

2010 CEU Vendor Policy

AAPC CEU Mission

All members and business associates of AAPC must Uphold a Higher Standard in education. Certified Professional Coders must choose continuing education that stretches their skill levels. Vendors and local chapters must provide quality in curriculum. And AAPC's national office must develop a comprehensive list of CEU opportunities, and provide vendors and local chapters with timely and consistent CEU approvals.

Through AAPC, medical coders undergo a rigorous examination to ensure they are qualified to become Certified Professional Coders and those who succeed are expected to update their skills throughout their careers. To verify the continuation of their education, AAPC requires Certified Professional Coders to obtain continuing education units (CEUs) and submit them to AAPC every two years. The CEUs must come from a large pool of CEUs that have received prior approval by AAPC. This document outlines the standards and processes for obtaining AAPC CEUs. All CEU applications, whether for a national AAPC event, a local chapter, an in-service presentation, or vendor education, are equal under this policy.

The principal focus of curriculum being considered for CEUs is its educational value and a time element. In keeping with the accepted standard for CEU determination, one hour of live education (workshop, audiosseminar, conference) is the equivalent of 1 CEU. Further in this document, we will discuss how this translates into written or online CEU opportunities.

AAPC has been strengthening its members' credentials by strengthening its CEU approval process over the years, and AAPC's CEU policies are evolving. CEU rules for members are applied according to the year in which the CEUs are earned, not the year in which they are submitted. Because CEUs can be earned over the course of two years, multiple CEU policies may need to be followed. All materials in this booklet will be based on current 2010 CEU standards; however, an appendix provides a list of "grandfathered" CEU opportunities, and their expirations.

Remember, CEUs will only be issued to the owner of the copyright on original materials, or to the sponsoring organization. CEUs would not be calculated, for example, to a government policy that a private vendor has attached to its online curriculum. CEUs would be issued to an organization that is sponsoring a speaker who will present original copyright materials.

Exclusions

Proliferation of Credentials

The AAPC is alarmed at the proliferation of new organizations that seek to profit by providing coding credentials that are redundant or not meaningful to the medical coding community. Inpatient and outpatient coders are long been served well by credentialing organizations established decades ago. These established organizations consistently provide quality education and relevant testing. The AAPC will no longer issue CEUs to any coding curriculum that has a stated goal of preparing a student for a coding, coding-related, or administrative healthcare related, credential exam issued by an organization that has not been licensed and established in its present form for no less than 10 years. The said established company must have been providing quality education and credentialing coders for no less than 10 years.

Coding Books and References

The AAPC will not award CEUs for publications or software considered to be tools that coders use at their desks to perform their responsibilities. Examples include CPT®, ICD-9-CM, HCPCS Level II, and desk reference books, medical dictionaries, and software containing code look-ups and coverage data. Also, curriculum designed specifically to be text for an instructor teaching coding/billing courses will not be awarded CEUs. The instructor must apply for CEUs for the course.

Presentations from Nonqualified Speakers

The AAPC will not award CEUs to presentations by speakers who are not qualified by AAPC standards. AAPC requires speakers to be Certified Professional Coders or to hold other certifications (i.e., MD, JD, RN, MBA) appropriate to the subject matter. Exceptions will be made for experts who submit a qualifying resume with the CEU application. Typically, a qualifying resume describes a presenter who is a payer representative responsible for coding education or coding compliance, or an employee of a government entity like CMS or the OIG.

A certified member with an apprentice status will not be approved as a presenter/instructor. If the presenter/instructor is a CPC-A® please refer to www.aapc.com/certification/index.aspx for guidelines on how to remove the apprentice status.

The AAPC will not award CEUs to presentations by speakers who are in violation of AAPC policies or guidelines including, but not limited to, marketing policies, and guidelines.

While similar requirements are not enforced for print or online curriculum, AAPC strongly recommends that Certified Professional Coders be engaged for the development of all coding curriculum being considered for CEUs.

CEUs Earned Prior to Certification

The AAPC will not accept as valid any CEUs earned prior to obtaining certification. Many coding certification courses will offer CEUs because certified coders may choose to brush up on their skills because they have been away from coding, or because they want specific information on other specialties. Certified coders are permitted to submit CEUs from these classes. Students who graduate to sit for their certification are ineligible for these CEUs.

