

RADT Career Pathway: Your Complete Guide to Addiction Counseling in California

What is the RADT (Registered Alcohol and Drug Technician)?

The RADT (Registered Alcohol and Drug Technician) is an entry-level credential specific to California that allows individuals to work in substance abuse treatment settings under the supervision of certified counselors. Think of it as your official "learner's permit" for the addiction treatment field—it gets you in the door and allows you to start gaining valuable experience while working toward higher-level certifications.

Key Facts About RADT:

- An RADT is a registration, not a license or certification
- Valid for 5 years from the date of initial registration (with possible 2-year hardship extension)
- Must be renewed annually during the 5-year period
- Registration cost is \$50, with annual renewal fees
- Beginning August 1, 2025, RADT fees will increase to \$100 for initial applications and \$60 for renewals

RADT Scope of Practice

RADTs perform a variety of support duties, including: collecting drug and alcohol screening samples (urine, saliva, hair, blood), assisting clients with intake procedures and early recovery steps, supporting certified counselors in treatment facilities, and maintaining professional documentation and ethical standards.

Under general supervision, RADTs can assist and support clients with alcohol/drug abuse or dependence to attain and maintain abstinence, develop tailored recovery programs, provide support as part of a treatment team in referring clients to other health professionals, and provide current and accurate information and education on alcoholism and drug dependency issues.

Opportunities Available with RADT Certification

Employment Opportunities

Entry-level jobs in settings like inpatient rehab facilities, outpatient programs, community programs, correctional facilities, and more are available to RADTs. Specific job titles include:

- **Substance Abuse Advocate Counselors** - providing supervision and supportive services for program and daily living activities
- **Residential Technicians** - working in treatment centers under program director supervision
- **Treatment Support Staff** - assisting with intake, screening, and basic client support services
- **Recovery Support Specialists** - helping clients navigate early recovery processes

Why Employers Value RADT Certification

Many employers require their employees to have RADT certification, as addiction services providers want staff to have some knowledge even for entry-level positions. Having RADT certification can give you a competitive advantage even when job descriptions don't specifically require it.

Career Development Benefits

- **Hands-on Experience:** Direct exposure to addiction treatment practices and client interactions
 - **Professional Networking:** Working alongside certified counselors and treatment professionals
 - **Skill Building:** Developing competencies in screening, intake, documentation, and client support
 - **Career Exploration:** Becoming a RADT gives you an opportunity to truly get an idea of whether a career as an addiction professional is the right fit for you
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RADT Requirements: Getting Started

Basic Eligibility

To qualify for CCAPP RADT certification, candidates need a high school diploma or equivalent

Step-by-Step Process

- 1. Complete the 9-Hour Orientation Course** Before registering as an RADT, you must complete CCAPP's nine-hour orientation course, "Ethics, Confidentiality, & Boundaries." This free course consists of nine video lessons (each about an hour) with quizzes at the end of each lesson.
- 2. Submit Your Application** Create an account in Certemy (CCAPP's online portal), complete the e-application, sign the CCAPP Code of Conduct for Registered Alcohol and Drug Technicians and the DHCS Code of Conduct for Credentialed Alcohol and Drug Professionals, and upload a photo of your government ID.
- 3. Begin Working and Learning** Once registered, you can work under supervision in a licensed substance use disorder treatment facility, as allowed by DHCS regulations.

Annual Requirements While Registered

RADTs are required to submit proof of completion of at least 45 hours of addiction education each year. Those hours are applied towards the 315 total required to earn CADC certification.

How RADT Hours Work Toward CADC Certification

This is where the RADT becomes truly valuable as a stepping stone rather than just an entry-level position. RADT hours are part of the 315 hours that will be required to become a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC).

Education Hour Accumulation Strategy

- **Annual Requirement:** 45 hours of addiction education per year while registered as RADT
- **Total Needed for CADC:** 315 hours of CCAPP-approved education
- **Timeline:** If you complete 45 hours annually, you can accumulate 225 hours over 5 years, leaving only 90 additional hours needed for CADC
- **Accelerated Path:** You can complete more than 45 hours per year to finish the 315-hour requirement faster

Work Experience Accumulation

While completing your education, you're simultaneously gaining the supervised work experience required for CADC certification:

- CADC-I requires 4,000 hours of supervised work experience (though 3,000 hours if you have an AA degree in SUD/AMHP)
- Working full-time (40 hours/week) = approximately 2,080 hours per year
- This means you can complete your work experience requirement in about 2 years of full-time work

Strategic Advantage

The RADT pathway allows you to:

