

NCCAP March Newsletter 2026

From: National Certification Council for Activity Professionals <nccap@memberclicks-mail.net>

Sent: Tue, Mar 17, 2026 at 1:57 pm

To: bryan.rife@nccap.org

## NCCAP March Newsletter 2026



# NCCAP<sup>®</sup>

Enriching Lives Through Person-Centered Engagement



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

March brings the promise of spring—longer days, renewed energy, and a sense of fresh beginnings. After a long, cold and snowy winter in many parts of the country, we recognize the extraordinary commitment of healthcare professionals, including Activity Professionals, who remained in their communities—often camping out during severe snowstorms—to ensure residents continued to receive safe, compassionate care. This level of dedication, though often unseen, reflects the heart of our profession and its unwavering commitment to resident well-being.

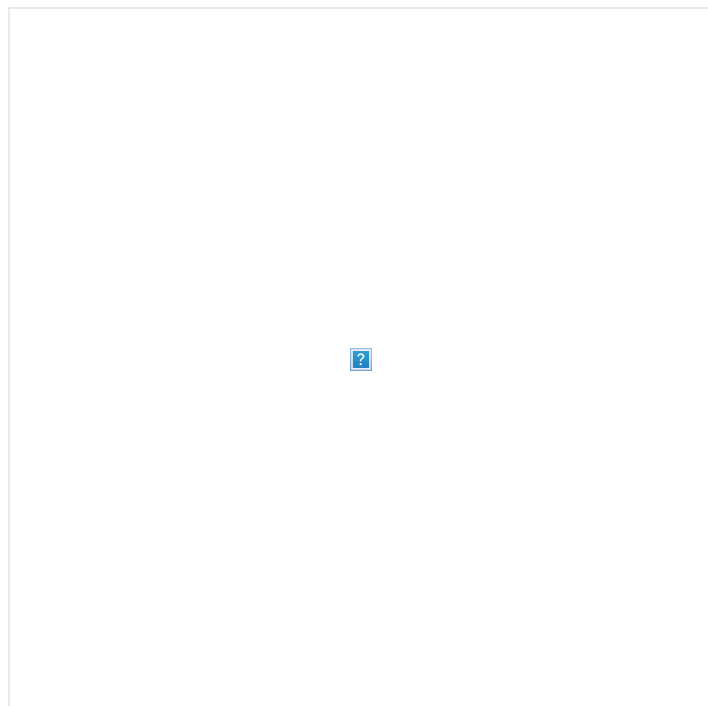
With the arrival of spring comes renewal, and we are pleased to introduce a refreshed look for the NCCAP Newsletter that rolls out next month. In the months ahead, we will also be launching new certification initiatives designed to further strengthen professional standards and advance the role of the Activity Professional within the long-term care continuum. We look forward to sharing these developments with you and continuing to support excellence in practice.

Next month marks the Annual Conference of the National Association of Activity Professionals, and we are looking forward to attending this important gathering of Activity Professionals from across the country. Conferences like this provide valuable opportunities for professional development and networking.

Please stop by our table in the vendor hall to say hello. I will be there along with Kara, our Vice President, and we would truly enjoy the opportunity to connect with you in person. We hope to see you there!  
Think Spring!

Thank you for your continued commitment to professional growth and for the essential work you do each day.

Debbie Hommel, ACC/MC/EDU, CTRS  
NCCAP President



NCCAP is pleased to introduce its Special Projects Committee, a collaborative group formed to explore innovative ideas that support the continued growth of the activity profession and strengthen NCCAP's educational resources. This committee will be led by the Past President of NCCAP, Linda Redhead.

