



GEORGIA STATE BOARD OF DISPENSING OPTICIANS
237 Coliseum Drive, Macon, Georgia 31217-3858
478-207-2440 * www.sos.ga.gov/plb/opticians

Via E-Mail to oaglist@att.net, and USPS Certified/Return Receipt Mail

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 16, 2015

TO: Board of Directors, Executive Officers
Opticians Association of Georgia

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Thomas Blair, Jr. LDO - First Vice President
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FROM: Georgia State Board of Dispensing Opticians

RE: Continuing Education and Sponsorship Monitoring

This communication is primarily for transparency for the communication regarding continuing education courses that were provided by the Opticians Association of Georgia on February 21-22, 2015 in Valdosta, GA.

As most of you are aware, one of the responsibilities of the Georgia State Board of Dispensing Opticians is to ensure not only are those persons who fit and dispense eyewear licensed by the great state of Georgia, but that continuing education meets the requirements for renewal

purposes. The Official Code of Georgia § 43-29-11 states that 10 hours of continuing education are required prior to each renewal and each renewal applicant shall submit an affidavit of course hours completed. The state licensing board does not require that ALL licensees send in ALL 10 hours, however, when audited, they must provide them for verification purposes. The statute also states that recognized state dispensing society or associations are approved *if such course increases the education of a dispensing optician* and is made available to all licensed opticians on a reasonably nondiscriminatory fee basis. The Opticians Association of Georgia has always been recognized as an approved provider of education. The Georgia State Board of Dispensing Opticians appreciates the longevity of OAG supporting licensed Opticians in the state as well as providing quality education to its licensed Opticians.

Under O.C.G.A. § 43-29-5, the law gives the board exclusive jurisdiction in the enforcement of the statutes governing Dispensing Opticians. For that reason, and to ensure that all providers of education are treated in a non-discriminatory manner, rules set forth for one group must also be adhered to by all other groups.

During the 2015 license renewal continuing education audit, an issue arose regarding credit for courses at the aforementioned OAG conference. Prior to the end of the late renewal period, the Georgia State Board of Dispensing Opticians received communication from your counsel to our board attorney, that OAG may be seeking legal action against the board. In addition, there were two Public Service Announcements placed on the OAG website and sent out to the membership that placed the Board, unjustifiably so, in an unfavorable light. While the issue was resolved and the renewal audits completed, there remains an issue regarding your sponsorship of future courses, as indicated in the March 26, 2015, correspondence from ABO/NCLE to Mr. Blair. Please note the following statements made in that correspondence:

- (1) In the future, if there are two separate courses, or there are two separate sections to a course, the application to ABO and NCLE needs to designate, in some fashion, that this is seeking two separate blocks of credit as there was no indication on either application that these were different applications seeking different credits. . . . [T]he initial reaction of the Georgia Licensing Board was correct, inasmuch as the courses were not identified as seeking separate and not simultaneous approval.
- (2) By allowing attendees to obtain two separate CEC's, attendees are seeking a total of four hours of attendance at a two hour course. This lack of proper oversight cannot occur in the future, as it is OAG's sole responsibility to assure that attendees do not receive credits for courses that were not attended, or only receive credits for those courses that were actually attended for the course sought, and for the specific Certification required.
- (3) OAG was not monitoring the room attendance. . . . The lack of oversight on this issue is deeply concerning, and cannot occur in the future.

In light of the aforementioned problems identified by ABO/NCLE with regard to courses sponsored by OAG and the distasteful postings on your website, the Georgia State Board of Dispensing Opticians would like to request that a retraction be made public to the membership and that it be placed on your website to clarify.

We look forward to working positively with the Opticians Association of Georgia to ensure that quality continuing education is offered to the licensees in the state of Georgia and elsewhere. If we can be of any assistance to you, we would be most happy to do so. Again, we appreciate the working relationship between the Georgia State Board of Dispensing Opticians and the Opticians Association of Georgia and hope it may continue in a positive vein.

