disclosure is mandatory or voluntary, by what statutory or other authority the disclosure is solicited, and the uses to which the SSN will be put.

Consequently, the federal law does not prohibit CDR or other private entities from requesting the SSN. However, various advocacy groups are advising citizens to refuse to disclose their SSNs to non-governmental agencies, and it may become somewhat problematic (practically more than legally) to deal with an applicant who refuses to disclose. It appears, therefore, that CDR can legally continue to require the disclosure of the SSN by its applicants.

CDR currently uses the social security number to prevent the creation of duplicate member and registry records, since CDR shares its demographic database with ADA. Based on this legal input, CDR will continue to request the social security number for each applicant for registration eligibility.

Q. How does CDR address the fact that standardized testing is a culturally biased process in light of diversity goals/needs for the profession? Should there be multifaceted evaluation forms of competency?

A. CDR recognizes that bias in testing is a complex issue that has received increased scientific and public attention. From the inception

of its testing program in 1970, CDR has been committed to the inclusion of bias prevention steps in its examination development process. The basis of this process is the use of practice audit data that is practice/job related and representative of cultural diversity in dietetics practice to develop the examination content specifications. In the subsequent examination development step, the process of item writing and review, CDR has consistently included writers and reviewers who represent diverse population subgroups engaged in dietetics practice. This assists in ensuring that under represented group perspectives are represented in the items. This review activity is repeated throughout the examination development process.

- Q.** Several students have failed the exam on the first try due to "computer problems", and then passed on the 2nd try. What can be done about this?
- A.** CDR is concerned by this query. We maintain a log of all CBT technical problems reported to us by examinees. In no instance has an examinee failed due to a technical difficulty. All computer problems are to be reported to the onsite test proctor for immediate resolution. If the problem cannot be resolved within a few minutes, the examinee is rescheduled for an alternate test appointment. In no instance is the candidate given a failed score report solely because of a technical problem.
- Q.** Could the exam subscores be more representative of the 5 domains in order to better examine our curriculum to determine what changes we could make to better prepare the students. We need more detailed scoring information.
- A.** With the implementation of computer based testing, the length of the registration examination was reduced from 240 scored items to 125 scored items. Since the examination assesses a broad scope of information it is impossible to provide valid, reliable scores for subtopics. As an example, an examinee's inability to answer six out of seven questions related to education and research on the RD exam should not be used to make an assessment of the examinee's knowledge of education and research. In order to provide meaningful results, sixty plus questions would have to be included in each domain. This would dramatically increase both the time and cost of administering the examination for both CDR and the examinee.

- Q.** Would it be possible for CDR to speed up the registration application process by including the examination application fee with the registration eligibility application as either as cash or a credit card payment?
- A.** This is definitely an option that CDR can consider. One major consideration is that payment processing with registration eligibility processing would require interface with the ADA Accounting area which may result in additional processing time. The ACT online registration examination application process, which is scheduled for implementation in July 2005, should result in significant time savings by eliminating the postal delivery time from the examination application process.
- Q.** Why can't the test specification domains match the CADE educational program competencies?
- A.** Both the CADE educational competencies and the CDR registration examination test specifications are based on the results of the entry-level dietetics practice audit. This ensures congruence with actual entry-level dietetics practice. While there is significant overlap between the competencies and the test specifications, it is important to note that there are several competencies that can not be assessed on the registration examination. As an example, counseling skills are integral entry-level dietetics practice competencies that must be included in the education program, but are difficult to assess on a multiple-choice examination.
- Q.** If a program is in audit, will CDR tell a student who calls regarding their application status that their application is pending?
- A.** Yes, it is CDR's procedure to indicate to students whether or not an application has been received and its status.
- Q.** Why is it necessary to hold up processing the entire class submitted when one person did not fill out a form properly. During the summer

when applications are often processed, the program director may not be available to get the data/form needed for the errant student.

- A.** CDR makes the assumption that the Program Director has previously reviewed and edited their students application materials prior to submission. Recognizing that many program directors are away from their offices during the summer months, CDR developed a special contact form for use in resolving application issues. CDR will expedite the processing of the class without the errant student(s) upon program director's written authorization.
- Q.** What if a student has a learning disability and needs extended time, will the two and one-half hour testing time be extended?
- A.** Yes. CDR will extend the testing time for examinees that have a documented learning disability. The *Handbook for Candidates*, which is included on the program director page of the CDR website, includes specific instructions regarding the special testing accommodation process. The *Handbook* is also sent to all examination applicants.
- Q.** Do dietetics educators have access to the full practice audit reports?
- A.** CDR expends considerable resources to conduct the dietetics practice audit every five-years. The complete results are shared with the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE) and ADA Research Team. A summary of the results is published in the *Journal of the American Dietetics Association*. CDR will consider requests for use of the data on a case-by-case basis with a written request including a full explanation of the research project.
- Q.** Are the registration examination test scores examined by either range of percent correct, or correct number of questions answered?
- A.** Yes, psychometricians at CDR's testing agency, ACT, Inc. conduct a thorough analysis of the test scores. CDR has made the decision to only release scaled scores.
- Q.** Are examination scores for students who completed a dietetics education program several years ago included on the institutional summary reports provided to program directors.

A. CDR includes aggregate examination score information for program graduates who completed the dietetics education program within the last five years.

Q. Is the score release section of the examination application clearly identified.

A. Yes, the score release section is repeated after each program type. The new on-line application will also highlight these sections of the application.

Q. Why is the practice audit based on 0-3 years of practice?

A. The profession defined entry-level practice as 0-3 years several years ago. CDR will be empirically validating this definition of entry-level practice with the 2005 dietetics practice audit.

Q. Does the exam begin immediately, or are there practice questions to get the test-taker used to the format?

A. An examination tutorial is available at the beginning of each examination. The testing appointment is scheduled for a three-hour period to allow examinees thirty minutes to complete the tutorial before going on to the two and one-half hour examination.

Q. Is CDR planning to offer the registration examination in other languages, or will additional time be allowed for examinees for which English is a second language?

A. CDR has given careful consideration to requests to offer its examinations in a second language. CDR has made the decision not to administer the registration examinations in a second language for several reasons including:

- The RD credential is a national credential in the United States where English is the official language. English and Spanish are the official languages in Puerto Rico.
- It is reasonable for employers and the public to assume that CDR credentialed practitioners are fluent in the English language.
- It is cost prohibitive to develop a separate Spanish registration examination in Puerto Rico. The Spanish dialect spoken in Puerto Rico is different than that spoken by other Spanish

populations which would limit use of this Spanish examination to Puerto Rico.

- English language, textbooks, software and comprehensive examinations are used in CADE accredited programs in Puerto Rico.

English as a second language is not currently defined as a reason for special testing accommodations, such as extended time, under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- Q.** How does the test development process ensure that examination questions are current? Are question writers required to provide references for each question?
- A.** New questions are written every year by trained item writers representing diverse geographic, ethnic and dietetics practice perspectives. The CDR Examination Panel and content expert reviewers representing diverse ethnic, geographic and practice perspectives review all new questions for currency, accuracy and absence of bias before they are pretested. Entire item pools are reviewed on an annual basis when outdated items are archived and new items are introduced. Every item must be referenced by the item writer prior to submission.