

# CERTIFICATION FOR INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SPECIALISTS—AGING/DISABILITIES (CIRS-A/D)

## FACT SHEET

### What is AIRS Certification?

The AIRS Certification Program awards professional credentials through the identification of specific competencies and related performance criteria, which describe the knowledge, skills, attitudes and work-related behaviors needed by I&R practitioners to successfully execute their duties.

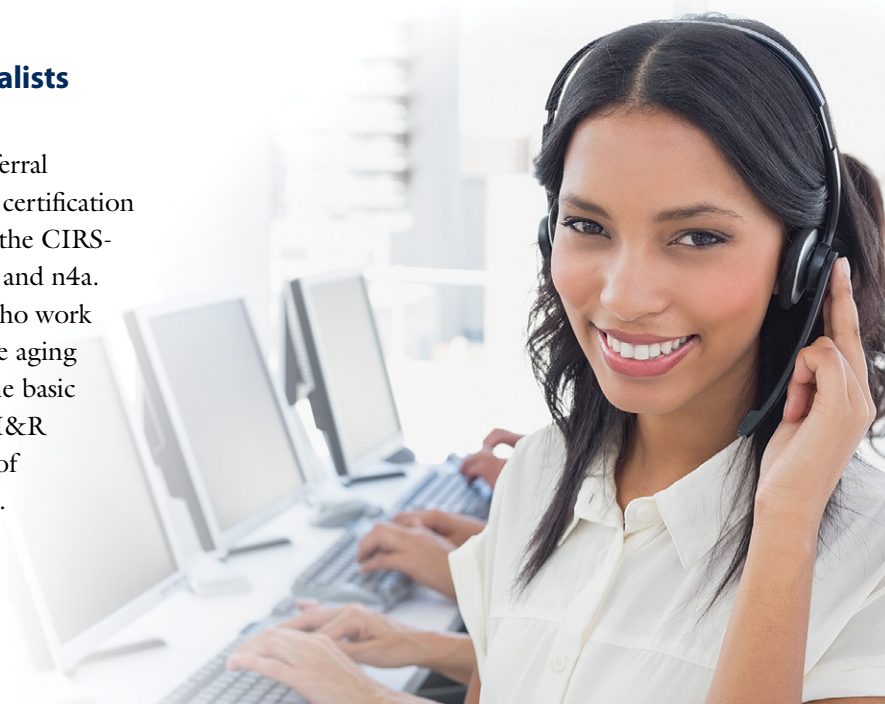
Certification improves the professionalism of the field and the quality of service provided to the public. AIRS Certification benefits I&R specialists, the agencies where they work, and the communities they serve. Certification validates I&R skills and knowledge, provides a transferable qualification, and recognizes the professionalism of I&R practice.

### Is there a Certification for I&R Specialists working in aging/disabilities?

AIRS offers a Certified Information and Referral Specialist—Aging/Disabilities (CIRS-A/D) certification (before March 15, 2015, this was known as the CIRS-Aging) that is supported by both NASUAD and n4a. This program is designed for practitioners who work directly with clients and caregivers within the aging and/or disabilities area and perform the same basic range of skills and tasks as a comprehensive I&R Specialist but who also have a special depth of knowledge related to their core client group.

### Who can become AIRS Certified?

Candidates may apply to take the certification examination once they are eligible. Eligibility is based on I&R and equivalent experience combined with educational background. I&R practitioners are eligible for certification only for the work they actually perform and/or directly supervise and must be currently engaged in CIRS-A/D work. A certification candidate does not have to be an individual member of AIRS or an employee of a member organization. However, AIRS members can apply for reduced rates as a benefit of membership. Visit [www.airs.org/certification](http://www.airs.org/certification) for further information on eligibility.



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## How do I apply for Certification?

Complete the Certification/Recertification Application Form available at [www.airs.org/certification](http://www.airs.org/certification). This form must be submitted directly to AIRS, along with payment and supporting documentation, at least 30 days prior to taking the exam. The exams are online only and proctored certification exams are offered year round at sites across North America and also at the AIRS Annual Training Conference. Please refer to the website for a [complete list of test dates and locations](#) to find one near you. For a small additional fee (\$25), exams can also be taken at work or at home via computer with webcam through the ProctorU online proctoring option. This allows for reduced travel and more flexibility in scheduling (to use this option, designate it on your application).

