

430-2-0.1-.04 Emergency Rule - Continuing Education Requirements; Approval of Educational Programs. Revised.

(1) The Board has pre-approved continuing education (post-graduate) courses from schools and colleges of optometry accredited by the Council on Optometric Education of the American Optometric Association; a maximum of ten (10) hours per biennium in ophthalmologic related courses taught by the Medical College of Georgia, Emory University, Mercer University and Morehouse College; any courses offered by the American Optometric Association or its regional or state affiliates; the Society of Professional Optometrists of Georgia; the SECO International, LLC, the Council on Optometric Practice Education (C.O.P.E.) and any courses approved by C.O.P.E.; American Board of Optometry and American Academy of Optometry. All preapproved continuing education providers must give notification of their courses on a timely basis to all Georgia Optometrists. Any other individual or organization desiring Board approval of an educational program sponsored by the individual or organization, or particular segments of such a program shall submit a request for approval to the State Board of Optometry, 237 Coliseum Drive, Macon, Georgia 31217, not later than thirty (30) days prior to the scheduled date of such program. Each administrator of continuing education credit that gives credit to more than five doctors at any single event shall register all attendees and credits with the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry-OE Tracker Program. The Board will act on such request within thirty (30) days after receipt of the request for approval. Any request for Board approval of an educational program must include the following information:

(a) The identity of the sponsor, including:

1. The name and address of the sponsoring individual(s) or organization and a description of any organizational form (e.g., unincorporated association, non-profit corporation, etc.) and the date of organization;
2. The name and address of the principal officers of the sponsor.

(b) A description of the program, including:

1. With respect to each course for which approval is sought:

- (i) the name and address of the instructor;
- (ii) the title of the course;
- (iii) a brief biographical sketch of the instructor including a detailed description (curriculum vitae) of his/her academic qualifications and a listing of prior publications including published speeches, which relates to the subject matter of the course;
- (iv) an outline of the proposed content;
- (v) the number of hours for which approval is requested, including a specification of those hours relating to practice management.

2. The scheduled time and place of the course;

3. A description of the method by which course attendance is to be monitored;
4. The amount of any registration fee, tuition or other charge for attendance, including a statement of any difference in such charges, which depend on membership in the sponsoring organization;
5. A sample of any advertisement or announcement intended to be employed concerning the program.

(c) Such additional information as the Board may request in the course of its deliberations concerning the application for approval.

(2) The following course content will not satisfy the continuing education requirement:

- (a) Courses dealing with social and health trends;
- (b) Any course unrelated to or not designed to enhance the professional skill of the practitioner;
- (c) Courses conducted by any individual who is the owner of or is directly connected with any optical wholesale concern unless approved by the Board.
- (d) CPR.

(3) A doctor of optometry is expected to ascertain in advance that the courses, which he/she attends, have received prior Board approval and do not fall within the exceptions of sub-part (2).

(4) Board approval of any educational program under this section relates to the program as proposed to the Board. In the event the actual program does not substantively correspond to the proposed program approved by the Board, the board will not give credit for that program under Code Section 43-30-8. The Board will not consider for approval the program as modified.

(5) Minimum hours required. The Board requires a minimum of 36 hours of attendance at Board-approved continuing education programs.

- (a) Those licensed in the first year of the biennium will be required to obtain eighteen (18) hours of continuing education. This requirement applies regardless of when you establish practice in Georgia. Licensees in this category shall obtain one (1) hour of CE in Georgia laws and rules. This one (1) hour shall be included in the total eighteen (18) hours required for renewal.
- (b) Those licensed in the second year of the biennium are not required to obtain continuing education in that biennium.
- (c) All licensees are required to obtain thirty-six (36) hours per biennium beginning in the third calendar year of licensure. Licensees shall obtain one (1) hour of Board-approved continuing education in Georgia laws and rules. This one (1) hour shall be included in the total thirty-six (36) hours required for renewal.

(d) All CE hours on Georgia laws and rules must be prior approved by the Board. A maximum of one (1) hour per biennium will be allowed as continuing education credit in this area. Georgia licensed optometrists not practicing in Georgia are exempt from acquiring the one (1) hour of CE in Georgia laws and rules.

(e) A maximum of eight (8) hours per biennium will be allowed as continuing education credit for grand rounds. One (1) hour credit will be allowed for every two (2) hours spent in grand rounds.

(f) Due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency, notwithstanding any other rule or provision of law, the requirement that a maximum of ten (10) hours of continuing education credit may be taken by correspondence or electronic medium is hereby modified as follows:

1. A maximum of eighteen (18) hours of continuing education credit will be allowed for the upcoming renewal cycle **ONLY** (expiration date of December 31, 2021) for any coursework that is offered by correspondence or electronic medium, which coursework is approved or sponsored by any provider identified in paragraph (1) of this rule; and,

2. The remaining eighteen (18) hours may be in person, or any courses deemed “live online interactive” courses offered through current Board approved sponsors, or approved by the Board, will be accepted by the Board for this renewal cycle only (December 31, 2021). For the purposes of this rule, the following apply:

- (i) In-person (live): Participants are physically present at the location where the presentation, lecture, workshop, or seminar is being held and are present for the entire length of the activity;

- (ii) Webinars: A presentation, lecture, workshop, or seminar that is transmitted via the internet and allows full participation between the participants and the presenter(s); or,

- (iii) Video conferencing: Participants are in two or more locations in a virtual conference room and communicate as if they were sitting right next to each other.

3. This rule shall be effective for the duration of the emergency and for a period of not more than 120 days thereafter. Continuing education hours obtained after the termination of this emergency rule shall be subject to the rule as currently written.

(g) A maximum of ten (10) hours of continuing education credit will be allowed per biennium for practice management course work, as long as it is patient care related.

(h) Effective January 1, 2006, of the thirty-six (36) required hours, a minimum of 18 hours of continuing education per biennium is required for pharmacology and pathology courses as related to ophthalmologic conditions.

(6) Reporting and Auditing. The method of reporting and auditing continuing education shall be:

(a) At the time of license renewal, each Optometrist shall certify to the Board that he/she has completed the continuing education required for license renewal. The preferred method of tracking continuing education is through the ARBO OE-Tracker system and the licensee is encouraged to verify that all course work has been posted to OE-Tracker. If the licensee chooses to not participate in the OE-Tracker system and if all of his/her education credits are not posted therein, the licensee may be required to submit paper records via email or FAX directly to the board in order to demonstrate compliance with the required continuing education hours.

(b) The Board shall audit the continuing education of a percentage of licensees for compliance with all rules and regulations. Such audits will be completed after the license renewal date and will cover course work completed during the just-completed biennium.

(c) Each licensed Optometrist shall maintain records of attendance and supporting documents for continuing education for a period of three (3) years from the date of attendance.

(d) Deferral of the requirement for education program hours may be considered by the Board. Requests for deferral must be submitted to the Board in writing and should include complete documentation of the reasons for the request. Deferral will be considered for the following reasons:

1. certified illness; and
2. hardship.

Statutory Authority: O.C.G.A. §§ 43-30-5, 43-30-8(b), 50-13-4(b)

Effective 03-20-2021