



# Policy & Procedures for obtaining the VitalStim® Therapy/DINES Specialty Certificate

## Policy:

VitalStim® Therapy and DINES Therapy (Dynamic Integration of NMES and Exercise for Swallowing) is the use of neuromuscular electrical stimulation (NMES) by a skilled dysphagia therapist as part of the therapeutic interventions used to treat dysphagia. The dysphagia therapist obtains the required skills to competently perform VitalStim® and DINES Therapy by completing an educational process leading to the awarding of the VitalStim/DINES Specialty Certificate. This certificate is awarded by Career Improvement and Advancement Opportunities (CIAO); it certifies that the learner has successfully completed the VitalStim/DINES Therapy competency process. VitalStim/DINES Specialty Certificate will be awarded based on the criteria set forth in this document.

## Purpose:

To establish clear criteria and guidelines determining eligibility/ obtaining the VitalStim/DINES Specialty Certificate

## Procedure:

1. The dysphagia therapist (usually a Speech-Language Pathologist or Occupational Therapist) will apply for entry into the VitalStim/DINES Therapy educational process by registering with CIAO.
2. The applicant must satisfy the following entry requirements:
  - a. Have a majority current caseload, a significant past caseload (applicant has been solely responsible for the evaluation, treatment plan and discharge of a minimum of 50 dysphagic patients), or a demonstrated similar knowledge of dysphagia theory and treatment to be determined by CIAO via a clinical interview (consideration will be given to, **but not guaranteed** to those without current caseloads such as extensive research experience in dysphagia or a graduate program professors.)
  - b. Have the skill to evaluate and interpret the results of instrumental dysphagia evaluations and/or reports.
  - c. Should the applicant not meet the requirements above, a clinical interview with CIAO staff will determine whether there is a base knowledge that qualifies the applicant for entry.
  - d. Therapists must be at least 6 months into their CFY to qualify for the clinical interview.
  - e. This Specialty Certificate is intended for active dysphagia treatment professionals and not for sales training.
3. Once entry requirements have been satisfied, the learner will register for the educational process, consisting of two components:
  - a. An online preparatory course that instructs the learner in the basics of anatomy, electrotherapy and MBS observational skills.
  - b. A two-day onsite course.
4. The learner must pass each component of the educational process satisfactorily **and** submit full payment for both course components within 60 days\*, to obtain the VitalStim/DINES Specialty Certificate. The following testing methods and pass/fail criteria will be applied:
  - a. Online preparatory course (12 contact hours), consisting of 2 units of 3 lessons each, one exam and 2 assignments to be submitted to a live instructor:
    - i. Each lesson is concluded by a multiple choice examination which must be passed with at least 80% correct answers.
    - ii. Each unit is concluded by an essay type assignment that must be accepted by the class instructor as containing all required elements.
    - iii. A PASS grade will be assigned when the above requirements have been met.
    - iv. The participant will be offered to retake the online course one (1) time should the above requirements not have been met within the two week course time line. There will be a \$50.00 administrative fee to retake the MBS course.
    - v. The participant will be granted access to the onsite course once a PASS has been obtained.

b. Two-day onsite course:

- i. Day 1 is concluded with a written examination (multiple choice format), which must be passed with at least 80% correct answers.
- ii. The course is concluded with a practical examination (demonstration of practical competency) during day 2. The learner must obtain a PASS score on the practical exam on day 2. The class instructors will determine whether all required elements of competency have been demonstrated by the participant.
- iii. A PASS grade will be assigned when the above requirements have been met.
- iv. The participant will be offered to retake the onsite course one (1) time should the above requirements not have been met free of charge.
- v. The participant will be awarded a Specialty Certificate as a VitalStim/DINES Provider once a PASS grade has been obtained.

\*The Certificate is issued once the above criteria are met and payment is received. The participant is responsible for the payment of the course/program. Failure to pay will result in CIAO rescinding CEUs; notifying the state licensure boards; notifying the national professional board (i.e. ASHA, AOTA, NBCOT); and requesting a subsequent audit.

Acceptance and Passing Trends: Approximately 5% of applicants do not meet the requirements to attend this intermediate level specialty program. Approximately 2% do not pass the program as assessed through the online portion, written exam, or lab practicals or MBS lab.

**Decision tree**