The basic cost of a Certification application is:

- \$90 for AIRS members (depending on your level of membership, you may qualify for additional discounts—see application form for details)
- \$250 for non-members

Fees for exam retakes and recertification are listed on the website.

The CIRS-A/D exam is comprised of 100 four-part, multiple-choice questions. Candidates have two hours and 10 minutes to complete the exam. While exam questions are mainly scenario-based, it is recommended that all candidates review the most current versions of the [AIRS I&R Training Manual](#) and the [AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators for Professional Information and Referral](#). Additionally, both AIRS and NASUAD offer online training courses through [AIRS Online Training](#) and [NASUADiQ](#) (NASUAD's Learning Center).

If you pass your certification exam, you will receive a certificate and lapel pin from AIRS to recognize your achievement, and you may use CIRS-A/D after your name.

## How do I maintain my CIRS-A/D Certification?

Certification is valid for 2 years from the time you pass the examination. You must apply for recertification and submit documentation that you have completed at least 10 hours of I&R training over that 2 year period, but you do not need to retake the exam unless you allow your certification to lapse. Your 10 hours of training may include a range of training options such as online training, conference workshops, and in-house training (CEUs may be accepted but are not required).

## How do current CIRS-A holders transition to the CIRS-A/D?

AIRS partnered with NASUAD and n4a to transition the professional credential of CIRS-Aging (CIRS-A) to the CIRS-A/D. These organizations developed an approach to allow current CIRS-A holders to grandfather to the CIRS-A/D. To support this transition, NASUAD developed a free training course called “Disability for I&R Specialists” that is available on its online learning site, [NASUADiQ](#). Successful completion of this course allows CIRS-A holders to use the CIRS-A/D designation and recertify as CIRS-A/D holders. This course also can account for 2 of the 10 hours of professional training required for recertification. CIRS-A holders should submit their certificate of completion from the Disability for I&R Specialists training course to AIRS with their recertification application when recertifying based on their existing renewal date. More transition details are available at [www.airs.org/certification](http://www.airs.org/certification). All new applicants can only take the CIRS-A/D.



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### What roles do national partners play in supporting CIRS-A/D Certification?

AIRS, NASUAD, and n4a are long-time partners in supporting certification within the aging and disabilities sector of the I&R field. AIRS administers the Certification Program, so it is important that application materials and other documentation relating to individual CIRS-A/D certification or recertification are submitted to AIRS. The National Information & Referral Support Center, administered by NASUAD through a grant from the Administration for Community Living, provides training—including CIRS-A/D exam preparation training—and technical assistance to aging and disability information and referral/assistance (I&R/A) programs

and specialists. The Support Center's training and educational webinars, along with online courses available through [NASUADiQ](#), provide opportunities for I&R/A specialists to prepare for and maintain CIRS-A/D certification. For more information, visit [I&R/A Training](#). n4a works to promote the aging and disability online training courses and the AIRS certification exam for I&R Specialists throughout the aging and disability service provider networks. n4a's Eldercare Locator program is the only national information and referral resource to provide support to consumers seeking assistance across the spectrum of issues affecting older adults and their caregivers. The [Eldercare Locator's](#) Information and Referral Specialists obtain the CIRS-A/D certification.



The Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS at [www.airs.org](http://www.airs.org)) is a nonprofit professional membership association of Information & Referral (I&R) providers and a national partner of both NASUAD and n4a. AIRS is responsible for national I&R standards and for the administration of a certification program for individual I&R/I&A practitioners and accreditation for I&R programs, along with training, networking and support.



The National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD at [www.nasuad.org](http://www.nasuad.org)) represents the nation's 56 state and territorial agencies on aging and disabilities and supports visionary state leadership, the advancement of state systems innovation and the articulation of national policies that support home and community based services for older adults and individuals with disabilities. For over 25 years, NASUAD has administered the National I&R Support Center to build capacity and promote continuing development of aging and disability information and referral services nationwide.



The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a at [www.n4a.org](http://www.n4a.org)) represents America's national network of 622 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and provides a voice for the 256 Title VI Native American aging programs. n4a works to build the capacity of its members so they can help older adults and people with disabilities live with dignity and choices in their homes and communities for as long as possible.