

CERTIFICATION PROCESS HANDBOOK For CSACs and CSAC-As VIRGINIA BOARD OF COUNSELING

The DHP mission is to ensure safe and competent patient care by licensing health professionals, enforcing standards of practice, and providing information to health care practitioners and the public.

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NOTE: The information contained in this handbook is subject to change at any time.
All current information can be found at <http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/counseling>

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CSAC-A CERTIFICATION PROCESS

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Please read and become familiar with the [Regulations Governing the Certification of Substance Abuse Counselors and Substance Abuse Counseling Assistants](#) prior to submitting your application.

The board primarily communicates through email.
Please ensure that you add the board's email address (coun@dhp.virginia.gov) to your safe recipient list to ensure that you receive all email communication from board staff.

PROCESS TO BECOME A VIRGINIA CERTIFIED SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELOR

You must hold the Certified Substance Abuse Counselor (CSAC) credential in order to represent yourself as such in the Commonwealth of Virginia. There are two avenues to secure this credential:

1. Certification by Endorsement (Usually exam exempt)
 - a. This avenue may be applicable to those who hold a current substantially equivalent certification as a substance abuse counselor in another jurisdiction, or hold a national certification approved by the Board.
2. Certification by Examination
 - a. This avenue is for those who have never held a substance abuse counseling certification.

According to the Code of Virginia, a “certified substance abuse counselor” means a person certified by the Virginia Board of Counseling to practice in accordance with the provisions of the [Code of Virginia](#) §54.1-3507.1. This section of the Code defines the scope of practice for a CSAC and states that a CSAC shall be:

- Qualified to perform, ***under appropriate supervision or direction***, the substance abuse treatment functions of:
 - screening;
 - intake;
 - orientation;
 - the administration of substance abuse assessment instruments;
 - recovery and relapse prevention planning;
 - substance abuse treatment;
 - case management;
 - substance abuse or dependence crisis intervention;
 - client education;
 - referral activities;
 - record keeping; and,
 - consultation with other professionals.
- A CSAC cannot practice independently, but **shall** be clinically supervised or directed by:
 - A licensed substance abuse treatment practitioner (LSATP),
 - A mental health professional licensed by the Department of Health Professions, or,
 - If the CSAC is practicing in an exempt setting, he/she shall be supervised by:
 - another person with substantially equivalent education, training, and experience; or,

- the CSAC shall be in compliance with the supervision requirements of a licensed facility.

HOW TO BECOME A CSAC IN VIRGINIA

There are several forms that you will need to complete and submit for consideration that are available on the Virginia Board of Counseling's website (www.dhp.virginia.gov/counseling). The information provided in this handbook can be a valuable tool to use throughout the process.

OBTAINING VIRGINIA CSAC BY EXAMINATION

ANY PERSON PURSUING A CSAC BY EXAMINATION WILL NEED TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

- STEP 1. Complete the education requirements.
- STEP 2. [Apply](#) for and receive Supervision Approval prior to obtaining residency experience. Referred to as **Initial Registration of Supervision**. **This step is not required, but it is recommended.*
- STEP 3. Complete the residency.
- STEP 4. [Apply](#) for CSAC by Examination.
- STEP 5. Take and pass the examination offered through NAADAC.
- STEP 6. Receive CSAC credential.

STEP 1: EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

To achieve the credential of a CSAC, you must have:

- A Bachelor's degree; and,
- A total of **400 clock hours of substance abuse education** to include:
 1. **220 clock hours of didactic training in substance abuse education** from one of the following programs:
 - an accredited college or university; or
 - an integrated program approved by the Virginia Board of Counseling.
 2. **180 hours of experience performing substance abuse tasks with clients** under supervision.

DIDACTIC TRAINING

The 220 hours of didactic training in substance abuse must include a **minimum of 10 clock hours** in **EACH** of the 8 areas below are required:

1. Understanding the dynamics of human behavior;
2. Signs and symptoms of substance abuse;
3. Treatment approaches, group dynamics and other adjunctive treatment and recovery support groups;
4. Continuum of care and case management skills;

5. Recovery process and relapse prevention models;
6. Ethics;
7. Professional identity in the provision of substance abuse services; and,
8. Crisis intervention.

