Memorandum

To: The Honorable Shannon Bird, Chair of the Joint Budget Committee
The Honorable Rachael Zenzinger, Vice Chair of the Joint Budget Committee
The Honorable Emily Sirota
The Honorable Jeff Bridges
The Honorable Rick Taggart
The Honorable Barbara Kirkmeyer

From: Sam Delp, Division Director, Division of Professions and Occupations

CC: Kelly Shen, JBC Legislative and Budget Policy Analyst; Brita Darling, Senior Attorney Office of Legislative Legal Services; and Madison Kaemerer, JBC Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

The Department of Regulatory Agencies (Department) has been requested to provide the following information to the Joint Budget Committee quarterly on or by the first day of June, September, January, and March. Since the February 16, 2024 hearing, the Division of Professions and Occupations (Division) within the Department has provided updates on the specific questions a—d below.

a.   The number of Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) candidates that have passed the written exam over the past year, broken down by month;

9/23	10/23	11/23	12/23	1/24	2/24	3/24	4/24	5/24	6/24	7/24	8/24	Total
312	377	414	564	344	390	420	475	680	522	576	509	5583

b.   The number of candidates that are currently registered for a skills exam, broken down by the month in which the skills exam is scheduled;

Month	Skills	Written	Oral English	Oral Spanish
9/24	575	45	22	2
10/24	255	19	2	1
11/24	41	1	0	0

Month	Skills	Written	Oral English	Oral Spanish
12/24	21	1	0	0

c.   The number of skills exams that have been canceled, including: the location, the date the exam was scheduled for, the date the exam was canceled, and the reason for cancellation; and

The Division has been working with the vendor's new ownership to more comprehensively track exam cancellations to better report on the data since 2022 numbers. Cancellations from 2023 to date in 2024 with reasons are as follows:

Reason for Cancelation	2023	2024
Alternative Date Requested	87	26
Evaluator Cancelation	46	10
Facility Reported Issue	2	1
Minimum Candidate Threshold Not Met	69	74
No Evaluator Available for Scheduled Exam	116	70
Other	3	5
At Site Request	140	73
System Change	3	2
COVID	1	0
Weather	0	2

Cancellations by county

County	2023	2024
Adams	83	48
Alamosa	13	3
Arapahoe	109	37
Boulder	4	6
Clear Creek	3	3

| County	2023	2024
Delta	3	8
Denver	16	25
Douglas	18	14
El Paso	39	44
Garfield	3	7
Jefferson	0	5
Kit Carson	26	3
Larimer	40	3
Mesa	19	20
Montezuma	24	5
Montrose	0	5
Morgan	6	7
Otero	12	6
Pueblo	28	10
Routt	3	0
Weld	18	4

d. Updates on the progress of efforts to improve the language accessibility of the current certification process, real-time information pertaining to test availability, and vendor communications to candidates.

<u>Language Accessibility</u>:
A newly translated Spanish version of the written and complete skills exam will launch on 10/1/2024 as training programs migrate to the new Credentia platform. Both exams have been translated into 'US Spanish,' which is more widely understood than the previous translation.

Credentia currently has one Spanish-speaking Evaluator in Pueblo West for the Spanish skills exam. They are actively recruiting for others. Based on demographics and requests for written Spanish exams, they target the Grand Junction area but search the state. The Division is also contacting training programs that currently offer a Spanish-language nurse aide training program for possible Spanish-speaking NAEs.

