PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to provide the information necessary for individuals to prepare and apply for the American Society of Pain Educators (ASPE) Certified Pain Educator (CPE) Examination.

Candidates should read this handbook in its entirety before beginning the application process.
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ABOUT THE ASPE

The American Society of Pain Educators (ASPE) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit professional organization dedicated to improving pain management through the education and training of healthcare professionals to become Certified Pain Educators (CPEs). The Society works to develop pain educators and support them in their role in providing effective and responsible pain management to their patients and pain-related education to those who can benefit from it.

The mission of the ASPE is to improve the standards of clinical pain practice and to enhance the health and quality of life of pain suffers by providing educational activities that lead to better pain control. ASPE programs focus on best practices for pain management as well as on the most effective ways to implement and transfer that knowledge from clinicians to their peers as well as to patients, families, and caregivers.

1.2 WHAT IS A PAIN EDUCATOR?

A pain educator is a healthcare professional who provides education about pain assessment, evaluation, and management within a clinical practice or via formal presentations and direct contact with other healthcare professionals and/or patients on an individual or group basis. Pain educators practice in a wide range of healthcare settings (eg, medical and dental practices, hospitals, freestanding surgical centers, rehabilitation services, hospice and palliative-care facilities, nursing homes, physical- and occupational-therapy practices, chiropractic offices, integrative medicine practices), and they focus on transferring knowledge to and teaching others about pain.
2 CERTIFICATION

2.1 WHY CERTIFY?

Certification serves as a voluntary demonstration of competency. It signals a commitment to continued practice in the field, professional growth, and self-improvement. While there is no national, state, or local requirement for pain educator certification, the process helps those who are interested in pursuing a career in healthcare education establish that they have mastered a curriculum, understand basic educational concepts and principles, and can tailor their teaching to the needs of other healthcare professionals or lay people (patients and their family members or caregivers).

2.2 EARNING CERTIFICATION

Certification is earned. Candidates must be current ASPE members and meet a set of eligibility criteria to sit for the examination, which tests for a minimum level of competency as established by a job analysis. The job analysis derives from a survey of characteristics and skills; a group of leading pain educators worked with a psychometrician to establish content domains and specific skill sets. The significance of these factors were rated and, based on the responses, the Certification Examination Committee identified the essential knowledge and skills that served as the basis for the examination.

2.3 USE OF THE CPE CREDENTIAL AND RECOGNITION

Upon receiving notification of having passed the certification examination, successful candidates may use the honorific “CPE” after their names. Certified Pain Educators will receive certificates suitable for framing. Unless they indicate in their application form that they do not wish to be acknowledged, the ASPE will recognize those who earn the CPE credential in a number of ways:

- Inclusion in the CPE Registry on the ASPE Web site
- Publication in Painview, the ASPE’s official newsletter
- Acknowledgement during the annual PAINWeek® National Conference in September

2.4 MAINTAINING THE CREDENTIAL

The CPE credential is valid for 5 years. To maintain the credential, CPEs must

- Adhere to the ethical standards governing their profession
- Keep their ASPE membership current
- Remain a healthcare professional licensed by a recognized US jurisdiction (e.g., state)

Note: Failure to meet these criteria will result in revocation of the CPE credential

Ongoing participation in pain-related educational activities—both formal and informal—is strongly encouraged as are other efforts to further one’s continuing professional development.

2.5 RECERTIFICATION

The Certified Pain Educator (CPE) credential is valid for five (5) years, as long as the individual meets the criteria to maintain the credential. After that time, those wishing to recertify must file a new application with a $50 application fee, and provide documentation for completion of 30 hours of continuing education.
2.6 CANDIDATE RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the candidate to read the entire contents of this handbook before applying to take the examination. This handbook contains current information about the policies and procedures of the ASPE certification program.

Candidates are responsible for meeting all deadlines associated with the certification process.
3 ABOUT THE CPE EXAMINATION

3.1 OVERVIEW

The Certified Pain Educator (CPE) examination was first offered on December 1, 2008. It is available to current ASPE members who meet the eligibility criteria and whose application to sit for the test is approved. The examination consists of 120 multiple choice questions with 4 choices for each question,* and is designed to test and challenge the candidate's knowledge of and experience in the field of pain education. Candidates have 3 hours to complete the test, which is administered via computer in a proctored setting. The examination fee is $350 plus a $50 nonrefundable application fee.

