

## Certified Wellness Coach (CWC) FAQ for Students

July 2025

### 1. Profession Overview Questions

**What is a Certified Wellness Coach (CWC), and what do they do?**

**Answer:** Certified by the California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), CWC's are behavioral health professionals who provide non-clinical services to children and youth through age 25. They work in schools and school-affiliated organizations, other community organizations, and healthcare settings. They collaborate with other behavioral health providers to make support more inclusive and available.

[Watch this video to learn more.](#)

**How can this profession help me support my community?**

**Answer:** As a Certified Wellness Coach, you will be integrated into existing care systems to support children and youth in your community. This includes working alongside behavioral health professionals, teachers, and student support services on school campuses, or coordinating care to ensure that youth receive timely, efficient, and comprehensive services that meet their needs.

CWCs provide 6 core services:

- **Wellness Promotion and Education:** Lead group or classroom sessions that promote wellness, build life skills, and support mental health.
- **Screening:** Under the guidance of qualified staff, help coordinate and facilitate screening programs in schools and community settings.
- **Care Coordination & Extension:** Coordinate care by communicating with providers, school staff, and other professionals and help connect youth to support services.
- **Individual Support:** Provide brief one-on-one check-ins and scheduled sessions to offer emotional support and teach wellness skills.
- **Group Support:** Lead small and large group sessions using structured programs to build life skills and support emotional well-being.
- **Crisis Referral:** Recognize potential risks, provide emotional support, and refer youth to qualified behavioral health providers.

References [slides 21 – 22](#) in this CWC model to see an example of what this may look like in schools and community settings.

## 2. Becoming a Certified Wellness Coach

### How do I get certified as a Certified Wellness Coach?

**Answer:** *There are two paths to certification: the Education Pathway and the Workforce Pathway. Both require applicants to complete an associates or bachelor's degree and meet a minimum number of field experience hours. Once the minimum requirements are met, applicants can apply on the [Certified Wellness Coach website](#).*

### What is the difference between obtaining a certification through the Education Pathway or the Workforce Pathway?

**Answer:** *The Education Pathway is for recent graduates who earned a qualifying associate or bachelor's degree from a California college or university within the past six years. The Workforce Pathway is for individuals with any degree, as well as recent experience providing pre-clinical behavioral health services to children and youth in schools, nonprofits, or community settings. Refer to the [Certified Wellness Coach website](#) to learn more about each pathway and check your eligibility.*

### What's the difference between CWC I and CWC II?

**Answer:** *CWC I is intended for individuals with qualifying associate degrees, while CWC II is for those with qualifying bachelor's degrees. CWC IIs have an expanded scope of services in addition to those offered by CWC Is. Refer to [slides 15 and 16 in the CWC Model](#) to learn more.*

### Are there extra or hidden costs?

**Answer:** *The Wellness Coach certification application is free. However, any costs associated with obtaining your degree and applying for employment is the responsibility of the individual.*

### Will "Certified Wellness Coach" appear on my transcript?

**Answer:** *The Certified Wellness Coach curriculum is part of existing degree programs and therefore, will not appear on a transcript. Once a student graduates and applies for certification, however, HCAI will offer a state-issued Certificate ID with a unique number that denotes the status as a Certified Wellness Coach.*

### 3. Education Curriculum & Degree Opportunities

**Which schools offer eligible programs, and can I pursue this with an associates degree, bachelor's degree, or a minor from an approved degree?**

**Answer:** *You're eligible to apply for CWC certification if you meet the required combination of fieldwork experience and degree. At this time, minors from approved degrees do not qualify for certification. Please refer to the Education and Workforce Pathway certification requirements [here](#).*

**Are there scholarships or financial aid?**

**Answer:** *HCAI periodically offers scholarship and loan repayment opportunities. Please go to [this page](#) to learn more and stay up to date on current opportunities.*

**What is an HCAI Designated Education Program?**

**Answer:** *The state is partnering with specific California colleges and universities to create tailored degree programs to offer specific coursework with built-in fieldwork placements that meet certification requirements. By attending a designated school, you'll meet the requirements to apply for certification as soon as you graduate.*

*See the [interactive map](#) to learn which California colleges and universities, and their associated degrees, are becoming designated programs. New schools are being added regularly.*

**How do I join the Certified Wellness Coach program if I'm at a designated school?**

**Answer:** *Please reach out to the program's academic counselor, advisor, or coordinator for the program to confirm the academic requirements. They will guide you through the appropriate steps.*

**Who tracks or verifies that I've met all Wellness Coach education requirements at my designated college or university and can apply for certification once I graduate?**

**Answer:** *Each designated program has an individual who will work with you to verify that all education requirements have been met by graduation, including coursework and field placement hours. To confirm whether your school is developing an HCAI Designated Education Program, find it on this [map](#) and connect with the academic counselor, advisor, or program coordinator for more details.*

## **Do I have to attend a designated school to qualify to become a CWC?**

**Answer:** No. Individuals graduating with an approved degree from any school can apply, as long as all requirements are met through either the Education or Workforce Pathway. You can learn more about those requirements [here](#). If you are unable to meet all requirements in your degree program, such as completing all field experience hours, you need to gain some work experience (paid or unpaid) before seeking certification.

[Check your eligibility](#) on the Certified Wellness Coach website to learn more. If you're unsure, contact our support team by emailing [certify@cawellnesscoach.org](mailto:certify@cawellnesscoach.org) or calling (503) 210-1334 for a preliminary assessment before applying.

## **What support is available if I have more questions about completing a Certified Wellness Coach education program?**

**Answer:** Refer to the [interactive map](#) to see which California colleges and universities are becoming designated. The academic counselor, advisor, or program coordinator for that degree program is your main campus contact.

For questions about certification eligibility and the application process, email [certify@cawellnesscoach.org](mailto:certify@cawellnesscoach.org) or call (503) 210-1334.

## **4. Eligibility & Certification Questions**

**Answer:** For any questions about certification eligibility or the application process, please refer to this [FAQ page](#). If your question isn't answered there, email [certify@cawellnesscoach.org](mailto:certify@cawellnesscoach.org) or by call (503) 210-1334.

## **5. Career Questions**

### **How do employers verify my certification?**

**Answer:** Employers can verify an individual's certificate status through the employer [search portal](#).

### **What's the average salary for CWC I and CWC II?**

**Answer:** Salaries differ based on experience, geography, and employment type, such as working within an agency, unionized workforce, or healthcare practice. Salaries are determined by the employer.

### **Are there opportunities to advance in my behavioral health career?**

**Answer:** Yes. The Certified Wellness Coach profession is designed to offer upward mobility for individuals interested in advancing their careers. A bachelor's degree and field experience required for certification will prepare you to next pursue an advanced degree and continue in the fields of clinical social work, marriage and family therapy, professional clinical counseling, or psychology. The master's degree will enable you to work in schools as a Pupil Personnel Services Credentialed individual, or you can pursue licensure as a behavioral health clinician.

HCAI also periodically offers scholarships and loan repayment opportunities for those wanting to further their professional career options. Please go to [this page](#) to learn more and stay up to date on current opportunities.

### **Where can I find employment opportunities as a CWC?**

**Answer:** Please join our Certified Wellness Coach [LinkedIn](#) page or search [EDJOIN](#) for employment opportunities.