College of Alberta Dental Assistants

Competence Program Manual

A regulated member's guide to the Continuing Competence Program

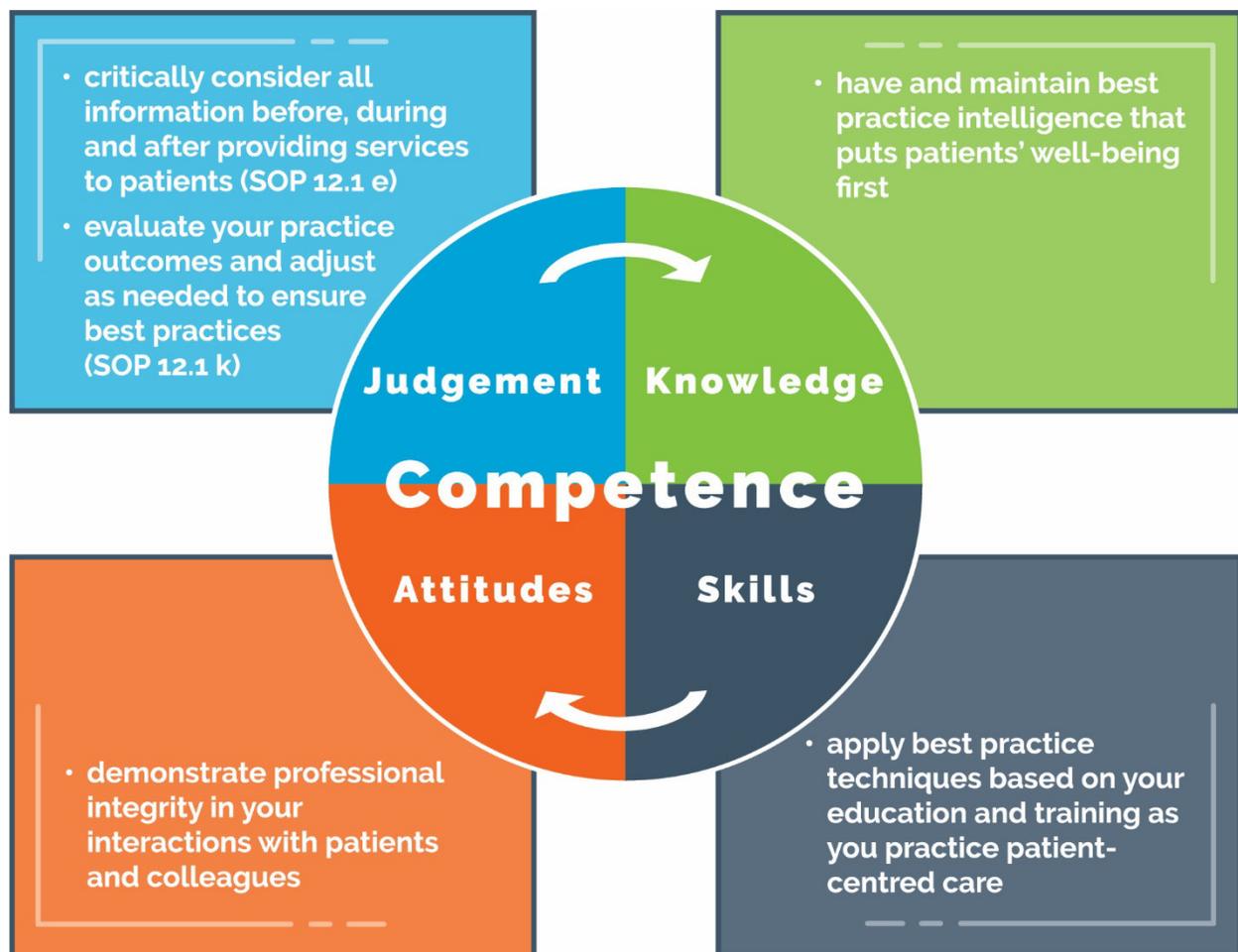# Contents

Introducing Continuing Competence

Lifelong learning is at the heart of what it means to be a competent professional. Patients assume and expect that you will provide them with knowledgeable, competent care throughout your career. To provide safe and appropriate services to the public, you must engage in ongoing learning.

