

**Texas Veterinary Medical Association  
Certified Veterinary Assistant Training and Certification Program**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

Q: What is the purpose of the TVMA Certified Veterinary Assistant program?

A: Through the CVA program, TVMA seeks to assist its members in training, employing and retaining better qualified and more productive employees. While the collegiate-based Registered Veterinary Technician programs do an outstanding job of training employees for the higher level work requirements in a veterinary practice, the CVA program provides and certifies training that was previously unavailable at the entry or more basic levels.

Q: What is the educational philosophy of the TVMA veterinary assistant certification program?

A: It is the philosophy of the TVMA-CVA program that adult students learn best by doing and when engaged in learning that has direct relevance to their lives. Accordingly, we structured this program as job-related education. We require the active involvement of the employer or immediate supervisor in the student's learning/training program, but we provide a well crafted educational program to guide the experience. We like to remind employers that well-structured, purposeful work assignments chosen carefully to augment the CVA training materials are like having an educational "wet lab" every day.

Q: Will the TVMA-CVA program eliminate the need for Registered Veterinary Technicians?

A: The answer to this question is a resounding NO! RVT programs are highly intensive college level programs taught by educators who hold licensure as veterinarians. Students attend their classes in an RVT program every day for two years. They meet rigorous examination requirements in each course they take. In addition, they are required to take college level courses in the liberal arts such as English, biological science, psychology, history, government and others. The TVMA-CVA program is a learn-on-the-job vocational training experience that covers only the basic fundamentals of veterinary medicine.

TVMA envisions the ideal veterinary practice as one in which the veterinarians, RVTs, and CVAs work together as valuable and highly productive members of a unified animal health-care team. As licensed veterinarians should supervise RVTs, we believe it is appropriate and highly effective for RVTs to supervise many activities of the CVA.

Q: Are educational and training materials available to support the applicant's preparation for certification?

A: Yes, TVMA has produced a high-quality, learning effective training manual to support CVA Level 1 certification. This manual consists of 10 courses dealing with a wide variety of skills and competencies required for initial certification at Level I. Each course consists of educational text, exercises, and other learning experiences arranged in workbook style. The complete training manual comes in an attractive 3-ring binder and is available from TVMA for a cost of \$149.95 plus shipping and handling.

TVMA has also produced educational materials to support the CVA-Level II program. These materials consist of 12 videocassettes covering all required learning outcomes identified for this level of certification. The materials will also include a comprehensive workbook and sample examination materials. Cost of the complete Level II training package is \$499.95 plus shipping and handling.

CVA-Level III consists of 12 videocassettes, workbook and veterinary technician textbook. Cost of the complete package is \$549.95 plus shipping and handling.

The educational materials for CVA Level I, II and III are available for purchase from the Texas Veterinary Medical Association. You may order these materials by phone or by mail at your convenience. While purchase of these materials is not mandatory to sit for the exam, TVMA believes it is a very beneficial tool for any veterinary assistant committed to the field.

Q: For how long is certification effective after the initial certification?

A: Certification is valid for one calendar year following initial certification, after which the CVA must renew his/her certification or else forfeit all rights and privileges associated with certification. They must be employed by a veterinarian in order to renew.

Q: What does renewal of certification require?

A: A CVA must be currently employed and the candidate must submit a check to TVMA in the amount of \$25.00 for the renewal fee.

Q: Is continuing education required for re-certification?

A: It is the intent of the TVMA Certified Veterinary Assistant program that a veterinary assistant will progress consistently through each level of certification from initial certification (Level I). However, there is currently no policy requirement that the CVA must obtain any minimum amount of CE to qualify for re-certification.

Q: What is the deadline for renewal of certification?

A: Certification is valid for one calendar year, beginning with the date of initial certification. This date will be clearly shown on the certificate issued to the successful candidate and on each subsequent certificate issued for re-certification. This date will serve as the CVA's permanent anniversary date. TVMA will make every effort to notify the CVA in writing that their certificate is about to expire, but the CVA is responsible for contacting TVMA on or before their anniversary date and for submitting the application for re-certification. The CVA has 60 calendar days following the anniversary date in which to submit the application for renewal of certification, the CVA evaluation, and the renewal fee. If all items required for renewal of certification are not received in the TVMA office before the 60-day deadline, the CVA will lose certification status and will be required to re-test for certification.

Q: May a person be certified at one level without first obtaining certification at the next lower level?

A: No, it is the policy of TVMA that all certified veterinary assistants must progress through each certification step in sequence, that is, all CVAs must certify first at Level I, then go on to Level II, Level III in sequence.

Q: How much work experience is required for certification at each level of the CVA program?

