

Specialized Professional Associations and Their Role in CAEP Accreditation

Specialized Professional Associations, often referred to as “SPAs,” are scientific and/or professional organizations representing professionals in a particular field of practice. These organizations can serve as advocacy units, bodies of research informing practice, as well as bearers of ethical practice and standards for the profession among many other roles. Some SPAs have entered into a partnership with CAEP to conduct reviews of specialty areas preparing pre-service candidates for their respective professions. Evidence from such reviews may be used by the provider* to address CAEP accreditation standards. These SPAs conduct their reviews using a CAEP-run and -owned information management system with the goal to provide National Recognition to a specialty licensure area, a status awarded by the SPA upon fulfillment of its standards and expectations.

Some SPAs have the status of programmatic accreditors and may be recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), or by the U.S. Secretary of Education, or by both. These accreditors operate independent of CAEP’s process and may or may not hold formal service agreements with CAEP. They too develop standards and conduct reviews that lead to specialty area accreditation upon fulfillment of their standards and expectations. A specialty licensure area that has received accreditation from such an accrediting agency may request to be exempted from CAEP review. For any EPP operating in a state with which CAEP has entered into a state partnership agreement, no such exemption will be granted unless the EPP first obtains a letter of support from the state. An EPP granted an exemption must disclose to its candidates, faculty, the public, and others that the specialty licensure area(s) are not included in the EPP’s accreditation by CAEP [[CAEP Accreditation Policy II.3.01\(a\)](#), p. 15]. Note that evidence from the accreditation reviews may also be used by the EPP to address CAEP accreditation standards if they choose to include such specialty licensure areas as part of CAEP review.

Finally, there are SPAs that are neither accrediting agencies, nor do they have a service agreement with CAEP. However, they have similar roles as the above SPA categories—representing professionals in their own field of practice, serving as advocacy units, bodies of research informing practice, as well as bearers of ethical practice and standards for the profession. CAEP encourages providers seeking CAEP accreditation to adopt these content-specific standards to develop instruments evaluating candidates’ knowledge and skills in the area(s) they are seeking state licensure or certification. EPPs adopting these specialty area standards conduct internal reviews to gather data, which are then presented through the self-study report submitted to CAEP. This process is referred to as the *CAEP Evidence Review of Standard 1/A.1***.

*** Educator Preparation Provider** (also referred to as an EPP or simply a provider) is the entity responsible for the preparation of professionals in various licensure or certification areas to serve in a PreK through 12 school setting.

****** The program review options available to EPPs are based on CAEP’s partnership agreement with the state in which they are located. States can allow three (3) options for review of individual licensure, certification, and/or endorsement programs, which include Specialty Professional Association (SPA) review with National Recognition, CAEP Evidence Review of Standard 1/A.1, and state review.