Courses Offered at Post Secondary Schools

The AAPC does not approve or endorse courses taught at a post secondary school. Therefore, a post secondary school cannot use the AAPC CEU approved Logo or approved vendor statement. An index number approved for an instructor at a post secondary school may not be used in advertising as an approved course by the AAPC.

NOTE: If your post-secondary school would like to consider offering its continuing education programs and/or products to a national audience, there is no better way than through advertising with the AAPC. Advertising options through the *Coding Edge Magazine*, the *EdgeBlast* e-newsletter, or on the AAPC Web site will get the word out about the courses you offer to any number of members who may be searching for continued educational opportunities. For more information on advertising with the AAPC, visit our Web site at www.aapc.com/advertise/website-advertising.aspx for information and rates or you may contact the Marketing and Advertising Coordinator, at 800-626-2633 ext 191.

AAPC will not approve CEUs for:

- A coder's day-to-day coding/billing responsibilities.
- Auditors for the audits they perform nor for the time they spend educating physicians.
- Time spent in curriculum preparation.

Inclusions

AHIMA CEUs

We offer one-for-one equivalent CEUs for any audio conferences and workshops published by the AHIMA national office. We also honor CEUs from AHIMA for online self assessments. A certificate of attendance or completion is necessary to show participation. One hour of instruction is worth 1 CEU. AHIMA CEUs are accepted from programs sponsored by AHIMA national offices and the state AHIMA branches. The AAPC does not accept CEUs from other entities that offer "AHIMA approved" CEUs, unless these organizations have separately issued AAPC CEU approvals, AAPC index numbers and CEU values.

CMS CEUs

CEUs for CMS-sponsored audio conferences and workshops are accepted by AAPC at a rate of 1 CEU per hour. These CEUs may come from CMS national or MAC offices. A certificate of attendance or completion with the CMS logo is necessary to show participation. More than 15 free CEUs are offered through the Medicare Learning Network online. The CEU value of each module is based on time.

CMEs

The AAPC will honor one-for-one CEUs for any live event offering CME credit. A certificate of attendance or completion is necessary to show participation. The certificate will give the total CMEs possible for the offering. Physicians are advised to claim only the actual hours they were present during the education. We ask that AAPC certified members abide by this request also. One hour of instruction is worth 1 CEU.

Post Secondary Education

If a student has an AAPC certification, the AAPC will accept as CEUs time spent in post secondary education programs, including diploma-degree-granting programs that relate to health care, health care business, health care finance and health care management. Each CEU is earned based on transcripts showing the "clock hours" or "credit hours." Clock hour CEUs are earned at the rate of 1 CEU per clock hour. Credit hours are earned at a rate of 10 CEUs per credit hour. In either case, the maximum number of CEUs that can be earned in this manner is 40 hours per year.

Types of CEUs

Two types of CEUs are awarded at AAPC: Curriculum A and Curriculum B. During each 24-month CEU accrual period, a member must earn two-thirds of total CEUs from Curriculum A. The typical member with a single credential would therefore be eligible to apply 12 Curriculum B CEUs during the two-year period in which she must earn 36 total CEUs.

Simply put, Curriculum A focuses on the technical side of professional medical coding, while Curriculum B focuses on general business skills. Vendors will be asked to categorize their curriculum at the time of their CEU application, and members need to be aware of what type of CEU they are earning, to ensure they have enough qualifying A CEUs at renewal time.

Member Core Educational Content Professional Medical Coding Curriculum A		Related Core Educational Content General Business Skills Curriculum B	
Coding/Billing	CPT®	Professional Self Improvement	Communication Skills
	ICD-9-CM (Vol. 1-3)		Management Skills
	ICD-10		Time Management
	HCPCS Level II		Stress Management
	Coding & Billing Policy & Procedure		Employee Issues
			OSHA
Clinical	Anatomy		Workers Compensation Benefits
	Physiology		Product Management
	Medical Terminology		Software Training
	Pharmacy		JCAHO
	Pathophysiology		
Compliance	Compliance Auditing		
	Compliance Planning		
	Self Reporting		
	Compliance Training		
Regulatory	Medicare Regulations		
	Medicaid Regulations		
	OIG Work Plan		
	MS Transmittals		
	Teaching Regulations		
	NCDs/LCDs		
Workers Compensation Coding	Data/Claims		
	Data Management		
	A/R Management		
	Appeals		
	Revenue Cycle		
Insurer	Payer Contract Negotiations		