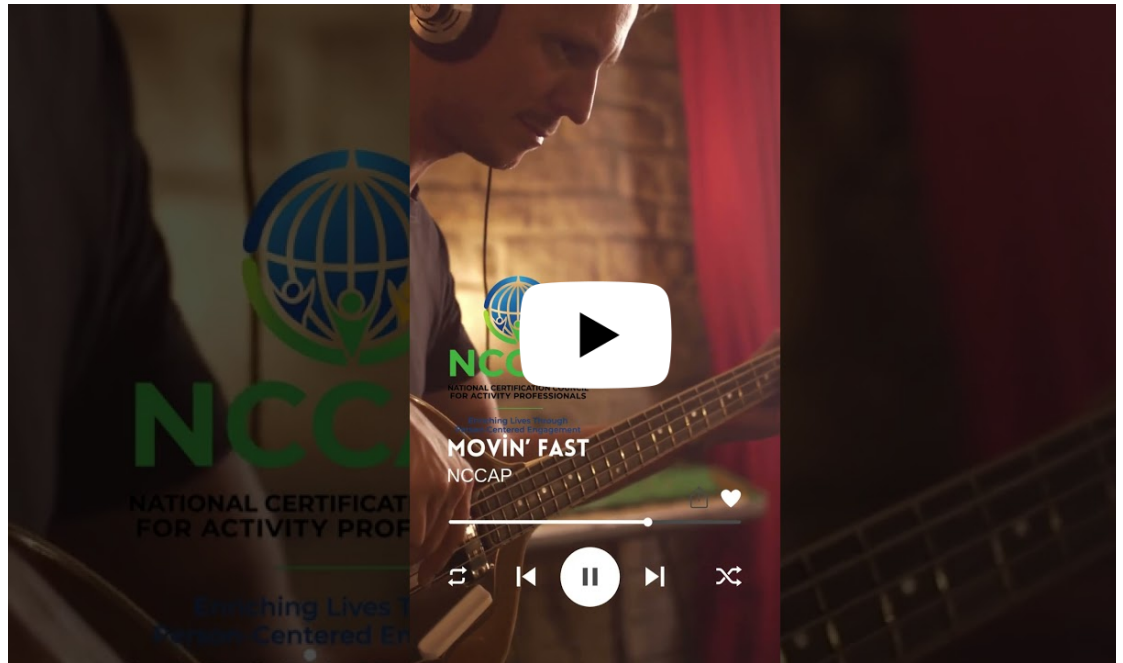
This committee will provide a space for fresh perspectives and creative thinking, allowing NCCAP to explore and pilot programs that may evolve into new programs, educational offerings, or resources for the field.

By welcoming new voices and forward-thinking ideas, the committee will help NCCAP further its commitment to advancing professional standards and supporting activity professionals in their essential role of promoting engagement, dignity, and quality of life for older adults.

Stay tuned in the next coming months as we introduce each committee member.

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### NCCAP is Movin' Fast!



This music track was officially released in **January 2026** by NCCAP to coincide with **National Activity Profession Week**. It serves as a tribute to the energy, creativity, and commitment of those who work in the profession, specifically highlighting the achievements of NCCAP-certified individuals.

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### NCCAP on Demand!

We are pleased to inform you that the Standardized ADC course is now available on demand. This format allows you to progress at your convenience. For registration details, please visit: <https://www.nccap.org/nccapondemand>.



**NCCAP'S  
STANDARDIZED  
ACTIVITY DIRECTOR CERTIFICATION  
(ADC)  
NATIONAL CERTIFICATION COURSE**

ACCEPTED BY CMS SINCE 1987, NCCAP'S MODULAR EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR ACTIVITY PROFESSIONALS (MEPAP) IS THE REQUIRED CURRICULUM FOR NCCAP CERTIFICATION

**ON DEMAND**

**1 YEAR TO COMPLETE AT YOUR OWN PACE  
TO HONOR YOUR LEARNING STYLE**

**COURSE FEE INCLUDES:**

- ONLINE COURSE ACCESS FOR A YEAR
- 2 YEARS OF NAAP MEMBERSHIP
- 2 YEARS OF INITIAL ADC CERTIFICATION
- 1 NATIONAL EXAM ENROLLMENT
- THE ART OF LIFE ENRICHMENT RESOURCEBOOK

**REGISTER NOW**



WWW.NCCAP.ORG | INFO@NCCAP.ORG | 757-552-0653



**NCCAP'S STANDARDIZED  
ON DEMAND BRIDGE TO ADC  
NATIONAL CERTIFICATION  
COURSE**

1 YEAR TO COMPLETE AT YOUR OWN PACE TO HONOR YOUR LEARNING STYLE

**FEE INCLUDES:**

- COURSE
- RESOURCE BOOK
- NATIONAL EXAM
- 2 YEARS ADC CERTIFICATION

**\$550**

\*MUST HAVE COMPLETED APC

**REGISTER NOW**

ACCEPTED BY CMS SINCE 1987, NCCAP'S MODULAR EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR ACTIVITY PROFESSIONALS (MEPAP) IS THE REQUIRED CURRICULUM FOR NCCAP CERTIFICATION

