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Results of the Master Certified Health Education Specialist Experience Documentation Opportunity Feedback Survey

Introduction

The National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. (NCHEC) implemented an advanced-level credential to designate the Master Certified Health Education Specialist (MCHES). The initial certification phase was a six-month Experience Documentation Opportunity (EDO) for current CHES who had been active for five continuous years (certified on or before October 1, 2005). Eligible applicants were invited to submit an advanced-level practice documentation application from October 15, 2010 through April 15, 2011. The application included instructions to submit both an experience self-appraisal and testament of practice from an outside recommender. The application gave instructions to the applicant on the following:

- How to organize, format, and present advanced-level documentation;
- Instructions to recommenders to testify to the applicant's advanced practice;
- A validation and signature page for the recommenders, and;
- A listing of the 61 advanced-level Sub-competencies within the Seven Areas of Responsibility.

To be reviewed for certification the applicants were required to submit the following to NCHEC:

- A curriculum vitae/ or resume (no more than five pages)
- Detailed, but brief explanations (no more than a 100 words) of experience in four advanced-level Health Education Sub-competencies—each different and in four different Areas of Responsibility---within the past five years. Appropriate documentation needed to be submitted with clear examples.
- Two completed experience self-appraisal and testament of practice forms from a current or past supervisor/manager and/or leader in a health education professional organization (The recommender) who attested to the applicant's advanced-level of practice as a health education specialist.

A total of 862 applications were submitted to NCHEC; 819 were approved, 36 denied and 7 withdrew. After the 6-month EDO process closed, NCHEC sought feedback from

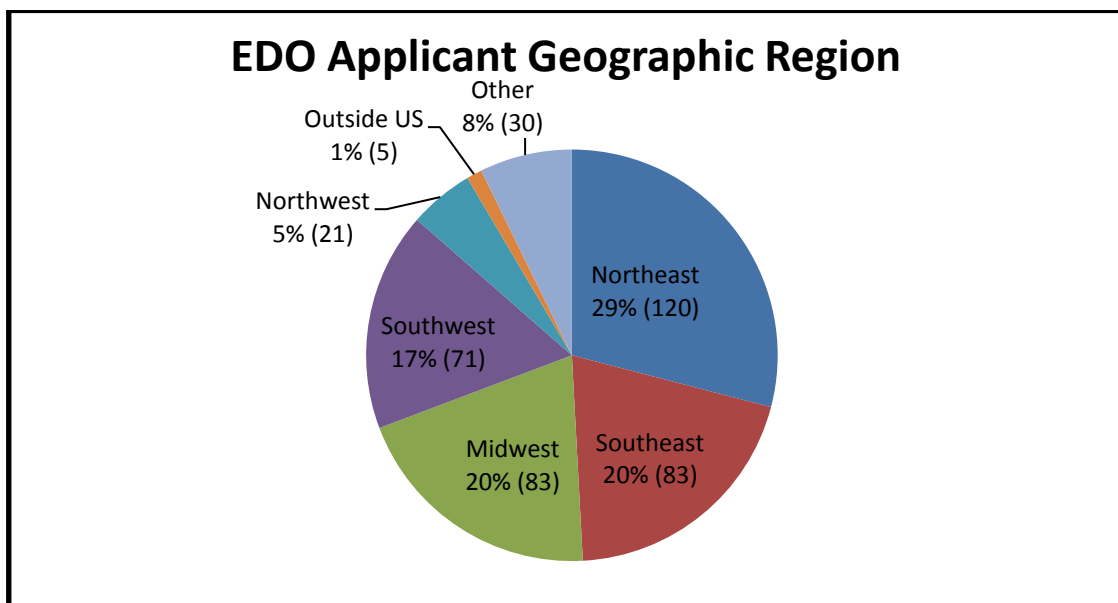
individuals who successfully completed the EDO process via an online survey. Information gained included satisfaction with the instructions for the application, ease of the application process, ability to secure recommenders, ability to secure documentation of advanced practice, reasons for applying for the MCHES credential, and the overall experience of the EDO process. In collaboration with the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, a 24-item survey was developed and IRB approved. All applicants who received the MCHES credential received an email inviting them to take the survey within a two-week period. An email reminder was sent out a week prior to the deadline to those who did not complete the survey. Individuals were offered a chance to win one of three \$50 gift cards to Barnes and Noble Bookstore as an incentive to participate in the survey. This report shows the major results of this MCHES EDO applicant survey.