*Twenty of these questions are included for research purposes only and will not be scored. These items are not identified; therefore, all questions are to be answered to the best ability of the candidate. Examination results will be based only on the 100 scored questions.

3.2 EXAMINATION DEVELOPMENT

The development of a valid examination for the ASPE certification process began with a clear and concise definition of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for competent job performance. Using interviews, surveys, observations, and group discussions, ASPE worked with experts in the field of pain education to delineate critical job components. The knowledge and skill bases for the questions in the examination are derived from actual practice of professionals in the field.

Composition of the examination was guided by this research. A detailed outline of major content areas is provided in this handbook along with the approximate percentage of the test devoted to each content area. Questions from each content area will be mixed throughout the examination and will not be presented in the order listed on the content outline.

The ASPE contracted with Schroeder Measurement Technologies (SMT) to develop, score, and administer the CPE examination. SMT is an established full-service international testing company serving the needs of licensing board and credentialing agencies with a wide range of test development and computer-based administration services at testing centers.

3.3 PREPARING FOR THE EXAMINATION

The ASPE does not provide study guides or materials, nor does it recommend any particular text or method of studying. To help candidates prepare for the examination, the validated content outline is provided in this handbook and a list of resources used to prepare examination questions is posted on the ASPE Web site.
3.4 CONTENT OUTLINE

Candidates for the CPE certification are required to demonstrate proficiency by answering examination questions that evaluate their knowledge of facts, concepts, and processes required to complete the tasks described below. The examination addresses the following areas, and the percentages indicate the amount of material devoted to each on the examination.

■ Fundamentals of Instruction/Pedagogy (28%)
  ● Adult-to-Adult Learning Theories
  ● Establishing Educational Objectives
  ● Tailoring Presentations to Professional Audiences
  ● Tailoring Presentations to Lay Audiences

■ Science of Pain (10%)
  ● Neuroanatomy and Neurophysiology
  ● Epidemiology of Pain

■ Clinical Application (49%)
  ● Assess Pain
  ● Apply Diagnostic Methods
  ● Differentiate Clinical Syndromes
  ● Integrate Treatment Options
  ● Evaluate Current Research for Treatment Options

■ Ethical/Legal Implications (13%)
  ● Ethical Standards in Pain Management and Research
  ● Medical/Legal Aspects

3.5 SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

The questions in the examination are multiple choice with 4 choices: A, B, C, and D. There is only 1 correct choice for each question. Carefully read each question and all the choices before making a selection. Choose the single best answer.

1. Which of the following is an example of a formative evaluation?
   a. Evaluation of a course after its completion
   b. Feedback given after practical application exercises
   c. Feedback given only from the instructor
   d. Patient-simulated final examination

2. Specialized endings of primary afferent neurons perceiving pain are called
   a. algometers
   b. baroreceptors
   c. dolorometers
   d. nociceptors
3. Mind-body therapies beneficial in the treatment of headache include all of the following EXCEPT

   a. biofeedback
   b. cognitive-behavioral therapy
   c. distraction
   d. meditation

4. Which of the following is most helpful for a person with moderate rheumatoid arthritis?

   a. Occupational therapy
   b. Physical therapy
   c. Recreational therapy
   d. Nutritional counseling

5. Pain practitioners may protect themselves from malpractice suits by following the Federation of State Medical Board Guidelines for Pain Treatment. These include all of the following EXCEPT

   a. conducting a history and physical examination of the patient
   b. developing a specific treatment plan
   c. educating the patient about the condition
   d. obtaining informed consent for treatment

3.6 TESTING LOCATIONS

The CPE examination will be administered at more than 200 testing centers located throughout the United States and Canada. To find the location of testing sites in your area, point your browser to:

http://www.isoqualitytesting.com/mlocations.aspx

Please note that you cannot sign up for the examination or check the availability of dates or times to take the examination via this portal. Only candidates whose CPE examination applications have been approved will be issued a user ID and password to register for the examination and select a date and time to take it.