Calculating CEUs

Quality of curriculum is the responsibility of the vendor, in-service presenter, or local chapter. The curriculum is evaluated by AAPC CEU analysts for tone and complexity, but AAPC does not validate or endorse the accuracy of the materials presented. AAPC requires all materials to be based on the current year's codes, and will perform a very superficial review of content quality. AAPC reserves the right to reject content based on quality issues, and will disclose these issues to the vendor. Being awarded CEUs by AAPC, however, does not guarantee accuracy or quality of curriculum.

AAPC's principal metric for awarding CEUs is time element. In keeping with the accepted standard for CEU determination, one hour of live education (workshop, audio seminar, and conference) is the equivalent of 1 CEU.

Timed Sessions

Live or Recorded events including Seminars, Workshops, Audios, Teleconferences, Live Web-Based Trainings, Courses, and Post Secondary School Courses, are considered "Timed Sessions."

Timed sessions are assigned CEUs based on time. Timed sessions will receive one CEU per hour of training with a maximum of 40 hours. This time equivalency is the basis of all CEU assignments, but is a simple metric to follow for live or recorded curriculum. Any time expended during a live session that is not active curriculum (i.e., a luncheon, networking session, taking a test) is omitted from the time calculation upon which the CEU allocation is based.

All live or recorded events requesting two or more CEUs must submit a time-lined agenda. A detailed program goal is sufficient for 1.5 CEUs or less.

Live events do not require a final test. Recorded products require a final test. Both live and recorded products may opt for supplemental CEUs. Please refer to "Guidelines for all required Tests and Tests for Supplemental CEUs" below.

Guidelines for all Required Tests and Tests for Supplemental CEUs

All required tests and those submitted for supplemental CEUs must follow AAPC guidelines for tests. Ten questions are required for each requested CEU. Test content should be sufficiently challenging. Someone should not be able to pass the test without having read the content or listened and learned from a presentation. Tests must be submitted at the time the curriculum is submitted. All tests must be corrected by the sponsoring organization. The participant must pass with a score of 70 percent or higher to be awarded the CEU certificate of completion.

AAPC allows for limited CEUs for testing as a supplement to curriculum for live or recorded live products. Test questions submitted for supplemental CEUs must be followed with **information-rich rationale**. Excluding post secondary school courses, up to 1 CEU for a pre-test or up to 1 CEU for a post-test can be awarded as a supplement to a one hour live or recorded training. No more than 2 CEUs may be awarded for a pre- or post-test of not less than two hours of training. One CEU is earned for each 10 test questions, up to 3 CEUs. Supplemental CEUs cannot total more than the CEU value of the live event or recorded product. No more than 3 supplemental CEUs can be associated with any single approval. The tests must be submitted at the time the curriculum is submitted and must follow AAPC guidelines for tests.

Guidelines according to Media for Required Tests and Tests for Supplemental CEUs

Educational publications: Ten questions for each requested CEU, with a maximum of 40 questions is required. These tests essentially activate the CEUs from the publication, and do not require rationales.

Newsletters and Magazines: Ten questions for each requested CEU is required. These tests essentially activate the CEUs from the publication, and do not require rationales.

Online education: Ten questions for each requested CEU, with a maximum of 40 questions are required. Information-rich rationale included with test questions for online education may contribute to the curriculum word count.

Live sessions do not require a final test. AAPC allows for limited CEUs for testing as a supplement to curriculum. Supplemental test questions require information-rich rationales. Excluding post secondary school courses, up to 1 CEU for a pre- or post-test can be awarded as a supplement to a one hour training. No more than 2 CEUs may be awarded for a pre- or post-test of not less than two hours of training. Supplemental CEUs cannot total more than the CEU value of the live event and no more than 3 supplemental CEUs can be associated with any single live event.

Recorded products require a post-test to verify attendance. This test essentially activates the CEUs from the recorded event, and does not require rationales. Each recorded event CEU requires 10 questions, up to 3 CEUs. No additional questions are required beyond 30 to earn CEUs for recordings of duration beyond three hours.