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**NAAP Conference!**



Mark your calendar for April 27–29, 2026, and join NAAP at the Sheraton Suites Chicago O’Hare for their highly anticipated Annual Conference. This vibrant three-day event offers cutting-edge workshops, inspiring keynotes, peer networking, NCTRC and NCCAP-approved CE hours. Immerse yourself in hands-on learning, enjoy themed celebrat and connect with fellow professionals who share your commitment to enriching lives through engagement. Be part of movement shaping the future of resident-centered care! [Register here!](#)

**NAAP Webinars!**

**NAAP**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ACTIVITY PROFESSIONALS  
NAAP.INFO

**LIVE WEBINAR**  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026 1-2PM EST

**NeuroShifts: Elevating Performance Beyond Extraordinary**

**Register Today**

**Edie Raether**  
CSP Certified Speaking Professional BS  
Occupational Therapy, MS Clinical Counseling, Ph.D. Credits in Neuroscience

**NCCDP**

**NAAP**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ACTIVITY PROFESSIONALS  
NAAP.INFO

**LIVE WEBINAR**  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2026 1-2PM EST

**Voice AI in Senior Living: Enhancing Connectivity & Engagement**

**Register Today**

**Ana Olano**  
Full-stack software engineer; AI/ learning developer; A.B. from Ha Applied Mathematics; 2+ B2B busi the healthcare space; 4+ business AI space

**NCCDP**

**Reducing Psychotropic Medication Use Through Purposeful, Person-Centered C**



### **Reducing Psychotropic Medication Use Through Purposeful, Person-Centered Care**

By Dawn Worsley, LNHA, ACC – Skilled Nursing Facility Administrator

As skilled nursing administrators, we are entrusted with one of the most important responsibilities in healthcare: protecting both the physical and emotional well-being of our residents while maintaining strict compliance with federal and state regulations. One area where this responsibility is especially critical is in the appropriate use—and reduction—of psychotropic medications.

For many years, psychotropic drugs were often viewed as a default response to behavioral symptoms associated with dementia, anxiety, depression, or adjustment disorders. Today, the regulatory environment and best clinical practice shifted toward a more holistic, person-centered approach that emphasizes non-pharmacological interventions as the first line of treatment.

#### ***The Regulatory Mandate***

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) clearly outlines expectations in F758 – Free from Unnecessary Psychotropic Medications, which requires that:

- Residents must not receive psychotropic medications unless clinically indicated.
- Facilities must attempt and document non-pharmacological interventions prior to initiating medication.
- Ongoing Gradual Dose Reductions (GDRs) and behavioral monitoring must occur unless contraindicated.
- In addition, F740 – Behavioral Health, and F741 – Sufficient Staff Competencies, reinforce the requirement that facilities implement individualized, interdisciplinary behavioral care plans and ensure staff are trained in alternative strategies to manage behaviors.

In short: psychotropics should support care—not replace it.

#### ***The Power of Non-Pharmacological Interventions***

At the heart of psychotropic reduction is the partnership between the Nursing Department and the Activities Department.

Together, these two disciplines are uniquely positioned to identify behavioral triggers, create meaningful engagement opportunities, and provide support for emotional regulation without relying on medication.

Some of our most effective non-pharmacological interventions include:

- Personalized activity programming based on resident life history, interests, and routines
-

- Sensory interventions such as music therapy, aromatherapy, weighted blankets, and tactile objects
- Structured daily schedules to reduce anxiety related to unpredictability
- Validation therapy and redirection techniques used consistently by nursing staff
- One-on-one engagement for residents with trauma histories or unmet psychosocial needs
- Environmental modifications, such as reducing noise, improving lighting, or creating calming spaces

These interventions do more than manage behaviors—they improve quality of life, preserve dignity, and strengthen trust between residents and staff.

### ***A Collaborative Clinical Process***

Successful psychotropic reduction does not occur in silos. It requires a collaborative workflow that is intentional, structured, and sustainable.

Our facility's model includes:

#### **Behavioral Risk Identification**

Nursing documents behavioral patterns in real time using objective language.

#### **Interdisciplinary Review**

Activities, Nursing, Social Services, and the Medical Director meet to analyze root causes.

#### **Individualized Care Planning**

Non-pharmacological strategies are embedded into the resident's care plan and activity profile.

#### **Staff Education & Coaching**

CNAs and nurses receive ongoing training on behavioral communication and de-escalation.

#### **Outcome Tracking**

Behaviors, medication usage, and PRN effectiveness are trended monthly through QAPI.

#### **Pharmacy & Medical Oversight**

Consultant pharmacists support Gradual Dose Reductions and monitor for side effects.