In addition to the above, each applicant is required to have **at least 20 hours in each of the following 2 areas:**

1. Substance abuse counseling treatment and planning and substance abuse research, and,
2. Group counseling.

Didactic Training in substance abuse education must be completed with one of the following programs:

- a. An accredited university or college; or
- b. Seminars and workshops offered or approved by one of the following:
 - The American Association of Marriage and Family Counselors and its state affiliates.
 - The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and its state affiliates.
 - The American Association of State Counseling Boards.
 - The American Counseling Association and its state and local affiliates.
 - The American Psychological Association and its state affiliates.
 - The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.
 - NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals and its state and local affiliates.
 - National Association of Social Workers.
 - National Board for Certified Counselors.
 - A national behavioral health organization or certification body.
 - Individuals or organizations that have been approved as continuing competency sponsors by the American Association of State Counseling Boards or a counseling board in another state.

PLEASE NOTE: Official school transcript(s) or certificates must be submitted to verify completion of a minimum of 220 hours of didactic training in substance abuse counseling. Each certificate must show your name, course name, number of clock hours, date of training and the approved providers/programs name. Training not approved or affiliated with one of the approved providers will not be considered.

What is the definition of clinical supervision? The ongoing process performed by a clinical supervisor who monitors the performance of the person supervised and provides regular, documented face-to-face consultation, guidance and education with respect to the clinical skills and competencies of the person supervised.

What does didactic mean? Teaching-learning methods which impart facts and information, usually in the form of one-way communication (includes directed readings and lectures).

EXPERIENCE PERFORMING SUBSTANCE ABUSE TASKS WITH CLIENTS

The required 180 hours of experience must include a *minimum* of 8 clock hours of experience **under supervision** with a qualified supervisor performing the following tasks with substance abuse clients:

- Screening clients to determine eligibility and appropriateness for admissions into a particular program;
- Intake of clients by performing the administrative and initial assessment tasks necessary for admission to a program;
- Orientation for new clients to program's rules, goals, procedures, services, costs and the rights of the client;
- Assessment of client's strengths, weaknesses, problems and needs for the development of a treatment plan;
- Treatment planning with the client to identify and rank problems to be addressed, establish goals, and agree on treatment processes;
- Counseling the client utilizing specialized skills in both individual and group approaches to achieve treatment goals and objectives;
- Case management activities which bring services, agencies, people and resources together in a planned framework of action to achieve established goals;
- Crisis intervention responses to clients' needs during acute mental, emotional or physical distress;
- Education of clients by providing information about drug abuse and available services and resources;
- Referral of clients in order to meet identified needs unable to be met by the counselor and assisting the client in effectively utilizing those resources.
- Reporting and charting information about the client's assessment, treatment plan, progress, discharge summaries and other client-related data;
- Consultation with other professionals to assure a comprehensive quality care for the client.

PLEASE NOTE: Groups and classes attended by the applicant as a part of a therapy or treatment program will NOT be accepted as any part of the educational experience.

STEP 2: APPLY FOR AND GAIN RESIDENCY APPROVAL (INITIAL REGISTRATION OF SUPERVISION)

We recommend that you apply for and gain board-approval of your residency prior to counting hours toward certification.

Supervisor Requirements

To provide supervision to a CSAC **applicant**, the supervisor must meet one of the following 3 categories:

1. Be a licensed professional counselor (LPC), licensed clinical psychologist (LCP), licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), licensed marriage & family therapist (LMFT), medical doctor, (MD) or registered nurse (RN) **with:**
 - a Board recognized national certification in substance abuse counseling; or,
 - documentation of a minimum of one year of experience in substance abuse counseling and at least **100 hours of didactic training** covering:
 - Understanding the dynamics of human behavior;
 - Signs and symptoms of substance abuse;
 - Treatment approaches;
 - Continuum of care and case management skills;
 - Recovery process and relapse prevention methods;
 - Ethics;
 - Professional identity in the provision of substance abuse services;
 - Crisis intervention;
 - Substance abuse counseling treatment planning and substance abuse research; and
 - Group counseling.
2. Be a licensed substance abuse treatment practitioner (LSATP); or,
3. Be a Virginia CSAC who has:
 - a Board recognized national certification in substance abuse counseling; or
 - 2 years' experience as a Virginia CSAC.