Demographic/Background Information of Survey Respondents

The online survey was conducted in the spring of 2012 and provided NCHCEC with a description of the perspective of applicants who submitted documentation during the MCHES EDO process. The following will highlight both the quantitative and qualitative responses from applicants who successfully completed the EDO and earned the MCHES designation.

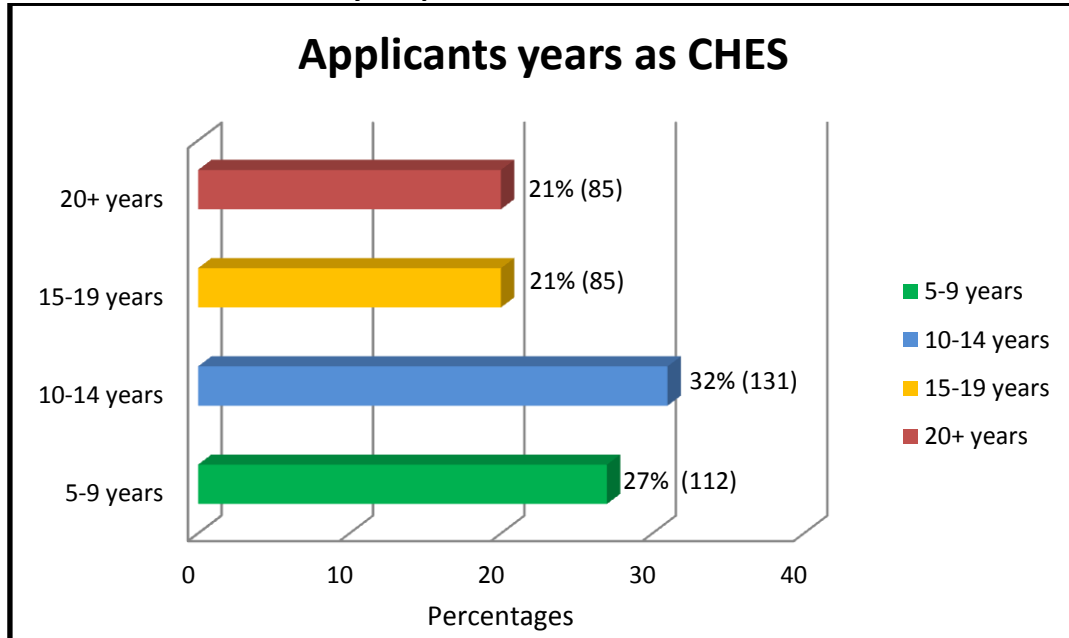
A total of 819 people received the MCHES designation. Of those, the survey went out to 810 applicants, 413 of which successfully completed the survey for a 50.9% response rate. Applicants came from the US and abroad with the largest number, 29%, from the Northeast United States, followed equally with 20% from both the Southeast and Midwest. The Southwest had 17.1% of applicants and the Northwest was the smallest US number at 5%. Outside the North American geographic region, 1.2% of respondents were represented including Hawaii, the Pacific Islands, Puerto Rico and Korea.

Geographic Information of MCHES Applicants Completing Survey



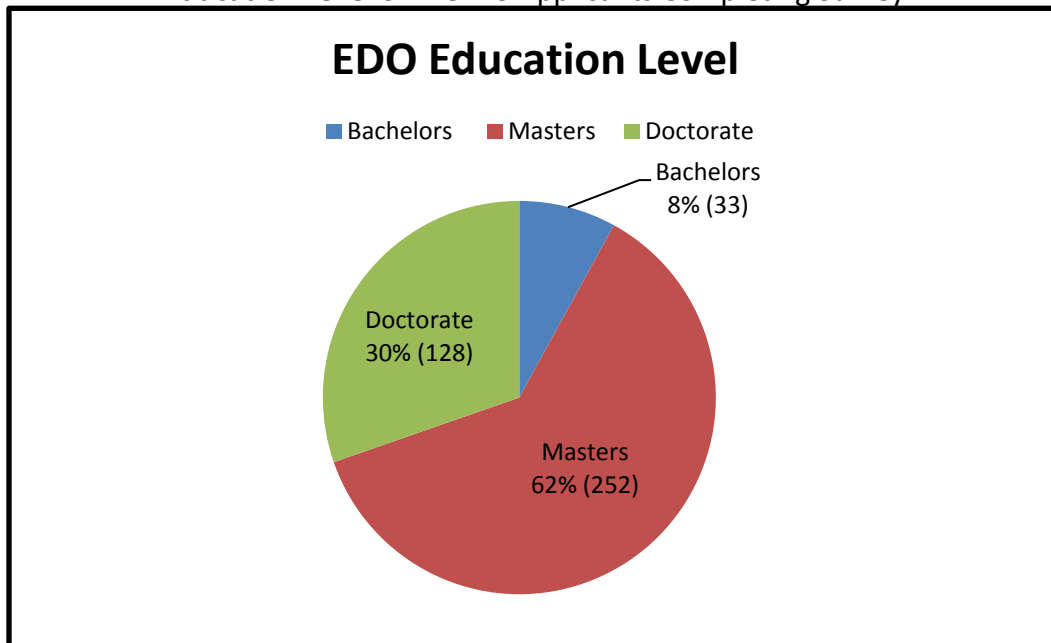
Among applicants, 27.1% had been Certified Health Education Specialists (CHES) for 5-9 years, 31.7% for 10-14 years, and 20.5% for both 15-19 and +20 years.