The written exam will include both the visible on-screen translation and the oral reading of the exam. There are a few questions that are a required comprehension component of the Spanish written exam that must be read to the candidate in English, which is the reason for the integrated audio element. The following screenshot is what the candidate will see when they login to the system:
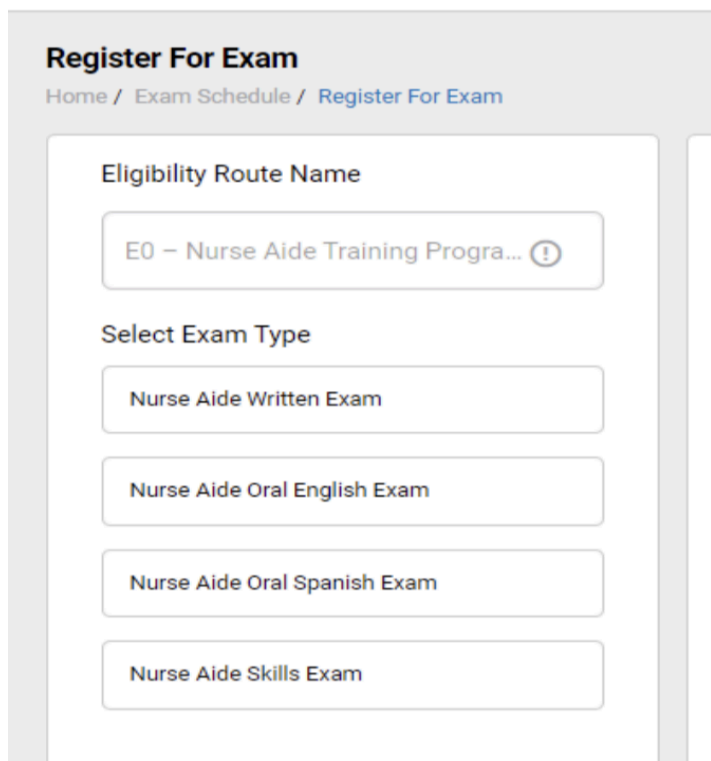
<u>Real-time Information for Test Availability and Exam Improvements</u>:
Once programs transition to the new Credentia platform by 10/1/24, candidate location tracking and exam schedule notifications will improve. The system has improved the mapping of candidates, sites, and evaluators through GIS mapping by radius, which will better match candidates and evaluators to testing sites. Candidates will be able to see available skills exams immediately when they become available in the new system instead of the current quarterly update of exam availability.

Nurse Aide Evaluators (NAEs) will have an improved ability to manage skills exams and be scheduled at exam locations. Paper test packets will be sent directly to the testing facilities instead of the evaluators to

better manage last-minute changes. If the scheduled evaluator cancels, a new evaluator can be more quickly scheduled because the logistics of transferring the testing material is no longer an issue. Scoring will be electronic through the application, and NAEs will no longer need to fax or ship score sheets to Credentia. NAEs can verify and check in a candidate through the application and assign them a pre-shipped testing packet. This eliminates "pre-assigned" testing packets and allows evaluators to accept last-minute candidates to a testing event.

Customer Service and Vendor Communication:

The Division has worked with Credentia to improve facility responsiveness and has reviewed and approved communication plans for training and exam facilities. As issues arise, our team works directly with Credentia executive members and customer service staff. While this is a continuous effort, we have seen a noticeable improvement in their ability to interact with facilities and candidates and will continue to drive efforts.

Credentia has provided updates and training via videos that should walk through daily tasks done on the Credentia platform, including a guided process. They have increased the availability of articles and FAQ documents for test sites and NAEs to navigate the system and processes. They are working to hire additional staff members to assist and support NAEs and facilities.

Other Skills Testing Options (ongoing):

The Division is pursuing an optional skills exam alternative that we plan to make available to training facilities and candidates in late 2024 and early 2025. We are working with the Colorado Community College system to develop a standard curriculum for the skills exam that CNA training facilities can adopt to provide a skills evaluation opportunity for candidates at the end of their training program. Passing this skills evaluation at the end of the training program will satisfy the skills requirement for verification. Candidates would then take the written exam through the online portal and, once passed, would obtain certification.

This option is currently in development and is the subject of ongoing discussions between DORA and the appropriate entities. It is intended to apply to entities beyond the Community College system. Before releasing any changes to the current process, a communications plan and a pilot using the revised process and curriculum would be implemented. The new curriculum and process would need to be approved by the Board of Nursing before rollout. If approved by the Board of Nursing, it is intended that more facilities beyond the Community College system would be invited to incorporate it into their testing infrastructure.