Testing sites are administered by ISO-Quality Testing, Inc. (IQT), a division of Schroeder Measurement Technologies (SMT), with whom the ASPE has partnered in providing national access to the CPE examination.
4 ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION PROCESS

4.1 OVERVIEW

Pain education professionals from any healthcare sector and practice setting may apply to be considered as a candidate for the CPE credential as long as they meet the eligibility criteria described below. After an application has been submitted and accepted, the candidate may register to take the certification examination on a secure computer in a monitored setting at 1 of 200 testing centers in the United States or Canada.

A candidate may take the examination at any time, dependent upon the specific testing center's operating schedule.

4.2 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To sit for the examination, a candidate must be a current member of the ASPE and be able to furnish documentation that they meet the following eligibility criteria:

- **Licensure**
  Applicant must hold a current license as a healthcare professional.

- **Clinical/Professional Experience**
  Applicant must have at least 2 years of full-time experience or 4 years of half-time experience in a position in which at least 10% of the applicant's time is devoted to providing pain-related education to clinical peers and/or patients (e.g., 400 hours of experience in pain education).

  **Note:** Experience must have accrued within the last 5 years.

- **Certified Continuing Education Activities**
  Applicant must have completed at least 30 hours (credits) of pain-related educational activities certified for Category 1 CME, CPE, CE, or other professional credit.

  **Note:** Credits must have been earned within the last 5 years.

Candidates who are unsure if they meet the criteria as stated or who feel their qualifications are different but equivalent should contact the ASPE at cpe@paineducators.org.

4.3 HOW TO APPLY

Before you begin the application process to sit for the CPE examination, read this handbook in its entirety. Then, follow these steps:

- **Check Your ASPE Membership Status**
  You must be a current member of the ASPE to have access to the CPE credential. You may join the Society or renew your membership online. Go to the ASPE Web site, and click on the “Membership” button.
Review the Eligibility Criteria

Before beginning to enter information into the online application form, make sure that you meet the eligibility criteria to sit for the exam.

Complete the Online Application Form

Go to the ASPE Web site, click on the “Certified Pain Educator” button, and then select “How to Apply.” From there, click on the link to the online application form and enter your information. When you have completed all fields, click “Continue.” If you have completely filled out the form, you will be able to print a copy by clicking the “View and Print Application” button. Print out a copy of the form. (For your convenience, a PDF of your application form will be sent to the e-mail address you provided.)

Special Accommodations: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), ASPE provides reasonable accommodations for applicants with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to take the examination. It is the candidate’s responsibility to notify the ASPE of the need for special accommodations by checking the box in Step 5 of the application form and completing the Request for Special Accommodations form, which can be downloaded while entering data into the application form. This form, along with the documentation described, must be submitted with your other application materials.

Assemble Your Documentation

You must provide the following documentation of having met the eligibility criteria:

- A copy of your license to practice as a healthcare professional.
  
  Note: Must be current. Copy both sides of the license if any information appears on the reverse side.

- A copy of credit certificates/statements for 30 hours of pain-related continuing education activities certified for Category 1 CME, CPE, CE, or other professional credit.
  
  Note: Credits must have been earned within the last 5 years.

Send to ASPE

Send your completed application (ie, application form, required documentation, payment method) to ASPE using a trackable shipping method (Federal Express, UPS, etc). All materials must be submitted together in hard copy form to:

American Society of Pain Educators
6 Erie Street
Montclair, NJ 07042
Attention: CPE Exam Application
Phone: (973) 233-5570

Note: The administration of the CPE examination is now held year round. It may require up to 2 weeks to process your application.

Await Application Approval

ASPE will acknowledge receipt of your application materials via e-mail. If your application is accepted, you will receive an approval letter containing the information needed to register for a testing center, you can then select a date and time to take the examination. If the Society needs additional information to complete its review of your application, you will be contacted via e-mail.
EXAMINATION REGISTRATION

Once you receive your approval letter, register online to select a testing center, date, and time to take the CPE examination.