Gaining Board Approval for Residency or “Registering Supervision”

Once you have identified a supervisor and a worksite, submit the Registration of Supervision application, along with the fee (in the form of a check or money order, payable to the *Treasurer of Virginia*), to the Board for approval. Specifically, submit the following:

- [Initial Registration of Supervision application](#)
- \$65 Fee for initial supervisor
- Official Bachelor's transcript with conferral date
 - Faxes and photocopies will NOT be accepted.

Adding or Changing Registration of Supervision

A new [application](#), documentation, and fee must be submitted for approval for any change in supervision (i.e. a location add/change, supervisor add/change, or any change in job responsibilities). Please note that a change to previously approved supervision (currently active) does not require an additional education review. However, the requested change still requires a formal administrative review and processing that can take 15 business days.

Termination of Supervision

If supervision terminates, you should submit a [Termination of Supervision form](#) (which can be found on the Board website) to the Board. Your supervisor should also complete the CSAC Verification of Clinical Supervision form at the end of your experience. You, the resident, must keep this form in your records until you are ready to apply for certification. This CSAC Verification of Clinical Supervision form is a necessary piece of your application and serves as documentation of your supervision hours.

Step 3: Complete the Residency Requirements

Prior to submitting your application for CSAC by examination, you must have completed the following:

- 2,000 hours of supervised experience in the delivery of clinical substance abuse counseling services to include:
 - One to four hours per week of supervision between the supervisor and the applicant for a total of 100 hours
 - Group supervision hours are equivalent to individual supervision hours, but are limited to 50 of the required 100 hours.

What is substance abuse counseling? Applying a counseling process, treatment strategies and rehabilitative services to help an individual to understand his substance use, abuse or dependency; and change his drug-taking behavior so that it does not interfere with effective physical, psychological, social or vocational functioning.

Step 4: Submit Application for Certification by Examination

Once residency has been completed and you have meet the 400 clock hours of substance abuse education, submit all required application materials and documentation with your check or money order, payable to the *Treasurer of Virginia*, in the amount of \$115 for the application fee. Once this application is approved, you may sit for the examination and obtain certification. Specifically, at this stage, submit the following:

- [Application form](#) by examination which must be signed and notarized
- \$115.00 fee (check or money order)
- CSAC Verification of Supervision form to be submitted by each of your supervisors to attest to you completing 100 hours of supervision, 2,000 hours of experience in the delivery of clinical substance abuse and 180 hours of experimental tasks
- Didactic Training Verification verifying the completion of 220 hours of substance abuse counseling training
 - Official transcripts or certificates must be submitted to verify completion of a minimum of 220 hours of didactic training in substance abuse counseling
- Official Bachelor's transcript
 - Faxes and photocopies will NOT be accepted.

- Out-of-State Licensure/Certification, if applicable
- Unless your supervisor was pre-approved, a LPC, LCP, LCSW, LMFT, MD and RN supervisor must possess either a board-recognized national certification in substance abuse counseling obtained by standards substantially equivalent, or a minimum of one-year experience in substance abuse counseling and at least 100 hours of didactic training
- You must provide a current report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Practitioner Data Bank. An online self-query can be processed at <https://www.npdb.hrsa.gov/ext/selfquery/SQHome.jsp>.

What information will be required if I have a criminal conviction? The Board requires that you submit a certified copy of all conviction orders (obtained from the courthouse of record); evidence that all court ordered requirements were met (i.e., letter from the probation officer if on supervised probation, paid fines and restitution, etc.); a letter from the applicant explaining the factual circumstances leading to the criminal offense(s); and letters from employers concerning work performance (specifically from Counseling-related employers, if possible).

