

North Carolina Psychology Board

March, 2002

Inside

Memo 1
Developing a Continuing Education Rule For North Carolina Psychologists
By Tom Thompson, Ph.D., Vice Chair 1
Continuing Education 2
Address Change? Let Us Know! 4
Renewal Alert! 4

Memo

To: Licensees and Other Interested Parties
From: Martha N. Storie
 Executive Director
 NC Psychology Board
Subject: Continuing Education
Date: May 19, 2004

The following material pertains to Continuing Education requirements applicable to license renewal for the **2004-2006** biennial renewal period. However, note that these requirements are **not** yet in effect. Renewal notices for the 2002-2004 biennial renewal period will be mailed out in August 2002, and licensees will **not** be expected to show any continuing education hours to renew for the 2002-2004 biennium. Note also that continuing education hours must be obtained **between October 1, 2002 and October 1, 2004** for the 2004-2006 biennial renewal period.

The Continuing Education rule and other information regarding licensure can be found on the Board's web site: ncpsychologyboard.org.

North Carolina Psychology Board
 895 State Farm Road, Suite 101
 Boone, NC 28607

(828) 262-2258 (tel)
 (828) 265-8611 (fax)

ncpsybd@helicon.net (E-Mail)

ncpsychologyboard.org (Web Site)

Developing a Continuing Education Rule For North Carolina Psychologists By Tom Thompson, Ph.D., Vice Chair

When I began my service to the North Carolina Psychology Board in 1997, I had a specific goal to become involved in the development of a rule that would direct the continuing education requirements for licensed psychologists and licensed psychological associates. Having been licensed for a short time in Georgia prior to my return to North Carolina in 1991, I was familiar with a continuing education requirement which seemed reasonable, and I was interested in our state developing a rule which would not be overly burdensome. Additionally, because I work in a highly specialized area of Psychology and have responsibility for my department's continuing education activities, I was interested in seeing a rule which was flexible and practical. Having participated in the development of this rule for 5 years since seeing an early draft in 1997, I am happy that it was approved by Rules Review Commission in December 2001. Barring the proposal of legislation which would specifically overturn this rule in the upcoming legislative session, it is scheduled to go into effect on August 1, 2002. I would like to offer you my perspective on the development of this rule.

Why Have Continuing Education?

A very common question, which many people have asked, comes from our scientific roots: Is there any empirical evidence that continuing education makes us better psychologists? I have found no studies that answer this question. What I know from my own experience, however, suggests that continuing education is a good practice. First, my reading of journals reveals that new and effective treatment technologies are routinely developed. If we are to provide our clients with the highest quality services, then obviously we need to educate ourselves about such developments. Second, my experience as a board member shows that complaints cluster in certain areas (e.g., custody evaluations). Continuing education might help some practitioners avoid the unpleasant and difficult experience of facing a complaint that their conduct was not up to current professional standards. Third, other professions in North Carolina (e.g., teachers, physicians) require continuing education as a condition of maintaining licensure. Continuing education as a means to assure professional competence has face validity nationally, and is consistent with the Psychology Board's mandate to protect the public.

Just the Facts

In May 2000, I went to the American Psychological Association's web site to see how our plans compared to other states and the District of Columbia. 80% of these entities required continuing education. Credit requirements per year ranged from 10-50, with an average of 19.5. 90% of these entities automatically accepted APA approval, while 68% accepted professional meetings for C.E. credit. Of the 13 which had specific content requirements, all required training in ethics. North Carolina's rule requires 18 credit hours per two year license renewal period. *Note: This requirement becomes effective with the 2002-2004 renewal period which begins in October 2002. Credit hours are not required before then, and any credit hours taken before then will not be counted as taken in the 2002-2004 renewal period.* North Carolina divides continuing education hours into two categories: Category A requires a minimum of 9 hours in structured training in programs which are sponsored or co-sponsored by the N.C. Psychology Board, the American Psychological Association, APA approved sponsors, or N.C. Area Health Education Centers. A minimum of three (3) of these hours must be in the area of ethics and legal issues. Category B requirements are less structured and may constitute up to 9 of the required hours.