Defining Competence

When you are competent, you have the **knowledge**, **skills**, **attitudes**, and **judgement** needed to provide professional services.[1]

- critically consider all information before, during and after providing services to patients (SOP 12.1 e)
- evaluate your practice outcomes and adjust as needed to ensure best practices (SOP 12.1 k)

- have and maintain best practice intelligence that puts patients' well-being first

Judgement   Knowledge

Competence

Attitudes   Skills

- demonstrate professional integrity in your interactions with patients and colleagues

- apply best practice techniques based on your education and training as you practice patient-centred care

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1 Standards of Practice 18.1

A Bit About Our CCP

Before we get into the Continuing Competence Program (CCP) requirements – the details about what you must do – let's look at what the CCP is for. Ideally, it will help you develop the **knowledge**, **skills**, **attitudes**, and **judgement** you need for competent practice. Briefly, the intent of our CCP is to:

1. meet the public's expectation of receiving competent care from dental assistants
2. meet the *Health Professions Act* (HPA) requirement of continuing competence for health professionals
3. meet our College's mission to regulate its members in the public interest, promoting the delivery of safe, quality oral health care
4. work with you to ensure you understand your responsibilities and meet them, practice competently and take responsibility for your own learning
5. encourage you to achieve more through self-reflection

We recognize that simply completing all CCP requirements does not guarantee competence. Instead, effective CCP participation requires self-assessing, completing learning activities and analyzing outcomes. We consider effective CCP participation to be an indirect indicator of competence.

This manual is meant to help you understand the CCP. It explains what we expect of you and guides you to resources that will support you. If you need help understanding anything, reach out to our Regulatory Compliance Advisors (RCA). They will answer your questions and help guide you.

Contact Our RCAs

Annual CCP Requirements

Framework

The HPA requires you to participate in a continuing competence program. Therefore, all dental assistants must complete continuing competence requirements every year. Our competence year is the same as our practice permit year: December 1st through November 30th of the following year. Our framework includes:

1. a self-assessment
2. a learning plan
3. learning activities
4. verification of learning activities
5. a learning results statement
6. verification of practice hours
7. participation in an audit

You can use our CCP Checklist as a quick reference.

Get the CCP Checklist

Assess → Achieve → Analyze

We have designed the CCP to encourage you to think proactively about your professional growth by following these **Assess → Achieve → Analyze** steps.

1. ASSESS

Each year you will assess your practice to find areas you can improve. This is an opportunity to think about what learning will help you maintain and develop your practice. You may identify this learning by:

- Using the confidential Self-Assessment tool as you review dental assisting competencies. During your review you decide if the skill applies to your practice and if you would benefit from learning more about it. Competencies (and their matching Competency Numbers - which include 1 letter and 2 numbers) are listed in the Self-Assessment tool and the Competency Profile (check the *More About the CCP* section of this Manual for details about the Competency Profile).

Get the Self-Assessment Tool   **Get the Competency Profile**

- Connecting with your colleagues and asking for help to identify areas where you can improve.
- Being open to cues in your daily practice that show areas where you can improve.

Measuring your level of competence requires awareness and honesty. Once your assessment is complete, you plan two learning objectives for the upcoming registration year. When you write your learning objectives, answer these two questions:

- What do I plan to learn?
- Why have I chosen this learning objective?

2. ACHIEVE

The activities you perform to fulfill your learning objectives help you become or increase competence in that area. There are many kinds of activities that you can participate in to meet your annual objectives. Examples include:

- completing formal educational courses
- self-studying
- attending a workshop/seminar/webinar
- mentorship by a colleague

Remember that your learning activities must be between December 1st and November 30th of the following year.

We have two resources to help you with tracking and verifying your learning:

1. For courses/workshops/webinars and mentoring, use the Verification of Learning form as proof of completing your learning activity.