A vendor can opt to include rationales with each question on its mandatory test for recorded curriculum, to earn up to 3 supplemental CEUs. Supplemental CEUs cannot total more than the CEU value of the recorded event and no more than 3 supplemental CEUs can be associated with any single recorded event. That means a three-hour recording could be valued at 6 CEUs: 3 for the test with rationales, and 3 for the recording; but without rationales, the same test and recording would be worth 3 CEUs.

Pre-Tests

A Pre-Test is a test with curriculum to bring all attendees up to the same level of knowledge. Guests of a seminar, workshop, or audio, can come in all shapes, sizes, and levels of expertise. Curriculum with a pre-test is provided prior to the event. If the pre-test is successfully passed, the curriculum has served the purpose of putting each attendee on the same foot. The pre-test must follow AAPC guidelines for supplemental CEUs meaning that the pre-test must not only provide curriculum prior to the test but the test questions must be followed by information-rich rationales. Now the offering can move along at a pace that everyone can learn from. Those with little or no experience in the topic have enough knowledge from the pre-test that they can “keep up” with the presenter and not feel lost or left behind.

Post-Tests

See above: **Guidelines for All Required Tests and Tests for Supplemental CEUs**

Print Publications

Qualifying curriculum within print publications includes narrative, illustrations, and graphs or charts. Excluded from word/page count are indexes and educational exercises (puzzles, quizzes, or other work). A final test is required for printed publications, to ensure that the coder has read and absorbed the materials within. The final test must be corrected by the sponsoring organization prior to the member receiving a CEU certificate of completion. The test must be passed by the participant with a score of 70 percent or higher to be awarded the CEUs. Because this test is a verification that the material was read, no CEUs are awarded for print publication tests.

The following guideline is used to calculate CEUs for Educational Publications and Self Study Guides, although the publication's font size and layout design may result in more or less CEUs being applied:

- 50 pages of quality curriculum plus a final test of 10 questions equals 1 CEU
- 100 pages of quality curriculum plus a final test of 20 questions equals 2 CEUs
- 150 pages of quality curriculum plus a final test of 30 questions equals 3 CEUs
- 200 pages of quality curriculum plus a final test of 40 questions equals 4 CEUs

There is a limit to the number of CEUs that will be awarded to any publication, regardless of its size. Four CEUs is the maximum. More pages and more questions will not result in a higher CEU value. A copy of the publication and test is required for CEU assignment.

Newsletters and Magazines, hardcopy, PDF or online

Newsletters and magazines can be a great source of education for the coder. The AAPC offers 0.5 CEUs for reading and completing the *EdgeBlast* test twice a month, and 1 CEU for completing *Coding Edge* magazine test each month. Other magazines are assigned CEUs similarly. In electronic formats, Web links are a consideration in CEU assignment, if the Web link content is included in the test questions. Typically, the calculation is as follows:

- 8–24 pages of education with a final 5 question test will receive 0.5 CEUs.
- 25 pages or greater of education with a final 10 question test will receive 1 CEU.

The final test for newsletters and magazines must be corrected by the sponsoring organization, prior to the member receiving a CEU certificate of completion. The test must be passed by the participant with a 70 percent score or higher to be awarded the CEUs.

Each publication has a ceiling of 1 CEU per month. This means that weekly newsletters worth 0.5 CEUs would be approved only twice monthly. The vendor will be requested to submit issue numbers or the dates of the issues for which they request CEUs.

Word Count Consideration

Time considerations are translated into word count when AAPC awards CEUs for online print products. While most educators use a baseline of 16,000 words per hour as a standard for education among adult students, AAPC instead bases its print, both hardcopy and online, publication requirements on the number of words spoken in the average coding education session. Our research shows that an average of 7,000 words is spoken in a one-hour session. Therefore, our calculation for written CEUs is 7,000 words for 1 CEU. This information may help vendors in their CEU application calculations. Keep in mind, AAPC reserves the right to exclude any material from the word calculation (for example, lengthy operative notes or coding scenarios, while contributing to the curriculum, may not qualify as curriculum).

CEUs are based on education provided. Products containing exercises without curriculum are not eligible for CEUs (for example, a series of worksheets with scenarios or coding questions). Rationales provided with individual questions and answers qualify as curriculum. See below for more information on rationales as curriculum.