MCHES Survey Respondents' Active Years as CHES

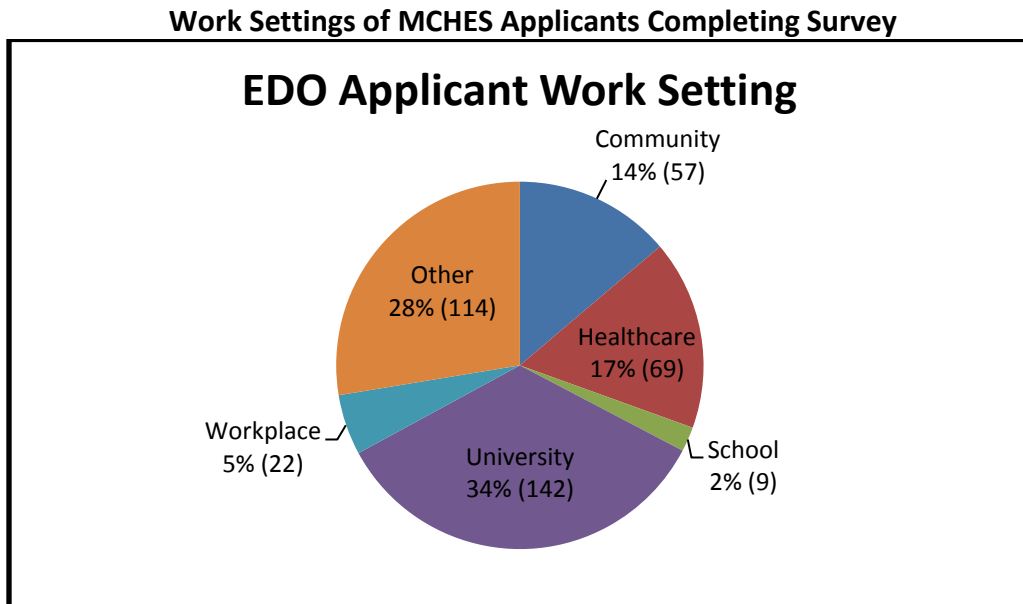


Applicants predominantly had Masters Degrees with 61%, followed by doctorates at 30.9% and bachelor's degrees with 7.9%.

Education Level of MCHES Applicants Completing Survey



Work settings included 34.3% at universities, 16.7% healthcare, 13.8% community, 5.3% workplace and 2.1% in the schools. A large number, 114 (27.6%) listed other with responses that including retired, federal, state and local government, military, consulting, and non-profit policy institute.



The NCHEC Bulletin appeared to be the most often cited avenue to have learned of the EDO with 60% seeing it there; others listed the NCHEC website, mass email, webinars and conferences. When asked to list reasons for applying for the EDO (respondents could check as many as they thought applied), 85% listed endorsement of advanced professional experience, knowledge, and skills; 80% put commitment to the health education profession; and 71% put demonstrate excellence in the field of health education. Opportunity for advanced professional development was cited by 53% as was greater recognition from health education peers at 49%. A small percentage, 7% listed salary increase or bonus. Applicants were also able to list other responses not listed – some included:

- “Serve as role model for students” (multiple times)
- “To use on resume and to strengthen grant applications”
- “Figured I should get in on the bottom in case it ever amounts to anything”
- “See how rigorous the process was”
- “Didn't want to sit for an exam to earn the MCHES”
- “Just felt like it was an opportunity, so why not?”
- “NCHEC board member” (multiple times)
- “I didn't want to need the MCHES later and have to take an exam”
- “Because other faculty were”
- “May help with promotion”