Get Started

- Open browser to http://www.isoqualitytest.com
- Click on “Exam Registration”
- Select “American Society of Pain Educators” from the “Organization” drop-down menu
- Select “Certified Pain Educator (CPE)” from the “Exam” drop-down menu
- Click “Next”

Log On

- Log on using the User ID and Password provided in the approval letter
- Verify all personal information
- Click “Next”

Select a testing site, date, and time

- The CPE examination will be offered at approximately 200 sites throughout the United States and Canada. Based on the postal/zip code you provide, the 5 closest testing centers to your location will be shown
- Select a testing center, test date, and time to take the examination
- Click “Next”

Examination Fee

- The CPE examination fee is $350 plus a $50 nonrefundable application fee
- Enter your credit card information, and click “Next”

Terms

- Agree to the Iso-Quality Testing Examination Agreement terms by checking the box
- Click “Submit.”
  Note: IQT is a division of SMT, which is responsible for online registration and examination administration.

IMPORTANT

- Print and save the candidate admission letter.
- Bring the candidate admission letter with you to the testing center.
- The candidate admission letter and a government-issued photo ID must be presented at the testing center in order for you to take the examination.
- Well in advance of your testing date, fully read the candidate admission letter and the additional information and instructions that are provided with it.

APPLICATION AUDITS

Applications for those who pass the test may be audited. Thus, licensing boards, employers, and/or accredited providers may be contacted by ASPE and asked to verify the information you provided in the application (e.g., licensure, work experience, completion of CME, CPE, CE activities). If the information an applicant provides is not accurate, the CPE credential will not be awarded, even though the individual took and passed the examination. In such a case, the applicant forfeits the full examination fee.
4.6 CPE RECOGNITION

Those who pass the CPE examination will be recognized in a number of ways including having their names posted in the CPE Registry on the ASPE Web site. Individuals who do not wish to be acknowledged must check the appropriate box on the application form.

4.7 APPLICANT AGREEMENT

You agree to abide by the terms outlined in the ASPE's Candidate Handbook; attest that all facts on the application and related forms are true and correct; agree that certification, if achieved, does not constitute any form of license; acknowledge having read and understood the requirements for maintenance of certification and recertification; and agree to abide by the decisions of ASPE relative to the granting of certification. You release ASPE from any and all liabilities, claims, demands, or causes of action whatsoever, including attorney's fees that may exist or may hereafter arise on account of your participation in the CPE certification process. You acknowledge that this release is being given as a prerequisite for having filed application for certification consideration by ASPE.

4.8 POSTPONEMENT POLICY

Requests to postpone taking the examination after registering for a specific location, date, and time must be received by the ASPE office at least 14 days prior to the scheduled examination date. There is a $50 rescheduling fee. Candidates who request a postponement must meet the eligibility requirements at the time of the rescheduled test, and must pay any fee increases in effect at that time.

4.9 CANCELLATION POLICY

Examination withdrawals received by the ASPE office at least 14 days prior to the scheduled examination date will receive a refund of the examination fee minus a $100 cancellation fee. Examination withdrawals received by the ASPE office less than 14 days prior to the scheduled examination date will not receive a refund.

4.10 SUMMARY OF PROCESS AND FEES

- Fully review Candidate Handbook. You must be a current member of the ASPE who meets the CPE examination eligibility criteria to apply.
- Submit application form, required documentation, and nonrefundable application fee ($50).
- Receive approval letter that contains information for online examination registration.
- Online examination registration—select a testing center, date, and time to take the exam. Remit examination fee ($350).
- Candidate admission letter generated—print, save, and bring to the testing center.

Note: Bring candidate admission letter and a government-issued photo ID with signature to the testing center to take the examination.
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<th>Notes</th>
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<td>Examination Fee</td>
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**Incurred as requested:**

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<tr>
<td>Cancellation Fee</td>
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<td>See Cancellation Policy (page 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescoring Fee</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>Assessed if no error found; see Rescore Requests (page 14)</td>
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*Subject to change.
5  DAY OF THE TEST

5.1  OVERVIEW

Please arrive at the testing center at least 1 half-hour prior to test time to allow time to park, locate the examination room, and visit the restroom. There are no scheduled breaks during the 3-hour examination period; proctors will be available to escort candidates to restroom facilities, if necessary. Candidates may leave the room as soon as they have finished the examination and have turned in their examination materials to the proctor.