1. **Earn while you learn** - getting paid while accumulating education and experience hours
 2. **Apply knowledge immediately** - using classroom learning in real work situations
 3. **Build professional relationships** - networking with supervisors who can support your career advancement
 4. **Develop practical skills** - gaining hands-on experience that makes you a more competent counselor
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Advancing from RADT to CADC: The Complete Pathway

CADC-I (Certified Alcohol Drug Counselor I) Requirements

Education Component: Complete 315 hours of education from a CCAPP-approved college or program

Practical Training: Complete 255 hours of supervised field practicum arranged through the school in cooperation with the employer

Work Experience: 3,000-4,000 hours of supervised work experience (an AA degree in SUD/AMHP may substitute for 1,000 hours, reducing requirement to 3,000 hours)

Examination: Pass the IC&RC ADC (Alcohol and Drug Counselor) examination

Administrative Requirements:

- Complete application through Certemy
- Sign various codes of conduct
- Submit required documentation

CADC-II (Higher Level Certification)

Requirements for CADC-II: 6,000 hours of supervised work experience. A behavioral health degree not used for education requirements can substitute for hours: BA degree = 4,000 hours credit toward the experience requirement.

Advanced Certifications Beyond CADC

CADC-III: Requires bachelor's degree in behavioral science or related field plus 4,000 hours of work experience

LAADC (Licensed Advanced Alcohol Drug Counselor): The highest level - requires master's degree, professional liability insurance, 300 hours of education, and 4,000 hours of supervised experience. Ideal for clinical supervisors, advanced practitioners, or private practice professionals.

Timeline and Strategic Planning

Typical RADT to CADC Timeline

Year 1-2 (RADT Phase):

- Register as RADT and begin working
- Complete 45-90+ education hours annually
- Accumulate 2,000-4,000 work experience hours
- Complete practicum requirements

Year 2-3 (Transition Phase):

- Finish remaining education hours (reach 315 total)
- Complete work experience requirement (3,000-4,000 hours)
- Prepare for and take IC&RC ADC exam
- Submit CADC-I application

Year 3+ (Certified Professional):

- Work as CADC-I
- Begin accumulating hours for CADC-II if desired
- Pursue continuing education for biennial renewal

Accelerated Path Options

- **Intensive Education:** Complete more than 45 hours annually to finish education faster
- **Full-Time Work:** Working 40+ hours/week accelerates experience accumulation
- **Prior Education Credit:** Existing degrees may reduce some requirements

Financial Considerations

RADT Costs:

- Initial registration: \$100 (after August 2025)
- Annual renewal: \$60
- Education: Variable (45 hours/year from approved programs)

CADC Costs:

- Education completion: \$3,000-8,000 (depending on program)
- IC&RC ADC Exam: ~\$230
- Application fees: ~\$45-100
- Continuing education: ~40 hours every 2 years

Return on Investment:

- **RADT Salary Range:** \$35,000-45,000 annually
- **CADC-I Salary Range:** \$45,000-65,000 annually
- **CADC-II+ Salary Range:** \$55,000-80,000+ annually

Choosing Your Certification Organization

California has three approved certification organizations. Each has different requirements and naming conventions:

CCAPP (California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals)

- Offers RADT → CADC-I → CADC-II → CADC-III → LAADC pathway
- CADC-I credentials include international IC&RC recognition for reciprocity
- Most widely recognized nationally

CAADE (California Association for Alcohol and Drug Educators)

- Offers RAC (Registered Addiction Counselor) → CATC (Certified Addiction Treatment Counselor) pathway with levels I-V
- CATC-I requires completion of 30 semester unit AOD/ADS community college program

CADTP (California Association of Drinking Driver Treatment Programs)

- Offers SUDRC → SUDCC pathway with multiple levels
- Focus includes DUI/DWI treatment specialization

Recommendation

Most professionals choose CCAPP because:

- It offers the clearest progression pathway
 - CADC credentials are internationally recognized
 - It has the widest employer recognition
 - It provides the most transferability if you move to other states
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Professional Development and Continuing Education

Maintaining Your Credentials

- **RADT:** Annual renewal with 45 hours education
- **CADC:** Renewal every two years with continuing education required
- **Specializations:** Additional credentials available in areas like Criminal Justice, Prevention, and Medication-Assisted Treatment

Building Your Career

1. **Start with RADT** to gain entry and experience
 2. **Work toward CADC-I** as your primary goal (2-3 years)
 3. **Consider specializations** based on your interests and workplace needs
 4. **Advance to higher levels** (CADC-II, CADC-III, LAADC) for leadership roles
 5. **Pursue supervision credentials** to train the next generation
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Key Takeaways for Success

1. **RADT is a stepping stone, not a destination** - You have 5 years to advance to certification
2. ****Start working imme**