Get the Learning Verification Form

2. For other ways to verify your learning activities, we give examples in the CCP Audit Evaluation Guide.
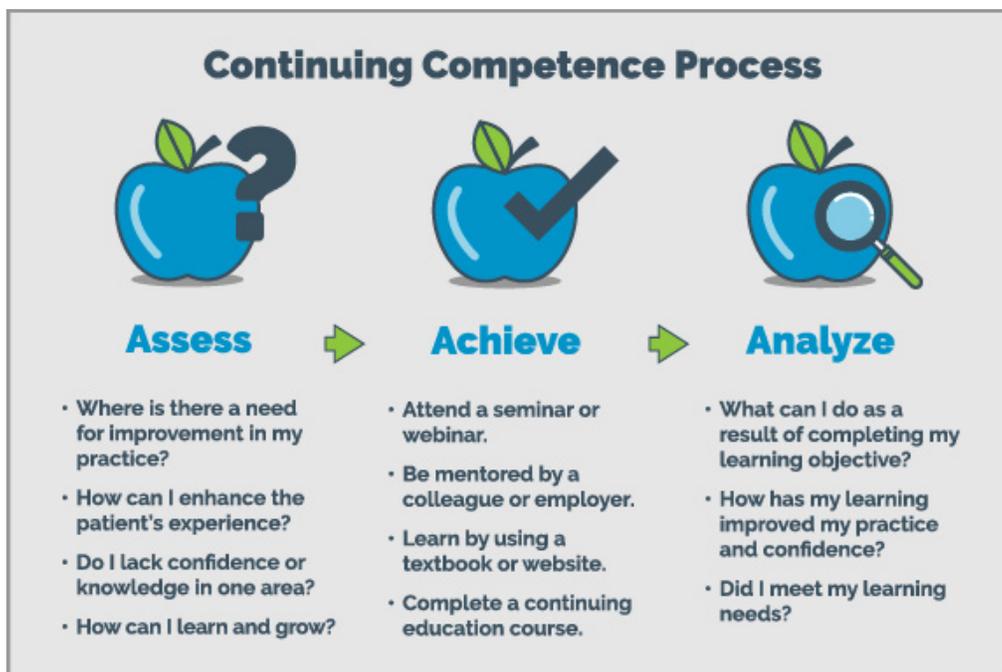
Get the Audit Evaluation Guide

3. ANALYZE

After completing and getting proof of your learning activities, you record the results of your learning activities through a reflective statement. We call this a results statement. To help you analyze the results of your learning, answer both of these :

1. Tell us how the learning impacted or enhanced your dental assisting practice. What can you do because of completing this Learning Objective?
2. Explain and or provide an example of how completing this Learning Objective improved your patient's oral health care experience or your dental assisting practice.

Follow our **Assess ➜ Achieve ➜ Analyze** steps for a simple way to approach your annual CCP requirements.

Continuing Competence Process

Assess ➜ **Achieve** ➜ **Analyze**

Assess
- Where is there a need for improvement in my practice?
- How can I enhance the patient's experience?
- Do I lack confidence or knowledge in one area?
- How can I learn and grow?

Achieve
- Attend a seminar or webinar.
- Be mentored by a colleague or employer.
- Learn by using a textbook or website.
- Complete a continuing education course.

Analyze
- What can I do as a result of completing my learning objective?
- How has my learning improved my practice and confidence?
- Did I meet my learning needs?

CCP Process	What to do and when	Find more information
Assess where you can improve	• use the Self-Assessment Tool – at least once a year, before you plan your learning • have conversations with your colleagues – throughout the year • self-identify gaps in practice – throughout the year • develop your learning plan and create two learning objectives – before you renew every year (*if this is your first year, you **also** need to do this right after you become registered*)	**Get** Self-Assessment **Get** CCP Audit Evaluation Guide
Achieve competence through completing learning activities	• complete two learning objectives from your learning plan – between December 1st and November 30th of the following year • collect evidence of completion from each activity – when you finish the activity • adjust learning plans if needed – throughout the year	**Get** Verification of Learning Form **Get** CCP Audit Evaluation Guide
Analyze the results of your learning	• reflect on your learning – when you finish a learning activity and throughout the year • identify if the learning had an impact on your practice and patients – when you finish a learning activity and throughout the year • write a results statement for each completed learning objective – when you complete each learning objective	**Get** CCP Audit Evaluation Guide

Changing your Learning Plan

There are situations where you may wish to change or update your learning plan for the year. Maybe you have recently changed jobs, or the office has purchased new equipment. Check *CCP5 Learning Plan Changes* in the CCP Policies for information about changing your learning plan.