5.2  WHAT TO BRING

● Bring your candidate admission letter to the testing center.
● Bring a government-issued photo ID with signature. A driver's license, passport, or military ID is acceptable. Student IDs and bank cards are NOT acceptable.
  Note: You will be required to give your ID to a proctor to hold during the examination; it will be returned to you when all of your examination materials have been turned in.

You are advised to bring a sweater or jacket in case the testing room is cool. You may also bring a bottle of water to the testing room.

5.3  EXAMINATION SECURITY/GROUNDS FOR DISMISSAL

● ASPE and SMT maintain established test administration and security standards to ensure that all candidates are provided with a fair and consistent opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities.
● Any candidate who does not have positive identification, uses unauthorized aids, engages in misconduct, or does not follow testing rules may be dismissed from the testing center by their proctor. ASPE may choose to have the scores of such candidates cancelled, in which case all applicable examination fees will be forfeited.

The following are examples of behaviors considered to be misconduct and will not be tolerated during the administration of the CPE examination:

● Providing or receiving assistance of any kind
● Using unauthorized references or aids
● Attempting to take the examination for another person
● Attempting to print any examination question
● Failing to follow testing regulations and/or test center instructions
● Creating disturbances
● Copying, removing, or attempting to remove examination questions and/or scratch paper from the examination room
● Tampering with testing-center computers
● Leaving the examination room without permission
● Using electronic communication devices during an examination (cell phones, pagers, etc)

ASPE will investigate all reported charges of misconduct. ASPE has the right to question the validity of test scores. If there is sufficient cause to question the score, ASPE will make the final decision on whether or not the score will be invalidated. In the event ASPE determines a test score is invalid and should be cancelled, ASPE will notify the candidate and decide to

● Allow the candidate to retest at an additional cost; or
● Prohibit the candidate from testing and earning the certification; or
● Take other action as deemed appropriate
6 EXAMINATION RESULTS

6.1 NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

Candidates will receive notification of their pass/fail status as soon as they have completed the test.

Individual examination results are released only to the candidate and are sent via the United States Postal Service. To ensure confidentiality, scores will not be released via telephone, fax, or any other electronic transmission by either ASPE or SMT personnel. Scores will NOT be sent to employers, schools, or other individuals or organizations under any circumstances. Names of candidates who do not pass the examination are confidential and are not revealed under any circumstances, except by legal compulsory process.

Candidates who fail the certification examination may apply to retake the test in 6 months, provided the candidate continues to meet the eligibility requirements and submits a new application and remits all required fees.

6.2 SCORING INFORMATION

The pass/fail cut-off score is determined using a criterion-referenced method that allows the performance of each candidate taking the examination to be judged against a predetermined standard rather than against other candidates. The predetermined standard is set by a committee of subject-matter experts working with testing experts to ensure the validity, reliability, and legal defensibility of the examination.

ASPE and SMT routinely apply a postexamination administrative review of the validity of examination scores. If irregularities are found, candidates will be notified of issues concerning their scores, when appropriate.

The statistical analyses performed on the CPE examination have shown that the examination is highly reliable. This reliability is a direct result of the efforts of APSE working with testing experts to ensure that ambiguity is eliminated from individual examination questions, and that the questions address concepts appropriate for candidates sitting for the examination.

6.3 RESCORE REQUESTS

Requests to rescore the examination must be submitted in writing to and must be received by ASPE within 30 days of the postmarked date on the formal letter of notification of test results. Such requests should be sent to the following address using a trackable shipping method (Federal Express, UPS, etc):

American Society of Pain Educators
6 Erie Street
Montclair, NJ 07042
Attention: CPE Exam Rescore
Phone: (973) 233–5570

Upon receipt of such a request, the answer sheet will be rescored and the results sent to the candidate within 2 weeks. The candidate will be assessed a $150 rescore fee if no error is found.
6.4 APPEALS PROCESS

Decisions by ASPE concerning the initial determination of eligibility to take the examination, continued certification, disruptive examination conditions, and verification of an examination score may be appealed to ASPE. The grounds for appeal to ASPE are only those stated in the previous sentence. ASPE may elect not to review appeals.