This process ensures that clinical decisions are evidence-based, resident-centered, and compliant with CMS expectations.

#### **Cultural Change: From Control to Connection**

Reducing psychotropic medications is not simply a regulatory goal—it is a cultural shift. It challenges us to move from controlling behaviors to understanding them.

When Activities professionals are empowered as clinical partners—not just program coordinators—and when nursing view engagement as a therapeutic tool, we create an environment where medication becomes the last option, not the first.

This approach leads to:

- Lower psychotropic usage rates
- Reduced falls and adverse drug events
- Improved resident mood and participation
- Stronger survey outcomes
- Higher staff satisfaction and confidence

#### **Conclusion**

Psychotropic drug reduction is one of the most meaningful quality initiatives a skilled nursing facility can undertake. Driven by strong collaboration between Nursing and Activities, supported by CMS regulations, and grounded in person-centered care, it becomes not just a compliance effort—but a true clinical excellence model.

As administrators, our role is to champion this collaboration, invest in staff education, and foster a culture where connection, engagement, and dignity are our most powerful interventions.



## ADVANCING EXCELLENCE IN LONG-TERM CARE COLLABORATIVE

NCCAP is grateful to continue our collaboration with AELTC as part of a shared commitment to strengthening post-acute and long-term care.

AELTC serves as an important forum for leaders across government, clinical practice, consumer advocacy, and professional organizations to exchange information, take collective action, and develop policy recommendations that support quality care and quality of life.

Through ongoing meetings and collaboration, NCCAP is proud to support AELTC's vision of ensuring individuals receiving post-acute and long-term care services have their goals, preferences, and priorities honored—while advancing equity, combating ageism, and promoting best practices across the continuum of care.

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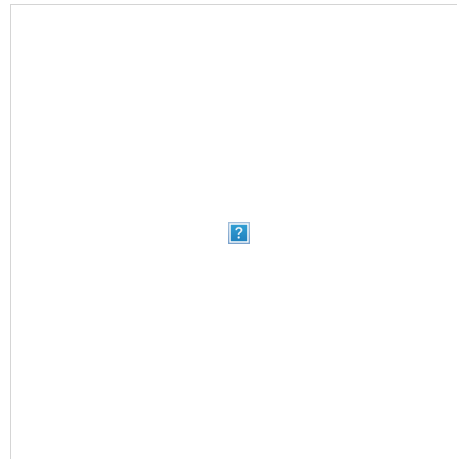
### Approved Educators

An Approved Educator is an individual or organization that has been formally reviewed and authorized by the National Certification Council for Activity Professionals (NCCAP) to provide educational and training programs that meet established NCCAP standards and criteria. Approved Educators offer courses eligible for Continuing Education (CE) credit hours, provided those courses carry an NCCAP approval number and adhere to required content, instructional quality documentation guidelines.

The Approved Educators recognized for the month of March are listed below. They meet NCCAP standards and criteria providing educational and training opportunities. Please look for the NCCAP approval number on all eligible courses.

Have questions regarding an individual or organization who is an approved educator, or want more information regarding the Approved Educator Program? Email us at [info@nccap.org](mailto:info@nccap.org).

**Apply to be an NCCAP Approved Educator today!**




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### A New Resource for your Profession Toolbox & Reference Library!

The new edition of the MEPAP® learning resource, 'The Art of Life Enrichment', is available for purchase. This project was a collaborative effort involving experts, thought leaders, and practitioners in long-term care.



## The Art of Life Enrichment

A practical guide for all who impact quality of life and wellbeing



Senior Living | Active Adult | Memory Care  
Skilled Nursing/LTC | Adult Day Services | Home Care

The required curriculum for  
NCCAP® certifications

In partnership with  


aging services. This book serves as the authoritative guide for students pursuing the MEPAP® Course for NCCAP® Certification.

This comprehensive resource proves invaluable for both clinical and non-clinical staff. Rooted in the person-centered Values and Principles of the Pioneer Network, this guide offers practical applications for achieving positive therapeutic outcomes through the Social Model of Care. Its content serves as a roadmap for interdisciplinary teams, empowering them to deliver individualized care tailored to the unique needs and preferences of each individual.

Enrich your library with this indispensable resource, equipping yourself with the knowledge and insights essential for providing exceptional care. **Get your copy here!**

# Validation

Validation for Activity Professionals is an 11-week online course that helps you build deeper, more meaningful connections with residents—especially those living with cognitive decline.