Get the CCP Policies

Repeating Learning Objectives

The intent of the CCP is for you to continually learn. Repeating learning objectives may prevent growth. *CCP4 Learning Objectives* in the CCP Policies and the CCP Audit Evaluation Guide have more information about this.

Get the CCP Policies   **Get the Audit Evaluation Guide**

Practice Requirements

You must have at least 300 practice hours in the three years before you apply to renew your practice permit. Hours must be from providing professional services directly connected to the dental industry and either require or benefit from a dental assisting background.

Employment and volunteer hours may meet the requirement. Examples of volunteer hours are:

- board or committee commitments with local, provincial, or national dental assisting organizations
- service organizations (like Dentists without Borders, Kindness in Action, inner city dental relief clinics)

You can use the Practice Hours Verification form, signed by your supervisor/employer, as verification of hours.

Get the Practice Hours Verification Form

For other ways to verify your practice hours, we give examples in the CCP Audit Evaluation Guide.

Get the Audit Evaluation Guide

If you don't have 300 practice hours, we accept these instead:

- you successfully completed an approved clinical refresher course within the last three years
- you successfully completed the National Dental Assisting Examining Board Clinical Practice Evaluation within the last three years
- you are a graduate from a dental assisting program within the last three years
- you hold current practice rights as a dental assistant in a Canadian province where dental assisting is regulated

Uploading CCP Records

Now that you have completed the CCP requirements you will need to add this information into the Portal for us to review.

Audit

We audit the CCP records of at least 5% of dental assistants each year. If we select you for audit, we will send you a CCP Audit Notice in January. In that CCP Audit Notice, we will let you know which years of your CCP records we will review. By February 28, you must have your records posted online and ready for us to review. To make this easy, keep your CCP requirements up to date throughout the year.

During audit, our Regulatory Compliance Advisors check to see that your mandatory practice hours, learning plans, learning activities and verification meet the requirements and that your records accurately capture your continuous learning activities. They use the criteria throughout the CCP Policies and the Audit Evaluation Guide when they decide if an audit is successful or incomplete. The Audit Evaluation Guide will give you details about what they look for during an audit. Using it will help you have a successful audit.