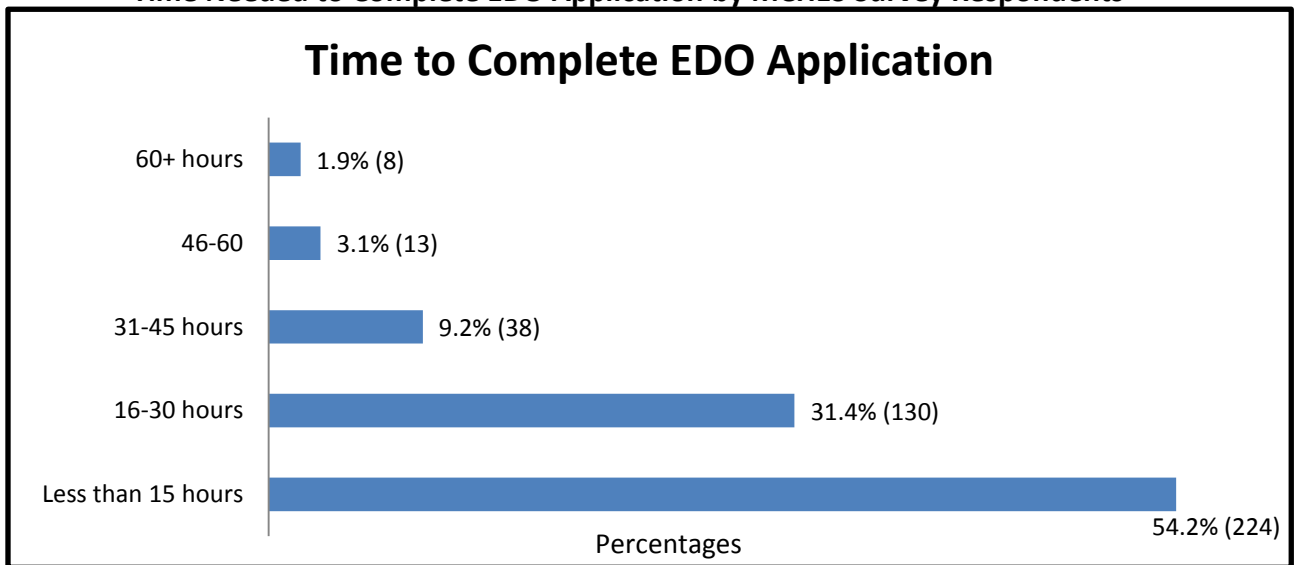
- “Stay current in field as I teach”
- “Professional integrity”
- “My employer paid for it”
- “Self-Actualization”
- “I wish it would lead to an increase in salary”

Application Process

When asked where they had located the EDO instructions, 89% located the EDO application instructions on the NCHEC website; 47% said they found them on the application itself and 21% remember seeing them in the NCHEC Bulletin. Roughly 18% located them through a webinar, and 16% called the NCHEC office.

The vast majority of applicants, 85%, were able to complete the application in less than 30 hours with 54% doing so in less than 15 hours, and 31% taking 16-30 hours. Eight applicants took over 60 hours to complete. This total time to completion did not include waiting for a response from NCHEC following application submission.

Time Needed to Complete EDO Application by MCHES Survey Respondents



When applicants were asked if they understood the EDO instructions, 26% found it “not difficult” at all, while the largest percentage, 32%, found it “somewhat not difficult”. Sixteen percent of applicants said it was neither “difficult” nor “not difficult” and 24% said they found it “somewhat difficult”. Only 1% found it to be “difficult”. As well, applicants were held to certain page and word limits. Among our sample, 68% found it “not difficult” or “somewhat not difficult” to meet those limits, while 20% said it was “somewhat difficult”. Only 3% found it “difficult”.

Four specific survey questions related to linking advanced-level activities with Sub-competencies and areas of responsibility by applicants. Table 1 highlights responses to those questions.

EDO Linkages to Advanced Level Activities

EDO Survey Questions	Not Difficult	Somewhat Not Difficult	Neutral	Somewhat Difficult	Difficult
Linking activity description to advanced-level Sub-competency	27% (110)	33% (138)	11% (46)	26% (107)	3% (12)
Linking advanced-level Sub-competencies to Areas of Responsibility	29% (118)	35% (144)	14% (56)	21% (86)	2% (9)
Linking documentation To advanced-level Sub-competencies	29% (119)	30% (123)	14% (56)	25% (102)	3% (13)
Demonstrating Health Education in activity description	40% (166)	31% (128)	14% (56)	14% (56)	2% (7)

Applicants were asked to provide their application materials to two recommenders who would serve to review and verify their advanced practice through a formal testimonial. Most applicants did not have difficulty obtaining recommenders with 89% reporting that it was “not difficult” or “somewhat not difficult”. A five page resume limit, a three page documentation limit, and a 100 word description was set for applicants to support their practice; 97% of survey respondents did not find this “difficult”.