If a **Self Study Guide** is composed of coding scenarios, as a practice tool, each scenario must have rationale provided. The rationale will be considered the educational component. A word count computation will be performed as a measurement of CEU value on the rationales. The coding scenarios must be corrected by the sponsoring organization, prior to the participant receiving a CEU certificate of completion. The member must pass with a 70 percent score or higher.

Online Education

Sometimes, the best education uses a multi-platform approach, combining reading assignments with lectures and quizzes. Online education is perfectly suited for multiple platforms, and is becoming an increasingly popular method for obtaining CEUs.

Components of eLearning or Web-based training are valued by AAPC CEU analysts in the same fashion they would be if they were not Web-based. For example, if an hour-long lecture is included in a Web-based training, it would receive 1 CEU. A 50-page document that qualifies as curriculum and that is attached to the online training would be valued at an additional 1 CEU when accompanied by a 10-question test. A Web-based “screen” is not the equivalent of a page in a document. To ensure the appropriate CEU assignment is made for this type curriculum, the number of words in the curriculum is determined, and 1 CEU is awarded for every 7,000 words. CEU analysts will consider additional weight for any illustrations or graphics included in the training, as they would for print product. A small consideration will also be given for hyperlinks to documents referenced in the Web-based training. For example, training on compliance might include a link to the OIG 2010 Work plan. But keep in mind, the Work plan contains 89 pages, but only a few will address issues affecting coders, and the Work plan is, essentially, a workplace “tool,” and not curriculum. It also is not curriculum originating with the vendor seeking the CEU. Even so, a significant number of hyperlinks combined with rich, relevant text regarding the links, may boost a CEU count if it is on the border between two numbers. Remember, the CEUs are for the vendor’s own curriculum, not for links to source documents the coders can access on their own.

As with publications, Web-based curriculum requires a final test to ensure materials were actually read and absorbed. The test should be based on the curriculum word count: 10 questions for each 7,000 words, with a maximum of 40 questions. Consideration will be given for any information-rich rationales that accompany the test questions or any quizzes along the way. These rationales must qualify as curriculum in order to be considered part of the word count. The final test must be corrected by the sponsoring organization. The participant must pass with a score of 70 percent or greater to be awarded the CEUs.

Rationales as Curriculum

The principal focus of curriculum being considered for CEUs is its educational value. CEUs are based on education provided.

We learn best by doing. As we learn, a teacher is usually there to provide feedback. In the absence of this type of interaction, some other sort of feedback is necessary. Because learning by doing is so effective, many print and Web-based curricula rely on coding scenarios to teach their students. A scenario is provided, and the reader is asked to code it or to answer the questions regarding the scenario. AAPC supports this mechanism for teaching, with one caveat. Feedback has to be part of this process. Questions must be followed by rationales. It does the student no good to simply be told that she chose the wrong answer; it’s important to understand how to find the right answer. Any quiz, test, or coding scenario that is a candidate for CEUs, either alone or as a component of curriculum, must contain rationales.

Rationales should be enriching curriculum. What follows are examples of acceptable rationales:

- Shortness of breath is documented. However, SOB is a common symptom associated with pneumothorax, and ICD-9-CM Official Coding Guidelines state, “Signs and symptoms that are integral to the disease process should not be assigned as additional codes, unless otherwise instructed by the classification.” (www.aapc.com/documents/2009-OCT-ICD-9-Official-Guidelines.pdf section 1.B.7.)
- When the cardiologist schedules an angioplasty, atherectomy, or stent procedure, it is usually based on a prior diagnostic cardiac catheterization. In these situations, it is not appropriate to code for a repeat diagnostic test. To be clear, it would not be appropriate to separately report catheter placement (93508 or 93510) or diagnostic coronary angiography (93545 and 93556) at the time of an elective coronary intervention.
- The first-listed diagnosis when treating complications of diabetes is the code for the diabetes itself. Because this patient has ophthalmic complications, a fourth digit 5 (ophthalmic manifestations) is used. Although insulin-dependence is usually associated with Type I diabetes, the documentation provided is not sufficient to assume this patient is a Type I diabetic. Because Type II diabetics are sometimes insulin dependent, insulin usage is not a good determination of whether the patient is Type I (producing no insulin) or Type II (with hampered insulin production or uptake). The Official ICD-9-CM Coding Guidelines tell us to default to Type II diabetes when the type is not specified in documentation. The guidelines also tell us that unless specifically noted as “uncontrolled” or “not controlled,” the fifth-digit for uncontrolled diabetes should not be used. Therefore, correct primary diagnosis is 250.50—identifying Type II diabetes with ophthalmic manifestations, not stated as uncontrolled. NOS is an acronym meaning not otherwise specified. Since the severity of the retinopathy was not documented, 362.03 is the correct code to report. The macular edema code is reported secondary to the retinopathy code with 362.07. Finally, to identify that a Type II diabetic patient is insulin dependent, coders should report V58.67.

