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TO: ♦ABHES Accredited Institutions and Programs
 ♦Accrediting Agencies ♦U.S. Department of Education
 ♦Interested Parties ♦State Regulator Agencies

FROM: Carol Money maker, Executive Director

DATE: February 5, 2009

SUBJECT: Call for Comment –
 Proposed Revisions to Programmatic Accreditation Standards
 Proposed Revisions to Diagnostic Medical Sonography Standards
 New Program-Specific Standards for Dental Assisting

Pursuant to Article 10.3 of the Bylaws of the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) and Section I.B.2 of the *Accreditation Manual*, ABHES presents to its accredited institutions and programs, as well as to the general public, proposed changes to the evaluation standards to which accredited institutions and programs must adhere. You are invited to comment in writing to these proposals through any one or all of the five survey links to this email. Each link is named for the program it refers (e.g., MA for medical assisting). Comments must be received on or before **February 27, 2009**.

If you are not the individual who should complete the surveys, please forward this email, prior to opening the survey links, to the appropriate individual(s) within your organization who is most capable of offering the requested input and feedback. **The surveys cannot be forwarded from the computer from which it has been opened.** If you choose to open the surveys to review them, and then have them sent to someone else to respond, this new contact information should be sent to Paul Price at pprice@abhес.org. Mr. Price will send that individual the surveys directly.

The proposals include the following:

1. Revisions to current programmatic accreditation standards to be contained in new Chapters VII, VIII, and IX (**Medical Assisting, Medical Laboratory Technology, and Surgical Technology**) of the *Accreditation Manual*. Institutions holding programmatic accreditation by ABHES for one or more of these disciplines and institutions holding institutional accreditation by ABHES and offering one or more of these programs must comply with the standards.

The proposed revisions to standards were developed through detailed research into commonly-accepted program standards and then considered by ABHES' Programmatic Accreditation Committee in each discipline. The standards follow an ABHES-developed program template for ease of review and are additional requirements to the new Chapter V, recently approved by ABHES and applicable to all institutionally and programmatically accredited members.

2. Revisions to **Diagnostic Medical Sonography** (DMS) program standards (currently Chapter IX of the *Accreditation Manual*) and the development of new program standards governing **Dental Assisting** (DA) programs. Both of these standards, as well as future program-specific standards being developed, will be contained in a new Chapter X, *Program-Specific Standards*. This is not to be confused with programmatic accreditation standards to be found in Chapters VII-IX as described previously in #1. ABHES is recognized only to accredit programmatically medical assisting, medical laboratory technology, and surgical technology, each having a dedicated chapter outlining requirements. The program-specific standards apply to programs offered within institutions accredited by ABHES (see the ABHES Notice entitled Commission Initiatives and Actions dated January 15, 2009, posted at www.abhes.org for additional information on the new *Accreditation Manual*).

Institutions accredited by ABHES and offering a DMS program or a DA program at an advanced level must comply with these additional standards. The reason for applying the DA standards only to programs at a more advanced or expanded level beyond entry level, thereby allowing an institution to choose whether it wishes to have the program evaluated with the program-specific standards, is necessary given the varying state requirements governing this program. This matter is further summarized in the opening preference to the standards.

The proposed program-specific standards for DMS and DA were developed through detailed research into commonly-accepted program requirements, using ABHES-appointed advisory committees of program specialists. Interested parties, including the ABHES membership and program-related membership organizations, credentialing agencies and educators throughout the country, were surveyed in June 2008 and asked to comment on the proposed standards. The comments received were then considered by the applicable advisory committee. The proposed program-specific standards follow an ABHES-developed program template for ease of review and comparison to the new Chapter V, *Evaluation Standards Applicable to All Institutional Programs*, since the program-specific standards are in addition to these more general requirements.

Comments received by **February 27, 2009**, will be considered by the Programmatic Accreditation Committees (MA, MLT, ST) and by the program-specific advisory committees (DMS, DA). The comments, coupled with committee input, will further be considered by the ABHES Standards Review Committee at its March meeting and then by the Commission at a special meeting being held in April.

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The revised *Accreditation Manual*, including newly- approved Chapters IV-V, is effective January 1, 2010. It is anticipated that Chapters VI-X contained in draft herein will also be effective at that same time, pending the Commission's consideration in April.

Thank you for completing the survey(s) in response to this important notice. Contact me at cmoneymaker@abhes.org or by phone at 866.463.0717 with any questions.