



TIPS FOR FORMING A STUDY GROUP FOR NAMSS CERTIFICATION EXAM

Are you thinking about taking either or both of the NAMSS certification examinations? Today, there are several options to prepare for the exam/s. On site seminars, on line sessions/quizzes, hard copy resources, study groups (local or via phone) are just some of what's out there to utilize.

This Tip addresses how to form a study group. Through your state or local NAMSS organization or perhaps even within your healthcare system, find those people who are planning to take the exam and make a list of interested persons.

1. If everyone is within driving distance, through email/phone calls, determine how often you want to meet and where you are going to meet
 - a. Depending on the exam date, the group may want to meet more frequently; e.g., weekly or bi-weekly, or monthly if you have more time
 - b. If everyone is local, determine where you are going to meet; e.g., at the same place each time or maybe group will take turns meeting at different locations; i.e., hospital or health plan conference room (should be a quiet place without distractions).
 - c. Develop a schedule for when and where the study sessions will take place and be sure everyone has the schedule.
 - d. Determine length of study group time. If it's after work and the group is local, allow at least 1-2 hours per session. Or, maybe longer if you're going to meet on a weekend. Agree on start and end times.
 - e. Address absence from a meeting and whether or not someone will share notes, and/or if there is an option to call into the meeting by use of conference phone.
 - f. Can/will the host supply any snacks, drinks or BYO
2. At the first meeting, if not before, agree on your study schedule; i.e., what topics you are going to address each time.
 - a. Review the, NAMSS Certification Handbook (www.namss.org), determine areas to be studied; then divide the topics and assign topics to your meeting dates with the goal of covering each of the major areas in the Handbook.
 - b. Determine who might have some expertise in the area and is willing to facilitate the study session. If more than one person is familiar with the material, they may want to divide the information to facilitate. If there is no "expert" available, assign someone to review the material and share with the group.
 - c. Determine how you want to have the information presented; e.g., a short presentation by the assigned person, a Q&A session, some pre-planned questions by the facilitator to "test" the group on their understanding, etc.
3. Find out what resources everyone has that might help the group study
 - a. Determine how to share information with those who don't have internal access to material; e.g., all accreditation standards included in the exam, case law, etc. Is someone willing to share excerpts from the material to share with everyone or can those who have the standards bring with them and/or willing to "loan" them to someone for a week or two.
 - b. Find out what resources everyone has that has helped them thus far or that they are planning to use.
 - c. Determine if anyone knows someone outside the group with some special expertise who might be willing to come as a "guest speaker" to discuss specific topics requested by the group – risk/quality manager, in house attorney familiar with due process, medical terminology related to privileges, etc. It might be helpful to have someone who's taken the exam recently discuss some study strategy, any encouragement, tips, advice, etc. to support those studying for the exam.
4. Determine some "ground rules" for the study sessions
 - a. Start on time, end on time
 - b. Cell phones on silent or vibrate and if someone gets a call, leave the room
 - c. Sidebar discussions are disruptive; one person talks at a time
 - d. No one should dominate the discussion – facilitator should monitor and be sure all participate
 - e. Others you come up with
5. Other logistics or important information everyone will need
 - a. Your group's list with contact information (for continued networking)

Good luck in forming your study groups. Networking with colleagues, especially those whose jobs are different from yours will provide a wealth of information and "experts" within the group.