Unacceptable rationales:

- B is the right answer.
- The patient received has sarcoidosis, reported with ICD-9-CM code 135.
- (www.aapc.com/documents/2009-OCT-ICD-9-Official-Guidelines.pdf section 1.B.7.)

Proper rationales will be a detailed narrative, telling the story of how to come to the correct answer.

Print publications include tests to ensure the written curriculum has been completed; no CEUs are awarded for these tests and rationales are not required.

Original PDF Certificate and CEU Code Card

A copy of the original PDF Certificate or CEU Code Card (new for multi-specialty conferences with breakout sessions) sent to you upon approval are the only documents the AAPC will accept if a member is selected for verification. The approved documents cannot be changed other than adding a name, a date, or an index number when one is not recorded. The CEU Code Card may also require session titles and specialty assignments be added. Please do not alter these certificates in any other way.

It is acceptable for you to make a personalized certificate for your events. However it is not permissible to use the approved index number, CEU value, the AAPC Logo, or the statement: *“This program has the prior approval of the American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC) for _____ continuing education hours. Granting of prior approval in no way constitutes endorsement by AAPC of the program content or the program sponsor.”*

CEU Tracker

The CEU Tracker has been developed to simplify the CEU reporting and verification process. Vendors play an important role in CEU Tracker success. The Index number assigned for an event and the date for the event must match in the CEU Tracker in order for the CEUs to be validated. Each Index number is assigned specialty status as well. Never alter any of the information on the CEU certificates and ensure your customers understand the importance of the Index number and date when they are entering items in the Tracker system.

Twenty-five percent of all CEU submissions are randomly selected for verification of CEUs submitted on the CEU Tracker. Members should maintain their CEU certificates and/or CEU Code Cards on file for at least six months beyond their renewal date so the evidence is on hand should he or she be selected for CEU verification.

Promoting Your Program

Guidelines for promoting your educational programs both online and offline can be found at www.aapc.com/vendor-resources. These guidelines ensure your customers, and potential customers, are educated as to the continuing education you have been approved by the AAPC to offer.

The AAPC will allow the vendor the ability to use the AAPC CEU Approved Logo for purposes of promoting approved coding products. The vendor can use the CPC®, CPC-H®, CPC-P®, CIRCC®, or CPMA™ in the body of marketing materials but are not permitted to use the CPC®, CPC-H®, CPC-P®, CIRCC®, or CPMA™ in the title or headline of marketing materials.

When vendors market inside a publication using the AAPC Logo and the AAPC statement of approval, they must include the expiration date of the approval.

The following Statement must always accompany the CEU Approved Logo. See [Asterisk]*

**This program has the prior approval of the American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC) for continuing education hours. Granting of prior approval in no way constitutes endorsement by the AAPC of the program content or the program sponsor.*

The CEU Vendor Application Process

The American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC) grants prior approval for continuing education programs based on the relevance of the program content to the medical coding, reimbursement, compliance, and billing profession.