Step 5. Take and Pass the Examination

Once staff has approved your application for CSAC examination, you will receive an email from the Board advising you that you have been approved to take the NCAC-I exam towards CSAC certification in Virginia. The examination is administered through the National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals (NCC AP) with the Association for Addiction Professionals (NAADAC). The examination is given on demand and testing sites are located in all major cities across the United States. The cost for the examination is \$150.00 per test.

The Board will receive your test scores within approximately 2-4 weeks after your testing date. Should you fail the examination, you may take the next examination again following a 90-day waiting period.

Once your examination score is received, the Board will sent you an email regarding licensure. Certifications and wall certificates are mailed 7 to 10 days after your CSAC application is approved.

SPECIAL EXAMINATION ACCOMODATIONS

NCC AP allows accommodations for any special needs you may have for taking your certification examination. You will need to visit their website at nccap@naadac.org for more information regarding the requirements for accommodation approval.

PROCESS FOR OBTAINING CSAC BY ENDORSEMENT

Virginia does not have reciprocity with any state. The endorsement application process is for those who have been substance abuse certified substantially equivalent in another jurisdiction, or hold a board-approved national certification. Prior certification does not release the applicant from

meeting the requirements of the Virginia Board of Counseling at the time of his/her initial certification.

PREREQUISITES FOR CSAC BY ENDORSEMENT:

To [apply](#) for a CSAC by endorsement, you must have one of the following:

1. License or certification as a substance abuse counselor in another jurisdiction in good standing obtained by standards substantially equivalent to what's required to obtain a Virginia CSAC by examination; or,
2. Current national certification in good standing from one of the following:
 - a. The National Certified Addiction Counselor Level II (NCAC II) accreditation from the (NCC AP)/NAADAC;
 - b. The Master Addiction Counselor (MAC) accreditation from the (NCC AP)/NAADAC; or,
 - c. The Advanced Alcohol & Drug Counselor (AADC) accreditation from the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC).

APPLYING FOR CSAC BY ENDORSEMENT:

If you have met the prerequisites for CSAC by endorsement, then you can [apply](#) for your Virginia CSAC by submitting the complete CSAC application by endorsement packet to the Board of Counseling. One approved, you will receive your Virginia CSAC certification.

What information will be required if I have a criminal conviction? The Board requires that you submit a certified copy of all conviction orders (obtained from the courthouse of record); evidence that all court ordered requirements were met (i.e., letter from the probation officer if on supervised probation, paid fines and restitution, etc.); a letter from the applicant explaining the factual circumstances leading to the criminal offense(s); and letters from employers concerning work performance (specifically from Counseling-related employers, if possible).

GROUND TO DENY AN APPLICATION:

Grounds to deny a license may be found in Regulation 18VAC115-20-140 of the board's [Regulations Governing the Practice of Professional Counseling](#). If grounds exist to deny an application for licensure, your application will not be approved by board staff, and you will be so notified and offered an opportunity to meet with a Special Conference Committee of the board to determine if the license should be denied, issued, or issued conditionally.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

THE APPLICATION/REGISTRATION PROCESS IS NOT A SHORT PROCESS. THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TAKES VARIES FOR EVERY APPLICANT. THE MORE COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION IS UPON RECEIPT, THE SMOOTHER THE PROCESS WILL GO. IT

IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT TO FOLLOW ALL DIRECTIONS AND COMPLETE ALL FORMS IN THEIR ENTIRETY.

ALL FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE, NON-TRANSFERABLE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Pending applications/registrations and fees are valid for one (1) year from the date of receipt. If your application/registration is not approved within one (1) year, a new application/registration and fee will be required.