> **Get the CCP Policies**   **Get the Audit Evaluation Guide**

When we audit, our goal is to educate you about our continuing competence expectations rather than to penalize. Use the CCP Checklist and Audit Evaluation Guide to help you prepare for a successful audit.
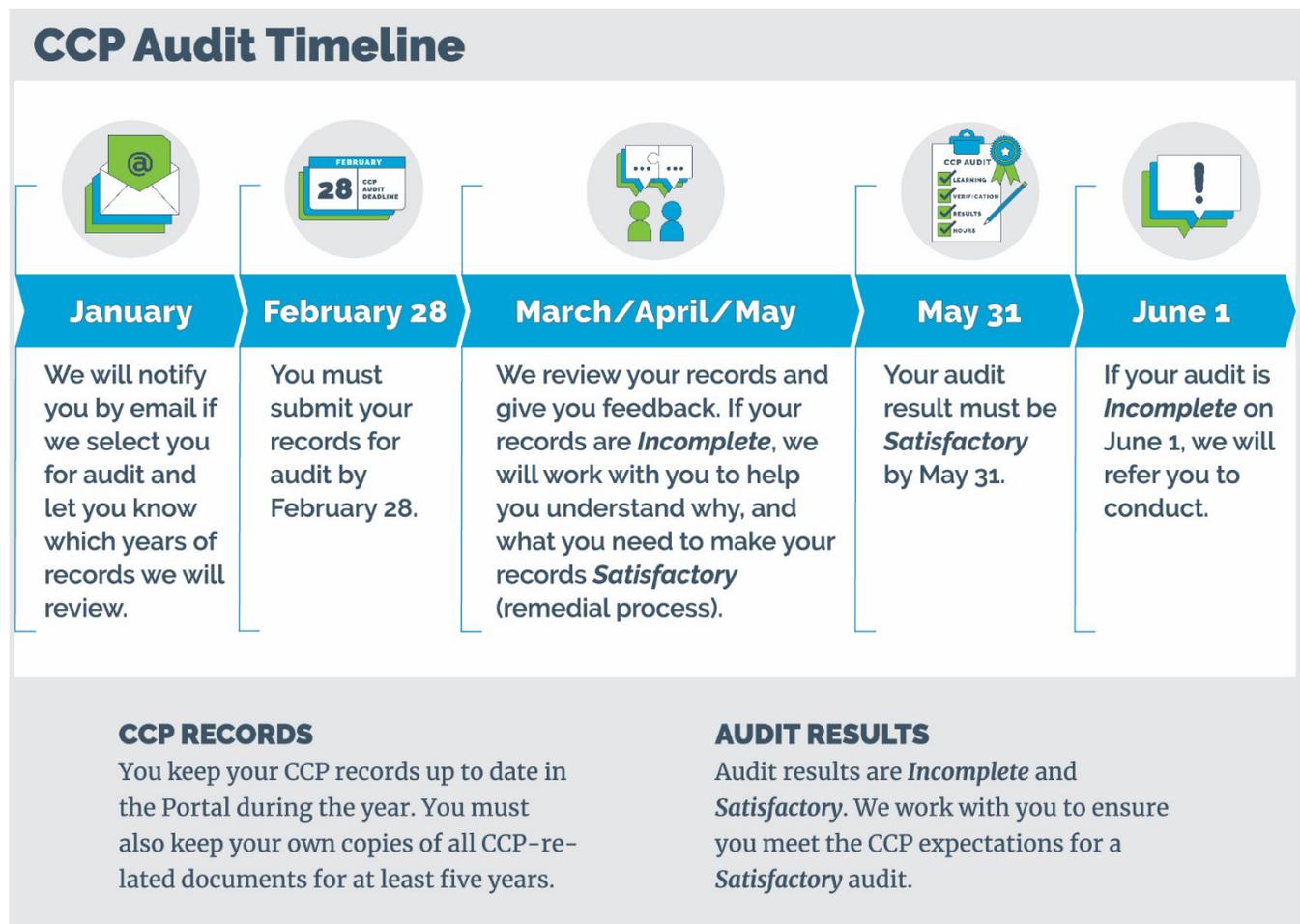
> **Get the CCP Checklist**   **Get the Audit Evaluation Guide**

You must keep copies of all documents related to CCP for at least five years.

Audit Timeline

This timeline shows you when the audit steps happen. Keep in mind that the CCP requirements align with your practice permit renewal timeline, not the calendar year.

CCP Audit Timeline

January	February 28	March/April/May	May 31	June 1
We will notify you by email if we select you for audit and let you know which years of records we will review.	You must submit your records for audit by February 28.	We review your records and give you feedback. If your records are *Incomplete*, we will work with you to help you understand why, and what you need to make your records *Satisfactory* (remedial process).	Your audit result must be *Satisfactory* by May 31.	If your audit is *Incomplete* on June 1, we will refer you to conduct.

CCP RECORDS
You keep your CCP records up to date in the Portal during the year. You must also keep your own copies of all CCP-related documents for at least five years.

AUDIT RESULTS
Audit results are *Incomplete* and *Satisfactory*. We work with you to ensure you meet the CCP expectations for a *Satisfactory* audit.

Audit Extensions

If you are experiencing extenuating circumstances and want to ask for more time to submit your audit, you must request an audit extension on or before the CCP audit deadline. You can find details about how to make your request, what it must include and what you can expect in the CCP Policies, *CCP11 Audit Extension.*

Get the CCP Policies

Audit Outcomes

We will let you know by email if your audit is Satisfactory or Incomplete.

If your audit is Satisfactory, your audit is done.

If your audit is Incomplete, you will have steps to take to make it Satisfactory (the Remedial Process). This may include updating or editing your records. We may ask for further proof of the activities you completed or any other steps that align with our CCP expectations.

We use the Remedial Process as a chance to help you understand the CCP requirements and our expectations so you can have a Satisfactory audit now and in the future. We describe the Remedial Process in the CCP Policies, *CCP 12 Remedial Process*.

Get the CCP Policies

If we notify you that your records are Incomplete, please follow the remedial process. Just as you expect the healthcare professionals who provide services to you and your family to learn and develop throughout their career, your patients expect the same of you.