The Rule Making Process and Your Input

One of the most useful pieces of input into the rule making process was the public hearing held in February 1999, following the publication of the rule one month earlier. Comments made by persons in attendance as well those sent from psychologists both in and outside North Carolina were given careful consideration. Subsequently, the rule went through a major revision to incorporate changes made based on comments received. The rule was republished in February 2000. Important changes were made in the content areas in which training is allowed, the format of training (e.g., acceptance of on-line courses), and numerous other areas. Constructive input provided by many persons is reflected in the final product.

A Reasonable and Cost-Efficient Plan Tailored To North Carolina

Given that continuing education would become a reality for psychologists in North Carolina, it has been my personal belief that the process should be neither burdensome nor costly. The present rule should accomplish this objective. North Carolina is a large state, where psychologists work in diverse settings, alone and in groups, in large communities with easy access to state-of-the-art library resources, and in remote rural locations. The present rule allows all these groups to meet the requirements without undue effort. Additionally, my informal assessment leads me to believe that, with careful shopping, these requirements can be met at a modest cost. Undoubtedly, some work will be needed. Professional organizations will need to become APA-approved sponsors, or to seek co-sponsorship with APA-approved sponsors or local AHECs in order to qualify for Category A designation. Individuals will need to become aware of training opportunities and to encourage professional organizations to which they belong to seek sponsorship for their training programs. This will take some effort to start, but over

time I suspect that these activities would become substantially easier.

Finally, take note of the requirements for attesting to having completed necessary continuing education and to record keeping. These minimal requirements are predicated upon the premise that most psychologists are responsible, ethical professionals who, if they are not already engaged in continuing education activities, will do so when required. Note, however, that the Board may check for documentation of activities as part of random checking or in relation to a complaint.

The Time Has Come...

Please take time soon to review the new rule on continuing education. During the next few months, the Board will make efforts through publications and its web site to inform all licensees about their responsibilities. Beginning in October, I plan to post a reminder to myself to begin my documentation so that I won't be forced to search for content at the last moment in 2004. However you choose to accomplish your continuing education goals, "Good Luck"!

Tom Thompson, Ph.D.

Continuing Education

Summary of Process & Time Line:

A rule requiring continuing education for license renewal was adopted by the North Carolina Psychology Board on 9/20/2001 and approved by the Rules Review Commission on 12/20/2001. This rule will become effective August 1, 2002, unless a bill that specifically disapproves the rule is introduced in either house of the General Assembly before the thirty-first legislative day of the 2002 session.

The text of the approved rule follows. Note, however, that there are **no** continuing education requirements for license renewal for the 2002-2004 biennium. Additionally, continuing education hours must be obtained during the period of time **from October 1, 2002 to October 1, 2004** to be counted for license renewal for the 2004-2006 biennial renewal period.

21 NCAC 54 .2104 CONTINUING EDUCATION

(a) The purpose of continuing education is to provide for the continuing professional education of all psychologists licensed by the North Carolina Psychology Board consistent with the purpose of the Board which is to protect the public from the practice of psychology by unqualified persons and from unprofessional conduct by persons licensed to practice psychology.

(b) Compliance with this Rule shall be a condition for license renewal. A license shall be suspended automatically by operation of law in accordance with G.S. 90-270.15(f) if a licensee fails to meet continuing education requirements specified in this Rule. This Rule shall apply to all individuals licensed by the North Carolina Psychology Board who choose to renew their licenses in North Carolina. Licensees who would otherwise be exempt from licensure, e.g., not practicing psychology in North Carolina, may relinquish their licenses if they do not wish to comply with the requirements specified in this Rule.

(c) A continuing education hour is defined as one hour of instructional or contact time.

(d) Category A requirements shall be met through attendance at formally organized courses, seminars, workshops, symposiums, and postdoctoral institutes; or through completion of on-line or correspondence courses. Programs shall relate to topics listed in Paragraph (g) of this Rule; be identified as offering continuing education for psychologists; and be sponsored or co-sponsored by the North Carolina Psychology Board, by the American Psychological Association, by American Psychological Association approved sponsors, or by North Carolina Area Health Education Centers. Contact hours shall be specified by the sponsor.

(e) Category B requirements shall be met through attendance at colloquia, presentations of invited speakers, grand rounds, and in-house seminars; attendance at programs offered at meetings of professional or scientific organizations which are not approved for Category A credit; participation in formally organized study groups or journal clubs; and self study (e.g., reading articles or books for professional growth or in preparation for publishing, teaching, or making a presentation). One continuing education hour shall be credited for each hour of participation in Category B activities.