PROCESS TO BECOME A VIRGINIA CERTIFIED SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELOR ASSISTANT (CSAC-A)

You must hold the Certified Substance Abuse Counselor Assistant (CSAC-A) credential in order to represent yourself as such in the Commonwealth of Virginia. There is only one avenue to secure this credential:

- Certification by Examination

According to the Code of Virginia, a “certified substance abuse counselor assistant” means a person certified by the Virginia Board of Counseling to practice in accordance with the provisions of the [Code of Virginia](#) §54.1-3507.2. This section of the Code defines the scope of practice for a CSAC-A and states that a CSAC-A shall be:

- Qualified to perform, **under appropriate supervision or direction**, the substance abuse treatment functions of:
 - orientation;
 - implementation of substance abuse treatment plans;
 - case management;
 - substance abuse or dependence crisis intervention;
 - record keeping; and,
 - consultation with other professionals.
- Supervised or directed either by:
 - A Licensed Substance Abuse Treatment Practitioner (LSATP),
 - Any other mental health professional licensed by the Department of Health Professions,
 - A CSAC, or,
 - If the CSAC-A is practicing in an exempt setting, he/she shall be supervised by:
 - another person with substantially equivalent education, training, and experience, or,
 - the CSAC-A shall be in compliance with the supervision requirements of a licensed facility.

HOW TO BECOME A CSAC-A IN VIRGINIA

There are several forms that you will need to complete and submit for consideration that are available on the Virginia Board of Counseling’s website (www.dhp.virginia.gov/counseling). The information provided in this handbook can be a valuable tool to use throughout the process.

OBTAINING VIRGINIA CSAC-A BY EXAMINATION

ANY PERSON PURSUING A CSAC-A BY EXAMINATION WILL NEED TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

- STEP 1. Complete the education requirements.
- STEP 2. Take and pass the examination.
- STEP 3. Receive CSAC-A credential.

STEP 1: Education Requirements

To obtain the CSAC-A credential you must have:

1. A high school diploma or general educational development (GED) certificate; and,
2. A total of **300 clock hours of substance abuse education** to include:
 - a. **120 clock hours of didactic training in substance abuse education** from one of the following programs:
 - i. an accredited college or university; or
 - ii. an integrated program approved by the Virginia Board of Counseling.
 - b. **180 hours of experience performing substance abuse tasks with clients** under supervision.

DIDACTIC TRAINING

The 120 hours of didactic training in substance abuse counseling must include a **minimum of 10 clock hours** in each of the following eight areas:

1. Understanding the dynamics of human behavior;
2. Signs and symptoms of substance abuse;
3. Treatment approaches;
4. Case management skills and continuum of care;
5. Recovery process and relapse prevention methods;
6. Ethics;
7. Professional identity in the provision of substance abuse services; and,
8. Crisis intervention.

Didactic Training in substance abuse education must be completed with one of the following programs:

- a. An accredited university or college; or
- b. Seminars and workshops offered or approved by one of the following:
 - The American Association of Marriage and Family Counselors and its state affiliates.
 - The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and its state affiliates.
 - The American Association of State Counseling Boards.

- The American Counseling Association and its state and local affiliates.
- The American Psychological Association and its state affiliates.
- The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.
- NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals and its state and local affiliates.
- National Association of Social Workers.
- National Board for Certified Counselors.
- A national behavioral health organization or certification body.
- Individuals or organizations that have been approved as continuing competency sponsors by the American Association of State Counseling Boards or a counseling board in another state.

PLEASE NOTE: Official school transcript(s) or certificates must be submitted to verify completion of a minimum of 120 hours of didactic training in substance abuse counseling. Each certificate must show your name, course name, number of clock hours, date of training and the approved providers/programs name. Training not approved or affiliated with one of the approved providers will not be considered.

What does didactic mean? Teaching-learning methods which impart facts and information, usually in the form of one-way communication (includes directed readings and lectures).

EXPERIENCE PERFORMING SUBSTANCE ABUSE TASKS WITH CLIENTS

The required 180 hours of experience must include a *minimum* of 8 clock hours of experience **under supervision** with a qualified supervisor performing the following tasks with substance abuse clients:

1. Screening clients and gathering information used in making the determination for the need for additional professional assistance;
2. Intake of clients by performing the administrative tasks necessary for admission to a program;
3. Orientation of new clients to program's rules, goals, procedures, services, costs and the rights of the client;
4. Assisting the client in identifying and ranking problems to be addressed, establish goals, and agree on treatment processes;
5. Implementation of a substance abuse treatment plan as directed by the supervisor;
6. Implementation of case management activities that bring services, agencies, people and resources together in a planned framework of action to achieve established goals;
7. Assistance in identifying appropriate crisis intervention responses to clients' needs during acute mental, emotional or physical distress;
8. Education of clients by providing information about drug abuse and available services and resources;

9. Facilitating the client's utilization of available support systems and community resources to meet needs identified in clinical valuation or treatment planning;
10. Reporting and charting information about client's treatment, progress, and other client-related data; and,
11. Consultation with other professionals to assure comprehensive quality of care for the client.