Referral to Conduct

If you fail to meet the CCP audit requirements through the Remedial Process the next step may be that we refer you to the unprofessional conduct process. To avoid this, and to meet public safety expectations, we encourage you to engage with us and the remedial process.

Details about the Remedial Process and Conduct Referrals are in the CCP Policies, *CCP12 Remedial Process* and *CCP13 Conduct Referrals*.

Get the CCP Policies

Appealing a Decision

If you are not satisfied with your audit outcome you may appeal to the Competence Committee. Details about how to make an appeal are in the CCP Policies, *CCP14 Appeals*.

Get the CCP Policies

More About the CCP

At the beginning of this Manual, we described what our CCP is for. To help you understand it better, we'd like to tell you why we have the CCP and how it works.

A key reason that we have the CCP is that the Alberta Government expects us - the College - to serve in a way that protects the public interest. Our mission is to regulate dental assistants in the public interest to promote the delivery of safe, quality oral health care. When dental assistants follow the intent of our CCP, it helps to ensure they are providing safe, quality care.

Section 50 of the *Health Professions Act* requires that we have a continuing competence program for dental assistants to maintain competence and enhance their provision of professional services.

Self-Directed Learning

The CCP is meant to support and encourage your individual learning - it is not a one size fits all approach. The learning you choose to participate in is self-directed. As you consider your learning for the year you should tailor it to your role, work setting and patient needs.

Standards of Practice

Our Standards of Practice require that all Dental Assistants in Alberta must follow our Continuing Competence Program (CCP) requirements. They help define professional practice and are one tool we use to measure dental assistants' professional conduct. While the requirements of the CCP are in Standard 18, there is also information throughout the Standards that describe our expectations for competent practice. Applying the Standards to your practice may also help guide your CCP activities.

Get the Standards of Practice

Competence Committee and College Staff

We have a committee and staff who work together to support the Competence Program. The Competence Committee reviews CCP policies and procedures, including CCP audit. If needed, they suggest changes to Council.

Our Regulatory Compliance Advisors are your source for help, so reach out to them when you have questions about competence. They also perform audits.

Contact Our RCAs

Competence Policies

The Standards of Practice provide the rules for the CCP. We also have Competence Policies that complement the Standards of Practice by defining how we operate the program.

Get the CCP Policies

Competency Profile

The Competency Profile (Profile) describes the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes of competent dental assistants. We do not expect you to have every competency described in this Profile. Instead, your competencies will be specific to you and your patients' needs. Also, depending on those same needs, you may be more or less proficient than other dental assistants.

You will achieve most competencies in the Profile through formal education. Some you may gain through experience, further education and/or on-the-job training.

The Profile consists of nine competency categories, which are groupings of competencies or skills. They are:

A. Foundational Knowledge
B. Safety
C. Treatment Support Procedures
D. Dental Equipment & Technology
E. Clinical Procedures
F. Oral Health Education & Promotion
G. Communications & Interpersonal Skills
H. Practice Management
I. Professionalism

Get the Competency Profile

Resources

Get **Standards of Practice**
- Standard 18 includes the high-level CCP requirements
- there is information throughout the Standards that describe our expectations for competent practice

Get **Continuing Competence Program Policies**
- the Policies describe CCP requirements and how we measure if the requirements are met
- the Policies support the Standards of Practice

Get **Competency Profile**
- the Profile lists the competencies that are part of dental assistant practice
- this is where you find competency numbers for your learning objectives

Get **Continuing Competence Checklist**
- use this checklist to make sure your learning records meet our expectations

Get **Self-Assessment**
- use this tool to help you rate your own practice
- your ratings help you find your own learning needs
- plan your learning based on what you find

Get **Verification of Learning Form**
- use this form to record your learning from courses, workshops, seminars
- have speaker/presenter/employer sign to verify

Get **CCP Audit Evaluation Guide**
- this guide describes what we are looking for when we audit your records
- it explains what you need for a Satisfactory Audit result and what will cause an Incomplete Audit result

Get **Practice Hours Verification Form**
- use this form to record your practice hours (including volunteer hours)
- have employer/supervisor sign to verify