A: The TVMA-CVA program was designed from the ground up as a learning-at-work program. We believe the knowledge gained through hands-on application in the workplace is essential to the success of this program and its graduates. Accordingly, TVMA has established the following minimum work experience requirements for each certification level:

- Level I: (500 hrs) 90 days full-time or the equivalent days part-time prior to the application for certification
- Level II: (1000 hrs) 180 days full-time or the equivalent days part-time from the date of Level I certification
- Level III: (1000 hrs) 180 days full-time or an equivalent period part-time from the date of Level II certification

If for some reason the applicants' supervisor feels as if the applicant is more experienced (due to working in the field for a long period of time) please contact TVMA's Training & Certification Specialist for other possible options.

Q: When, where and how will the certification examinations be administered?

A: The administration of the certification examination varies with the level of certification sought, as follows:

- Level I certification examinations may be taken at the place of employment and will be administered by the supervising veterinarian or RVT. Third-party educators who provide classroom preparation for the CVA Level I certification exam may administer the examination at the conclusion of training, provided a supervising veterinarian has completed and signed the skills proficiency check-list. The examination and test booklet will be returned to TVMA for scoring.
- Level II and III certification examinations must be taken in a “test secure” environment. .

Most public schools and community colleges have a guidance and/or testing center that will agree to administer the examination. Many public libraries also provide this service. Under this arrangement, TVMA will send the examination to the designated test center and proctor, and that individual will return the completed test to TVMA for scoring. Sometimes these institutions charge a small fee to cover the cost of this service, in which case the cost must be born by the applicant.

It is the responsibility of the applicant for certification to make the necessary arrangements for the examination. TVMA should be notified as to where and when the examination will be taken and who will proctor the exam. TVMA reserves the right to approve all testing arrangements in advance.

Q: What is the cost of the CVA certification examination?

A: The initial exam fee for CVA certification is \$125 each for Levels I, II, and III The employer is responsible for the cost.

Q: What if I don't pass the certification exam?

A: Applicants for any level of CVA certification may retake the certification exam as often as they wish following the initial examination date. TVMA charges a small re-test fee to cover the cost of producing and administering the test. This fee is currently set at \$35 for Levels I, II, and III.

Q: What does the CVA receive for his or her certification under this program?

A: The CVA receives a number of benefits as a result of certification in the TVMA program, including:

- Certificate. All successful applicants for certification as a CVA will receive a professional quality certificate designating the date and level of certification as well as the name of the certified individual. This certificate is suitable for framing, and TVMA encourages the CVA to display it in a prominent place at the work site.

- Verification of Certification. TVMA maintains a permanent registry of all CVA's who have completed and maintained their certification status, and we will respond to all employer inquiries to verify an individual's certification.
- Promotion of Certification as an Employer Benefit. TVMA will continually promote to its member veterinarians the value of employing certified veterinary assistants. We believe the TVMA program certificate will become the standard employment credential across Texas for veterinary jobs at less than the RVT level.
- Portability of Employee Qualifications. As the TVMA-CVA program becomes well known and widely respected across Texas, veterinarians will come to understand and value the job skills and abilities represented by each level of certification. If the CVA moves into a new community, the certificate will greatly enhance his or her chances of employment at a new veterinary clinic.
- Discounts on Continuing Education. Individuals who hold current certification will be allowed to register for continuing education at any TVMA-sponsored seminar or conference at a reduced rate.
- FYI Newsletter. All individuals who maintain current certification as a CVA and provide an email address will receive the bimonthly TVMA publication, The FYI Newsletter. Each issue of this informative newsletter will contain news written for veterinary technicians and assistants to keep you abreast of new developments in veterinary medicine, to provide regulatory updates, and to help you stay in touch with your fellow technicians and assistants.

Q: Are there any different requirements for certification of veterinary assistants trained through Texas Education Agency approved public school programs?

A: Yes, TVMA recognizes that the school-based veterinary assistant programs consist of well designed, highly organized content taught in classroom settings by well-qualified professional educators extending through 1-3 academic years. TVMA further recognizes that these state approved programs consist of hands-on laboratory instruction, frequent live demonstrations, field work, internships and other interactive learning activities which can achieve the same learning objectives envisioned for the on-the-job training requirements described above. For these programs, TVMA requires that the following minimum standards be met before accepting applications from graduates of that program for certification as CVA Level-1:

- Program must be supported by one or more veterinarians licensed in Texas who serve in a program advisory capacity
- Program must include content addressing all the learning outcomes identified in TVMA standards and guidelines for CVA Level-1

- Applicants for certification from any school-based veterinary assistant program must have completed at least 9 months of the school based program
- Applicants for certification must be at least 16 years of age
- Applicants for certification must complete “learn-by-doing” activities such as laboratory instruction, live demonstrations, supervised field work, internships, part-time work in appropriate animal care settings and other interactive learning activities that in the judgment of the school personnel and the DVM advisor would be equivalent to approximately 500 hours of full-time work in a veterinary clinic, which can achieve the same learning objectives envisioned for the on-the-job training requirements described above.
- Applicants for certification must complete all application requirements for certification, including a Skills Validation Check-list completed either by a DVM or Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) who has observed the applicant’s performance, payment of the certification fee, and successful completion of the certification examination.