An appeal to ASPE must be made in writing and should be sent to the following address using a trackable shipping method (Federal Express, UPS, etc):

American Society of Pain Educators
6 Erie Street
Montclair, NJ 07042
Attention: CPE Exam Appeals
Phone: (973) 233–5570

All appeals must be received by ASPE within 30 days of the date (1) that ASPE mailed the notice denying eligibility to take the examination, or (2) the date the examination was taken. The written appeal must identify the precise factual basis and applicable rules or examination conditions that are the basis for the appeal.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. If I don’t pass 1 section of the examination, can I take that part over or do I have to repeat the whole examination?

A. If you do not pass the examination, you must retake the entire examination.

Q. Will I be told what questions I missed so I can study that part more thoroughly for the next examination?

A. All candidates will receive score reports providing information about their examination performance; included in the score report will be areas in which you may wish to focus your studies. The report will not list the specific questions that were answered incorrectly.

Q. How soon after I take the examination will I receive the results?

A. Candidates will receive notification of their pass/fail status as soon as they have completed the test.

Q. When can I take the examination?

A. A candidate may take the examination at any time, dependent upon the specific testing center’s operating schedule.

Q. How do I schedule an examination date?

A. First, you must submit an application form with documentation of having met the eligibility criteria to sit for the examination. If your application is approved, you will receive an approval letter that provides information and instructions for online examination registration (e.g., selection of a specific testing center, date, and time).

Q. If I fail the examination, can I retake it?

A. Yes. Candidates who fail the certification examination may apply to retake the test in 6 months, provided the candidate continues to meet the eligibility requirements and submits a new application and remits all required fees.

Q. How long must I wait after failing an examination before I can take it again?

A. Candidates must wait 6 months before retaking the examination.

Q. What do I do if I need to reschedule my examination date?

A. Requests to postpone taking the examination after registering for a specific location, date, and time must be received by the ASPE office at least 14 days prior to the scheduled examination date. There is a $50 rescheduling fee. Candidates who request a postponement must meet the eligibility requirements at the time of the rescheduled test, and must pay any fee increases in effect at that time.

Q. What do I need to bring with me to the examination?

A. You must bring a government-issued photo ID with signature (e.g., driver’s license) as well as your candidate admission letter. For more detailed information and other helpful recommendations, see the “Day of the Test” section of this handbook.
Q. Can I refer to materials during the examination?

A. No. The CPE examination is a closed-book test.

Q. Will I need to renew my certification?

A. The CPE credential is valid for 5 years, as long as the individual meets the criteria to maintain the credential. After that time, those wishing to recertify must file a new application and meet and provide documentation of the eligibility criteria.

Q. How do I get a refund?

A. The application fee ($50) is nonrefundable.

Requests to postpone taking the examination after registering for a specific location, date, and time must be received by the ASPE office at least 14 days prior to the scheduled examination date. There is a $50 rescheduling fee. Candidates who request a postponement must meet the eligibility requirements at the time of the rescheduled test and must pay any fee increases in effect at that time.

Examination withdrawals received by the ASPE office at least 14 days prior to the scheduled examination date will receive a refund of the examination fee minus a $100 cancellation fee. Examination withdrawals received by the ASPE office less than 14 days prior to the scheduled examination date will not receive a refund.

Q. I lost my password. What do I do?

A. Call Iso-Quality Testing (the division of SMT responsible for online registration and examination administration) at (866) 773-1114. A staff member will be pleased to assist you, Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm Eastern Time.

Q. Do I need to become an ASPE member to take the examination?

A. Yes. You must be a current member of the ASPE in good standing to apply to take the examination as well as to maintain the credential, if earned.

Q. How do I become an ASPE member?

A. Please visit the ASPE Web site (www.paineducators.org) to learn about the value of ASPE membership and its many benefits. You can join ASPE by completing an online application or by printing an application form; both options are accessible by selecting the “Membership” button and selecting “Individual Membership.”
ASPE Certified Pain Educator (CPE) examination contact information:

**Address**
American Society of Pain Educators  
6 Erie Street  
Montclair, NJ 07042

**Email**
cpe@paineducators.org

**Phone**
(973) 233–5570