(f) A licensee shall complete a minimum of 18 continuing education hours in each biennial renewal period which begins on the first day of October in each even numbered year. Continuing education hours shall not carry over from one renewal period to the next. At least nine continuing education hours shall be in Category A activities which shall include a minimum of three continuing education hours in the area of ethical and legal issues in the professional practice of psychology.

(g) Topics for Category A and Category B requirements shall fall within the following areas:

- (1) ethical and legal issues in the professional practice of psychology, and
- (2) the maintenance and upgrading of professional skills and competencies within the psychologist's scope of practice. This includes, but is not limited to, training in empirically supported treatments, the application of research to practice, and training in best practice standards and guidelines.

(h) Continuing education hours shall not be allowed for the following activities:

- (1) business meetings or presentations, professional committee meetings, and meetings or presentations concerned with the management of a professional practice;
- (2) membership, office in, or participation on boards and committees of professional organizations;
- (3) research;
- (4) teaching, presentations, and publication, except as allowed as self study in preparation for these activities as provided under Paragraph (e) of this Rule; and
- (5) personal psychotherapy or personal growth experience.

(i) An individual licensed on or before October 1, 2002, shall attest on the license renewal application for the 2004-2006 biennial renewal period, and on each subsequent biennial renewal application, to having met the mandatory continuing education requirements specified in this Rule during the two years

preceding the October 1st renewal date. An individual licensed after October 1, 2002, shall attest on the second license renewal application following licensure, and on each subsequent biennial renewal application, to having met the mandatory continuing education requirements specified in this Rule during the two years preceding the October 1st renewal date.

(j) An applicant for reinstatement of licensure shall document that he or she has completed a minimum of 18 continuing education hours as specified in this Rule within the two years preceding the date of application for reinstatement of licensure and shall attest on each subsequent biennial renewal application to having met the mandatory continuing education requirements specified in this Rule.

(k) For Category A, a licensee shall maintain certificates from Category A programs and written documentation of the following for a minimum of seven years:

- (1) date of program;
- (2) number of contact hours;
- (3) name of sponsor of program;
- (4) title of program; and
- (5) location of program.

(l) For Category B, a licensee shall maintain applicable written documentation of the following for Category B activities consistent with this Rule for a minimum of seven years:

- (1) date of program or activity;
- (2) number of instructional or contact hours as defined in Paragraphs (d) and (e) of this Rule;
- (3) description of activity;
- (4) name of presenter, facilitator, or leader;
- (5) name of sponsor;
- (6) location;
- (7) full citation of article; and
- (8) summary of content.

The nature of the Category B activity determines the applicable documentation. For example, name of presenter, facilitator, or leader; name of sponsor; and location are not required when a licensee documents reading a journal article.

(m) A licensee shall provide certificates, documentation, and a signed attestation form designed by the Board within 30 days after receiving written notification from the Board that proof of completion of continuing education hours is required. The Board may randomly verify the documentation of required continuing education hours for a percentage of licensees and may do so during the investigation of any complaints. A licensee shall not submit documentation of continuing education hours obtained unless directed to do so by the Board. The Board shall not serve as a depository for continuing education materials prior to its directing that documentation must be submitted.

History Note: Authority G.S. 90-270.9; 90-270.14(a)(2); Eff. August 1, 2002.

Address Change? Let Us Know!

Name: _____

License # (if applicable): _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Business name _____

Business Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Preferred Mailing Address: Home Business

Signature _____

Date: _____

Mail to: NC Psychology Board
895 State Farm Road, Suite 101
Boone, NC 28607

Renewal Alert!

As mentioned elsewhere in this publication, renewal notices for the October 1, 2002 - October 1, 2004 biennial renewal period will be mailed out in August 2002. Licensees are **not** expected to show any continuing education hours in order to renew their licenses for this biennium. The continuing education rule requires that licensees accumulate the required continuing education hours during the period of time from October 1, 2002 - October 1, 2004 in order to renew their licenses for the following biennial renewal period of October 1, 2004 - October 1, 2006.

North Carolina Psychology Board
895 State Farm Road, Suite 101
Boone, NC 28607