

Connecticut CHOICES Training and Certification Program

Initial Training

The Connecticut SHIP, the Connecticut Health insurance assistance, Outreach, Information and referral, Counseling, Eligibility, and Screening (CHOICES) program, provides its volunteers with a 5-day, 27-hour initial training about Medicare and related topics.

Update Training

CHOICES volunteers need to attend at least 4 hours of update training per year to remain certified. Additionally, they must volunteer with CHOICES for at least four hours per month.

Competency “Testing”

CHOICES has been using pre-tests and post-tests with its new volunteers for several years. At the beginning of each day of initial training, volunteers take a pre-test to see how much they know about the topics that will be covered. Then, at the end of each day, volunteers take a post-test to find out how much they've learned. Volunteers need to pass each post-test with a score of 90% or higher to become certified as CHOICES counselors. New volunteers who do not pass the post-tests are either invited to attend another training or given one-on-one assistance so they can learn the material.

CHOICES is currently in the process of creating a new online training and certification tool for its volunteers. During the first year, volunteers will test the tool and help CHOICES figure out where it should focus its training efforts. Later, volunteers will take an annual re-certification “test” to remain certified as CHOICES counselors. This re-certification process will help ensure that volunteers are retaining the Medicare-related information they learned during their initial and update trainings.

Mentoring

Mentoring is available to interested volunteers, although it is not currently a formal part of the CHOICES training and certification process.

Advice from CHOICES

The pre-tests and post-tests that we use are very straightforward and easy for volunteers to understand. Also, calling them “pre-tests” and “post-tests” helps clue people into the fact that they'll know the answers to the questions by the end of the day. We've found the pre-tests and post-tests to be very effective with adult learners.