Sincerely,

GEORGIA STATE BOARD OF DISPENSING OPTICIANS

Diane Drake, LDO, Chair
Glen F. Morris, LDO, Vice-Chair
Joseph J. Reed, LDO
Lurue Lord, LDO
Dave Meldrum, LDO



AMERICAN BOARD OF OPTICIANRY NATIONAL CONTACT LENS EXAMINERS



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March 26, 2015

SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mr. Thomas Blair, Jr., LDO, ABOM
Opticians Association of Georgia
P. O. Box 868
Lithia Springs, GA 30122

Re: American Board of Opticianry & National
Contact Lens Examiners Exam Administration

Dear Mr. Blair:

It was a pleasure meeting you at the SECO Event earlier this month. In accordance with your request, I have investigated the issues related to the Continuing Education Courses that were offered at the Valdosta, Georgia location at the end of February, 2015. As reported to me, your concerns deal with the Licensing Board's initial decision to deny credit for a specific course offered at that location. During the course of my investigation, I reviewed that issue, and a couple of other issues, and address them as follows:

1. **Optical Solutions After Intra-Ocular Lens Selections Course.** According to the ABO & NCLE database, the application for the course entitled "Optical Solutions after Intra-Ocular Lens Selections" was approved by ABO and NCLE with the endorsement "NEEDS TO BE CONDENSED INTO 2 HOUR COURSE." There was no indication that this was a two part course in the application sent to ABO. In the future, if there are two separate courses, or two separate sections to a course, the application to ABO and NCLE needs to designate, in some fashion, the fact that this is seeking two *separate* blocks of credit, as there was no indication on either application that these were different applications seeking different credits. Instead, it appears, from our database,

that the initial reaction of the Georgia Licensing Board was correct, inasmuch as the courses were not identified as seeking separate, and not simultaneous, approval. It is my understanding, however, that the Licensing Board has honored the four hours sought, so as to avoid any concerns raised by those who attended the course for credit in both ABO and NCLE. I would recommend that you contact them and explain what took place, and assure them that applications will provide a "Part I and II" or "ABO" on one application, and "NCLE" on another, or some other indication of the combined hours of education, as well as the difference between the education sought.

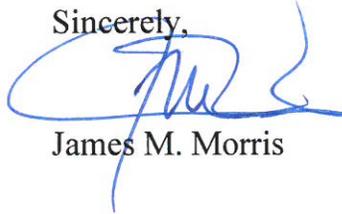
2. **Dual credit.** Shortly after meeting with you, ABO & NCLE started to receive both ABO and NCLE CECs from attendees to the course entitled "Dispensing Atrocities and Meaningless Nightmares," despite the fact that this Course is, in fact, entitled to two simultaneous ABO *or* NCLE credits. The blanket issuance of CECs to attendees is strictly prohibited. OAG has a responsibility to assure that the attendee identify which credit they are seeking, and only issue CECs for that type of credit. By allowing attendees to obtain two separate CECs, attendees are seeking a total of *four* hours of attendance at a *two* hour course. This lack of proper oversight cannot occur in the future, as it is OAG's sole responsibility to assure that attendees do not receive credits for courses that were not attended, or only receive credits for those courses that were actually attended for the course sought, and for the specific Certification required.
3. **Room Monitors.** During the course of our review of the circumstances surrounding the OAG CEC, and the concerns raised by the licensing board, our office sought documentation from your office related to the CECs that were offered, so that a proper investigation could take place. When the required sign-in sheets were sought from each of the courses in question, our office learned that OAG was not monitoring the room attendance, but, instead, only required attendees to sign in to the full meeting, and not each individual course. As a course provider, it is the obligation of OAG to assure that attendance in *each individual course* is monitored, and that attendees actually attend the course, sign out, including the time out of the room, and that credit is not provided for courses where the attendee did not remain in the room throughout the required minimum time period for the number of CECs granted. The lack of oversight on this issue is deeply concerning, and cannot

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occur in the future. Please undertake all required steps to assure that rooms are properly monitored, that appropriate information is properly documented, including departures from the room, and that such signature lists are timely forwarded to ABO & NCLE for documentation of the course attendance.

I trust that this adequately addresses the concerns raised by you related to the OAG's Valdosta CEC event, and that you are able to address, promptly, the concerns raised by ABO & NCLE related to the application process, the oversight, and monitoring of those courses offered by OAG in the future. If you have any questions, or need to address further, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



James M. Morris

JMM:be

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