Select Qualitative Comments Regarding Application Process

The following represent a wide range of comments from that section of the online survey; they are not exhaustive:

“The application was pretty rigorous but the instructions were clear and concise. It took some time for me to match certain activities to the Advanced-Level Sub-Competencies because some of the activities could fit under more than one Advanced-Level Sub-Competencies. I had to figure out which activity fit the best.”

“It was hard to figure out exact expectations for application and what work fit what sub competency. I had to speak to a few people who already did it to understand. If I had not done that, I would never have completed the process.”

“I clearly had trouble matching the health ed activity with the sub-competency. I appreciated the opportunity to submit additional information. Once I spoke with the rep from the NCHEC office, I had a much better understanding.”

“Completing the EDO application really helped me focus on the profession, my work experiences related to the profession, and how I connected to the sub-competencies and areas of responsibility.”

“The majority of the advanced competencies seem to be oriented, in my opinion, to people who work in community or state-level health education practice. I work for a for-profit company that develops, evaluates, and markets products. While I use a lot of the same processes, some of the activities and competencies are not required in my job.”

“It was mainly for health educators working in agencies and did not address university professor's work as much. Some stipulations were unclear and ambiguous.”

” I thought the entire process was way too difficult and time consuming, unlike other similar processes in other fields (which are much easier). I also felt it did not address health educators working in workplace wellness much AND that it seemed to be written for and by academics, and not practitioners.”

“It was totally unclear how to link my experience to the areas of sub-competencies and areas of responsibilities. And there were not enough directions or examples of how to do this.”

“I got the feeling that everyone was trying the best that they could to work through a paperwork exercise that did not have much real meaning.”

Post Application

Of the 413 applicants who responded to the survey, 75 (18.1%) said they received a formal request (known hereafter as “errata”) from NCHEC for additional information. Of those

18%, 62% found it “not difficult” or “somewhat not difficult” in amending the errata and resubmitting their application. However, 22% of applicants found it “difficult” or “somewhat difficult” to amend and resubmit. When asked if they contacted the NCHEC office at any time for more information, a little more than half, 57% said they had. Of those, 55.9% were satisfied and only 2% said they were not satisfied; 41% who responded yes they had contacted the office did not answer yes or no to this question. Almost all applicants, 86% were “very supportive” or “somewhat supportive” of the process; only 3% were not.

When applicants were asked if they had the chance to do this again and were given a choice of the EDO or taking the MCHES exam, overwhelmingly 96% would go through the EDO again. A few applicants suggested that a combination of exam and EDO was needed as well as a “grandfather type” process.

The last question asked respondents to best describe the EDO process from a list of options – they could choose all that applied. Ninety percent felt that it documented advanced-level practice, 80% felt it demonstrated professional commitment, 77% said reinforced awareness of professional competencies and 50% choose identified areas or continued growth.

Summary

A total of 862 CHES applied for the MCHES EDO process with 819 receiving the MCHES designation. The online survey went out to 810 MCHES who completed the process through the EDO, and of those, 413 completed the survey.

The majority of those who completed the MCHES EDO survey said that they were supportive of this process to earn the MCHES credential; ninety-six percent said they would complete the EDO process again. If NCHEC were to do another EDO in the future, clear and concise instructions must be included; 24% of MCHES who completed the survey stated that it was “somewhat difficult” to understand the EDO instructions. As well, comments indicated that if clearer instructions were presented the process would have been a bit easier to complete. NCHEC also learned that the majority of people who completed the MCHES EDO preferred the experience documentation opportunity versus the exam. In summary, the vast majority of MCHES EDO applicants found the EDO process to be an effective and mostly efficient method for obtaining the MCHES credential.