- Prior approval is requested by submitting the AAPC form entitled “Application for Prior CEU Approval.” The applications are online at www.aapc.com/vendor-resources/ under the application tab. Choose the application specific to the media you will be using.
- Submit the completed application form and all materials requested on the application form at least 21–30 days prior to your marketing needs or first event date.
- AAPC will not backdate approvals for programs that have already been held.
- The AAPC offers free approvals for in-service events in which no monies are exchanged.
- The AAPC offers instructors at post-secondary schools free approvals for the instructor only for face-to-face teaching. The instructor must provide a copy of the course syllabus and names of all textbooks and workbooks used for the course.
- Regular application fee schedules are on the first page of each media specific application form.
- All submissions are requested to provide a tax identification number.
- For-profit companies are required to pay a yearly vendor registration fee (VRF) with their first application of each new year. The VRF is for the calendar year, January–December and includes the first approval up to \$150.00.
- Media-specific AAPC guidelines for CEU approval are included on each application form. All questions must be answered completely.
- All required documents and copies of all pre and post-tests must be submitted with the application.
- Incomplete applications will not be accepted. They will be returned to the vendor without processing or held in a file with incomplete applications. The review cycle will not begin until the application is complete.
- **An approved course title cannot be changed.** Submit the exact title, as it will appear in all marketing materials.
- Provide the names of all presenters, along with their current credentials, (eg, CPC®, CPC-H®, CPC-P®). Other professional licenses (eg, RN, MD, JD) or other acceptable proof of expertise in the subject matter may be accepted. Presenters without a current credential or professional license relevant to the subject matter should provide a resume. Persons with an apprentice status will not be approved as instructors. If the presenter/instructor is a CPC-A® please refer to www.aapc.com/certification/index.aspx for guidelines on how to remove the apprentice status.
- Application materials will be reviewed by a CEU analyst for worthy educational content according to the 2010 policies for CEU approval.
- Vendors are expected to carefully read the guidelines in the application regarding CEU assignment and to make application, to the best of their ability, for the number of CEUs appropriate to the curriculum.
- A unique index number and CEU value will be assigned to the program/product.
- Upon approval, a letter of approval, a PDF certificate, and an evaluation form will be emailed to the Vendor. If payment was provided a paid invoice will also be emailed.
- An exception to the above bullet, multi-specialty conferences with breakout sessions will be issued a CEU Code Card rather than a certificate.

- Vendor will provide each attendee a copy of the original PDF certificate or CEU Code Card provided by the AAPC. The approved documents cannot be changed other than adding a name, a date, or an index number when one is not recorded. The CEU Code Card may also require session titles and specialty assignments be added.
- If you distribute a personalized certificate, you must also provide the attendee with a copy of the original PDF certificate or CEU Code Card provided to you by the AAPC.
- The evaluation form is as much for the sponsoring organization as it is for the AAPC. Vendor will return to the AAPC only those forms with a rating of 2 or less supported by a qualifying statement.
- A single approval is valid for a 12 month period, beginning with the date of the approval, allowing the approved program to be presented an unlimited number of times at any location during the approved period.
- There is an exception to the above statement. PMCC approvals expire with the PMCC license.
- The online pre-approved vendor list at www.aapc.com/education/ceu-vendors-list.aspx contains the names of products except those provided by instructors at post secondary schools or as in-service education. A product remains on the online list for 12 months following its approval, and then is removed.
- Refer to www.aapc.com/vendor-resources/ for guidelines for promoting your educational program offline and online.
- You may not state verbally or in marketing, that CEU approval has been submitted to, or is pending from, the AAPC.
- Company organization must be in good standing with the Better Business Bureau.
- The AAPC is a private company and reserves the right to refuse any vendor, for any reason, in which case all fees will be refunded minus a \$50.00 processing fee.
- All approvals solely belong to and are assigned to the requesting organization.
- To reapply for an expired program/product, submit again all information.

Late Fees and Fast Track Fees

A complete application must be received 21 to 30 days prior to your promotion date. Incomplete applications received 21 days, or less, prior to your marketing needs or first event date will be charged a \$50.00 late submission fee. Once the application is made complete it will be placed into a two week review cycle. If the marketing or event date is within the two week review cycle, a \$50.00 fee will be charged to fast track the application.

Reevaluation

A reevaluation may be requested at a cost of \$50.00 (nonrefundable) if an application is denied or the program is awarded a lesser amount of CEUs than requested. The reevaluation request, along with any additional information, must be made within 30 days of receiving denial or approval from AAPC. If an application is denied for a second time, resubmission will not be accepted for one year.

Reasons to Revoke Vendor Status

If an application has received prior approval and any of the following are found to be true, AAPC vendor status will be revoked without refund of any fees for violation of these policies.