Groups and classes attended as a part of a therapy or treatment program will not be accepted as any part of the educational experience.

Supervisor Requirements

The [Code of Virginia](#) states that in order to provide supervision to a CSAC-A ***applicant***, the supervisor must be a licensed substance abuse treatment practitioner (LSATP), or any other mental health professional licensed by the Department (such as a LPC, LMFT, LCP or LCSW), or by a certified substance abuse counselor (CSAC), or, in an exempt setting as described in section § 54.1-3501 of the [Code of Virginia](#), another person with substantially equivalent education, training, and experience, or such counseling assistant shall be in compliance with the supervision requirements of a licensed facility.

STEP 2: Apply for CSAC-A by Examination

Once you have meet the 300 clock hours of substance abuse education, submit all required application materials and documentation with your check or money order, payable to the *Treasurer of Virginia*, in the amount of \$115 for the application fee. Once this application is approved, you may sit for the examination and obtain certification. Specifically, at this stage, submit the following:

- [Application form](#) by examination which must be signed and notarized
- \$115.00 fee (check or money order)
- Verification of Experience While Under Supervision form documenting the completion of 180 hours of substance abuse experience tasks
- Didactic Training Verification verifying the completion of 120 hours of substance abuse counseling training
 - Official transcripts or certificates must be submitted to verify completion of a minimum of 120 hours of didactic training in substance abuse counseling
- Official high school transcript
 - Faxes and photocopies will NOT be accepted.

The Board requires that you take and pass the Virginia State Constructed CSAC-A exam. Once you are approved to sit for the exam, the exam will be emailed to you. The CSAC-A exam is an open book test. You are encouraged to reference the [Regulations Governing the Certification of Substance Abuse Counselors and Substance Abuse Counseling Assistants](#) when answering the

questions. Once you complete the exam, you should mail, fax or email your examination to the Board office for processing.

You are able to take the CSAC-A examination multiple times, and there is no requirement that you take and pass the exam within a specific examination timeframe. Once you pass the exam, you will receive your CSAC-A certification.

What information will be required if I have a criminal conviction? The Board requires that you submit a certified copy of all conviction orders (obtained from the courthouse of record); evidence that all court ordered requirements were met (i.e., letter from the probation officer if on supervised probation, paid fines and restitution, etc.); a letter from the applicant explaining the factual circumstances leading to the criminal offense(s); and letters from employers concerning work performance (specifically from Counseling-related employers, if possible).

STEP 3: Receive CSAC-A Credential

Once your examination is graded and reviewed by the Board, you will be sent an email regarding licensure. Certifications and wall certificates are mailed 7 to 10 days after your CSAC-A application is approved.

GROUND TO DENY AN APPLICATION:

Grounds to deny a license may be found in Regulation 18VAC115-20-140 of the board's [Regulations Governing the Practice of Professional Counseling](#). If grounds exist to deny an application for licensure, your application will not be approved by board staff, and you will be so notified and offered an opportunity to meet with a Special Conference Committee of the board to determine if the license should be denied, issued, or issued conditionally.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

THE APPLICATION/REGISTRATION PROCESS IS NOT A SHORT PROCESS. THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TAKES VARIES FOR EVERY APPLICANT. THE MORE COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION IS UPON RECEIPT, THE SMOOTHER THE PROCESS WILL GO. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT TO FOLLOW ALL DIRECTIONS AND COMPLETE ALL FORMS IN THEIR ENTIRETY.

ALL FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE, NON-TRANSFERABLE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Pending applications/registrations and fees are valid for one (1) year from the date of receipt. If your application/registration is not approved within one (1) year, a new application/registration and fee will be required.