By the end of the course, you will:

- Enhance communication with older adults in all phases of cognitive change
- Strengthen your ability to connect with older adults on an emotional level
- Use practical Validation techniques to respond compassionately to distressing behaviors
- Creatively integrate the Validation Attitude to improve engagement and participation in individual and group activities and programs

### Who Should Attend

This course is ideal for anyone who works directly with older adults, including:

- Activity Professionals and Life Enrichment staff
- Nursing assistants and care staff
- Adult day center team members
- Volunteers in long-term care communities

Whether you're brand-new to the field or a seasoned professional, the skills you'll learn are practical, adaptable, and immediately useful in your daily work. Register today! <https://vvalidation.org/product/validation-for-activity-professionals/>

**Assisted Living Enrichment Certification!**



# ASSISTED LIVING ENRICHMENT CERTIFICATION

**Big news alert!** NCCAP is now offering a **new** certification option **EXCLUSIVELY** for Assisted Living Life Enrichment Professionals!

Start your **ALEC** Certification Journey Today




### Continuing Education Hour Requirements



NCCAP 's Certification Standards reflect the CE requirements to align with the professional standards of related health organizations. Specifically, we reflect the CE requirements for Therapeutic Recreation and Occupational Therapy.

Our current renewal requirements are:

Activity Consultant Certified (ACC): 30 hours every 2 years.

Activity Director Certified (ADC): 20 hours every 2 years.

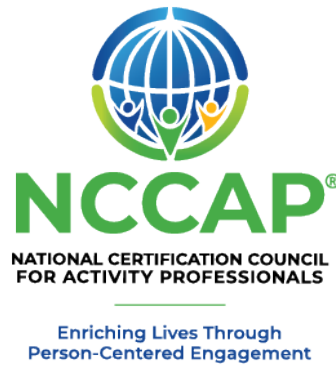
Activity Professional Certified (APC): 10 hours every 2 years.



## Elevate Eldercare Podcast

The podcast, "Elevate Eldercare," by Aging In, was created in an effort to bring together thought leaders, activists, and advocates in the field of aging services to foster thoughtful discourse and diverse perspectives aimed at elevating eldercare.

Join **Susan Ryan**, **Alex Spanko**, and other GHP team members every Wednesday for enlightening, provocative, and sometimes uncomfortable conversations. Together, the hosts and guests explore the opportunities and challenges to actualizing a vision for dignified eldercare through the lens of the Green House and Pioneer models [here](#).



## NCCAP Certification

In 1986 the National Association of Activity Professionals (NAAP) created NCCAP as the official credential of the Activity Profession. Based on CMS F658, NAAP establishes Professional Standards of Practice requiring the Modular Education Program for Activity Professionals (MEPAP) for NCCAP Certification. For over 30 years, NCCAP Certification has been the Gold Standard for life-enriching activities and is the only certification that meets the credentialing standards of ICE and NCCA. NCCAP offers the following **Professional Certification** to meet Federal and State requirements.

## How to Renew your NCCAP Certification

Want to learn more about how to renew?

It's important to make sure that your correct email is on file so that you receive an email link beginning 4 months before your certification expiration date. If you don't receive this email, please contact the NCCAP office to update your email. You will then be able to renew through the link sent to you from NCCAP via email.

NCCAP is now following an audit process for continuing education.

You will not need to upload your certificates of proof of continuing education clock hours to your online profile on the NCCAP website or mail to the office. If you are chosen for an audit, you will be sent an email within days of your renewal submission and at that time you will be instructed on how to send in your certificates.

**Please Note: When submitting CEs for renewal they must be within the 2 years of expiration date. For example, if expired on 12/1/2025, the CEs must be between 12/2023-12/2025.**

When your application for re-certification has been reviewed and approved you will receive your NCCAP certificate as a PDF via email. Contact the office if you wish to have a hard copy of your certificate for a nominal fee at [info@nccap.org](mailto:info@nccap.org)

## Support our Professional Association, NAAP is Seeking Qualified Speakers

NAAP provides education, resources, and a voice in unison with NCCAP! NAAP annual membership is \$85 USD/year. Do you have leadership and expertise in a topic that you would like to share with a targeted, interested audience to gain visibility and expand your network? NAAP is seeking online webinar speakers to provide quality education for Activity Professionals. For questions or to learn more contact: [office@naap.info](mailto:office@naap.info)

[Go to NAAP](#)



Activity Professional Association



Activity Credentialing Council

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