- Misrepresentation by the sponsoring organization or presenter of programs, credentials, or intent.
- False or misleading information by the sponsoring organization or presenter.
- False claims of the AAPC endorsement or unauthorized logo use by the sponsoring organization or presenter.
- Discrimination by the sponsoring organization or presenter against race, creed, religion and/or gender.
- Representation by the sponsoring organization or presenter of the AAPC and/or members in a negative manner.
- Negative or adversarial remarks against payers or providers by the sponsoring organization or presenter.
- Foul or vulgar language will not be tolerated and visual aids shall be free of inappropriate content or pictures per subject matter.
- Sharing or transferring an approved CEU for distribution by or through another entity.
- Using the approved time to promote products, services, or software for commercial or financial gain.

Vendor Advisory Committee

The AAPC established a Vendor Advisory Committee and completed the following goals in 2009:

- Index all CEU opportunities according to geographic location, platform, specialty, and level of difficulty.
- Publish a complete instruction and policy guide to the CEU vendor process.
- A simple-to-use search screen for members seeking specific CEUs will be available in late 2009 or early 2010.

The Vendor Advisory Committee will meet twice in 2010, February and July.

Enhancements for 2010

CEU Certificate

CEU Certificates will have total core CEUs and up to *five* specialty CEU values indicating the *total hours of content specific* to the specialties.

CEU Code Cards

Multi-Specialty conferences with breakout sessions will be issued a CEU Code Card rather than a certificate. Each breakout session will be approved individually with both core and specialty CEUs. Code cards will be completed by the attendee and will serve as verification of attendance.

Members Search Screen

Information is being collected on the media specific applications forms for a new member search screen. The search screen will provide information about educational opportunities to coders that they may not have been aware of; in addition, the search screen will offer additional advertisement for vendors for their programs/products with a CEU-approved status. Beginning in late 2009 or early 2010 Members of the AAPC will have access to an online search screen to locate programs/products that have been approved with an application fee based on:

- **Specialty**—Each application may be awarded up to “five” specialties according to the “total hours” of “content specific” to the specialty.
- **Level of difficulty/expertise**—Apprentice Coder [certified with no experience], Beginner Coder, Intermediate Coder, or Expert Coder
- **Geo-specific location**—According to zip codes and dates of future offerings.
- **Media of presentation**—Face-to-face opportunities (workshops, conferences), audios, publications, online learning

Policy changes for 2010

Recorded Products require a Post-Test

Recorded products require a test to verify attendance. These tests essentially activate the CEUs from the recorded event, and do not require rationales. Each recorded event CEU requires 10 questions, up to 3 CEUs. No additional questions are required beyond 30 to earn CEUs for recordings of duration beyond three hours.

A vendor can opt to include rationales with each question on its mandatory test for recorded curriculum, to earn up to 3 supplemental CEUs. Supplemental CEUs cannot total more than the CEU value of the recorded event, and no more than 3 supplemental CEUs can be associated with any single recorded event. That means a three-hour recording could be valued at 6 CEUs: 3 for the tests with rationales, and 3 for the recording; but without rationales, the same test and recording would be worth 3 CEUs. All tests must follow the AAPC guidelines for tests. The tests must be submitted with the application. The tests must be corrected by the sponsoring organization. Participants must pass with a score of 70 percent or higher to be awarded the CEUs.

Archived CEU Policies

The guidelines for each year are explained below. CEUs earned under previous CEU policies will be honored for CEUs earned in that year.

2009

For the year 2009, the AAPC will not be awarding CEUs for publications or software considered to be a tool that a coder would or could use at her desk to perform her responsibilities. Examples would be CPT®, ICD-9-CM, HCPCS Level II, desk reference books, and software containing reference material.

- Training on the benefits of particular software or how to use the software may be eligible for Core B CEUs.
- Portions of the training may be considered Coding/Billing knowledge, the CEU analyst will reflect back on the “**purpose**” of the training to make a decision.

Summaries and scenarios, in current form will not be accepted after 2008. Instead, approved publications will provide a test and CEU certificate for those successfully completing the **publisher’s test**.

2008

- All publications are awarded 1.0 CEU per scenario/summary.
- In-service events are each assigned a specific index number and CEU value.