Contributors

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Appendix

Applicants Perspective of the EDO Process Survey

1. How many years have you been a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES)?

- 5-9 years
- 10-14 years
- 15-19 years
- 20 or more years

2. What is your highest degree earned?

- Bachelor's
- Master's
- Doctorate

3. What is your practice/work setting?

- Community
- Healthcare
- School
- University
- Workplace
- Other (please specify) _____

4. What is your geographic region?

- Northeast
- Southeast
- Midwest
- Southwest
- Northwest
- Not in US
- Other (please specify) _____

5. How did you learn about the Experience Documentation Opportunity (EDO)? (Check all that apply)

- Web site
- Bulletin
- Webinar
- Conference exhibit/lounges
- Mass emails
- Conference presentations

Other (please specify) _____

6. What reason(s) did you have for applying for the EDO? (Check all that apply)

- Endorsement of advanced professional experience, knowledge, and skills
- Commitment to the health education profession
- Opportunity for advanced professional development
- Demonstrate excellence in the field of health education
- Greater recognition from health education peers
- Salary increase or bonus
- Other (please specify) _____

7. How did you locate the instructions to complete the EDO? (Check all that apply)

- Webinar
- Web site
- Bulletin
- FAQ
- Called National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc (NCHEC) office
- Online application
- Conference presentations
- Conference exhibits/lounges
- Other (please specify) _____

8. How much **active time** did it take you to complete the application and documentation application? (Do not include time waiting for responses from reviewers)

- Under 15 hours
- 16-30 hours
- 31-45 hours
- 46-60 hours
- 60 or more hours (please specify) _____

9. The EDO instructions were clearly understandable.

[Difficult] 1 2 3 4 5 [Easy]

The following questions #10-17 pertain to application process itself. Portions of the MCHES EDO handbook are included as a reference. Please indicate the effort to meet the requirements of the MCHES EDO process for each of the following statements (from easy to difficult).

10. Keeping within the required word and page limits.

[Difficult] 1 2 3 4 5 [Easy]

Requirements as stated in the EDO handbook:

*“Experience Self-Appraisal - the applicant briefly details (no more than 100 words per activity) activities in **four advanced-level Health Education Sub-competencies--each different and in four different Areas of Responsibility. Each of the four advanced activities must be linked to one advanced Sub-competency in the corresponding Areas of Responsibility. For each of the four advanced health education activities, appropriate documentation (no more than three pages per activity) must be included.”***

12. Linking activity description to advanced-level Sub-competencies

[Difficult] 1 2 3 4 5 [Easy]

13. Linking advanced-level Sub-competencies to Areas of Responsibility

[Difficult] 1 2 3 4 5 [Easy]

14. Linking documentation to advanced-level Sub-competencies

[Difficult] 1 2 3 4 5 [Easy]

15. Demonstrating health education in activity description

[Difficult] 1 2 3 4 5 [Easy]

Requirements as stated in the EDO handbook:

“Recommenders - Recommendations by two people who can attest to the applicant’s advanced-level of practice as a health education specialist are required. These two recommenders could be a current or past supervisor/manager, fellow co-worker, colleague, etc. who can act as a reference and review the Experience Self Appraisal and Testament of Practice as completed by the applicant. The recommender does not need to be CHES certified.”

16. Obtaining two recommenders’ review of the Experience Self-Appraisal and Testament of Practice form?

[Difficult] 1 2 3 4 5 [Easy]

Requirements as stated in the EDO handbook:

“Resume - A current resumé/curriculum vitae (limit of five pages) must clearly show that the applicant has been engaged in the Health Education Areas of Responsibility for at least the past five years (Experience may be prior to completion of graduate degree).”

17. Demonstrating health education practice in resume

[Difficult] 1 2 3 4 5 [Easy]

For questions #10-17, please provide additional comments below:

18. Did your EDO application result in a formal request from NCHEC for additional information?

- Yes
 No

19. If you answered yes to receiving a formal request from NCHEC for additional information, please rank your ease in fixing the situation

[Difficult] 1 2 3 4 5 [Easy]

20. Did you contact the office for more information at any time?

- Yes
 No

21. If yes, were you satisfied with the help you received?

- Yes
 No

If no, please elaborate below:

22. After successfully completing the Experience Documentation Opportunity (EDO), are you supportive of this process as a mechanism to document advanced-level practice to earn the Master Certified Health Education Specialist (MCHES) credential?

[Not supportive] 1 2 3 4 5 [Very supportive]

23. If you had the chance to do this again – which process would you choose to demonstrate your advanced level practice in health education (Check only one)

- MCHES EDO
- MCHES Exam
- Other (please specify) _____

24. After completing the MCHES EDO, which statements do you believe describe this process
(Check all that apply)

- Documented advanced-level practice
- Demonstrated professional commitment
- Reinforced awareness of professional competencies
- Identified areas for continued growth
- Other (please specify) _____

Thank you!