

***Personal Trainer and Clinical Exercise Professionals:  
Scope of Practice and Suggested Structure for PEIA Weight Management Program  
Sites***

***December 1, 2010***

Prepared for the PEIA Weight Management Program

by Sean Fitzpatrick, Christiaan Abildso, & Sam Zizzi

West Virginia University College of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences

Weight Management Program Research and Evaluation

## *Certifications and Academic Programs Reviewed*

### NCCA Accredited Personal Training Certifications

1. American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM CPT)
2. American Council on Exercise (ACE CPT)
3. International Fitness Professional Association (IFPA CPT)
4. National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM CPT)
5. National Council on Strength and Fitness (NCSF CPT)
6. National Exercise and Sport Trainers Association Personal Fitness Trainer (NESTA PFT)
7. National Federation of Professional Trainers (NFPT CPT)
8. National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA CPT)

### Clinical Exercise Professional Certifications

1. American College of Sports Medicine Health/Fitness Specialist (ACSM HFS)
2. American College of Sports Medicine Clinical Exercise Specialist (ACSM CES)
3. American College of Sports Medicine Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (ACSM RCEP)
4. American Council on Exercise Advanced Health and Fitness Specialist (ACE AHFS)
5. National Strength and Conditioning Association Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (NSCA CSCS)

## ***Recommended Scope of Practice at Weight Management Sites***

Based on an evaluation of credentialing organizations, prerequisite training for credentials, curricula in academic programs, current weight management sites' structure and performance, and feedback from weight management sites, it is the recommendation of the WVU Weight Management Program Research and Evaluation team that exercise professionals at PEIA Weight Management Program sites be classified into the following tiers of practice:

| Tier | Training/credential   | Allowable Scope of Practice  |   |                   |
|------|---|--|---|-------------------|
|      |   | Fitness testing  | Exercise program prescription/design  | Personal training |
| I    | ACSM – Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist<br>Master’s degree in Exercise Physiology or exercise science-related discipline with clinical experiential component<br>ACSM – Clinical Exercise Specialist<br>ACSM – Health/Fitness Specialist<br>ACE – Advanced Health/Fitness Specialist   | Yes  | Yes   | Yes               |
| II   | Licensed Physical Therapist (LPT)<br>Bachelor’s degree in allied health field with clinical exercise-related component (e.g., Exercise Physiology, Exercise Science, Kinesiology, Biomechanics, Physical Therapy, Physical Education, Occupational Therapy, Athletic Training)<br>NSCA – CSCS<br>Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC)<br>Physical Education Teacher (certified) | Yes, upon completion of supervised clinical experience <b>and</b> obesity-specific training          | Yes, upon completion of supervised clinical experience <b>and</b> obesity-specific training                     | Yes               |
| III  | Certified Personal Trainer by NCCA accredited organization (i.e., ACSM, ACE, IFPA, NASM, NCSF, NESTA, NFPT, NSCA)<br>Licensed medical professionals (e.g., Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA), Chiropractor (DC), Physician (MD), Nurse (LPN))<br>---if within their scope of practice; if not, the professional is accepting responsibility/liability for their actions      | May observe or conduct test <i>ONLY</i> with direct supervision (in-person) by a Tier I professional | May assist program design/prescription <i>ONLY</i> with direct supervision (in-person) by a Tier I professional | Yes               |

\*All other credentials, licensures, and academically trained exercise professionals should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with the understanding that experiential knowledge gained from working with overweight/obese exercisers can prepare professionals beyond passing a credentialing exam or earning an academic degree.

\*\*All individuals working with weight management program clients should hold current CPR, AED, and First Aid certifications

\*\*\*Tier III professionals may be eligible to take a certification exam to move to a higher tier and should be encouraged and incentivized to do so. Individuals should be encouraged to gain the education and clinical experience necessary to progress up through the tiers.

Due to the unique medical needs of the population served by the Weight Management Program, the WVU Weight Management Program Research and Evaluation team recommends pursuing credentialing through the American College of Sports Medicine. The clinical and research background required to gain certification through this organization is the most applicable to the high risk clientele served by the program.

For each scope of practice domain above, the following terms are defined as:

- “*Direct supervision*” of work conducted by Tier III exercise professionals in the Weight Management Program must come from a Tier I exercise professional in-person
- “*Supervised clinical experience*” is defined as: at least 50 hours of experience conducting fitness assessments or designing exercise programs (depending on type of practice to be conducted)
- “*Obesity specific training*” is defined as: educational content or continuing education focusing on the specific needs/risks of working with an obese population

Further, it is the recommendation of the WVU Weight Management Program Research and Evaluation team that these tiers of practice be used as guidelines in the evaluation of potential PEIA Weight Management Program sites. Sites may be categorized in the following manner:

| Site classification | Tiers of exercise professionals on staff   |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>Ideal</i>        | Tier I + Tier II and/or Tier III*  |
| <i>Good</i>         | a) Tier I full-time alone<br>b) Tier II (w/requisite experience & training) + Tier III                             |
| <i>Acceptable</i>   | a) Tier I off-site/part-time + Tier II, III, or IV on-site<br>b) Tier II (w/requisite experience & training) alone |
| <i>Unacceptable</i> | a) Site without a Tier I or Tier II<br>b) Tier II without requisite experience and training                        |

\*this structure would allow for supervision and training of future Tier I professionals as well

Regardless of credentials of the professionals at the sites, it is recommended that training be provided by WVU to develop techniques for addressing behavioral/adherence concerns with weight management clients based on findings from program evaluation and research.