**Section 1320.80 Continuing Education**

a) Continuing Education (CE) Hour Requirements

1) Every renewal applicant shall complete 30 hours of CE relevant to the practice of optometry required during each pre-renewal period. A pre-renewal period is the 24 months preceding March 31 in the year of the renewal.

2) A CE hour equals 50 minutes. CE credit may be given only in one hour increments.

3) A renewal applicant is not required to comply with full CE requirements for the first renewal following the original issuance of the license.

4) Optometrists licensed in Illinois but residing and practicing in other states must comply with the CE requirements set forth in this Section.

5) All renewal applicants must complete state mandated training/continuing education during all renewal cycles.

b) Approved CE

1) All CE hours must be earned by verified attendance at or participation in a program that is offered by an approved CE sponsor who meets the requirements set forth in subsection (c). Beginning April 1, 2024, all continuing education, except for certified courses or transcript quality courses that meet the requirements of 68 Ill. Adm. Code 1320.80(b)(2)(A), may be completed online through live, real-time presentations or by pre-recorded video provided by an approved continuing education sponsor.

2) As part of the 30 hours of required CE, each licensee shall complete during each pre-renewal period at least 12 hours of credit that is certified by an approved optometry college in accordance with Section 1320.20, osteopathic or medical college or university pursuant to the Medical Practice Act of 1987 [225 ILCS 60], or a pharmacy college pursuant to the Pharmacy Practice Act [225 ILCS 85].

A) Each certified course shall include at least 2 hours of actual course presentation and shall include the successful completion of a post-course evaluation of the attendee's understanding of the course material. No additional credit may be given for the required post- course evaluation.

i) The post-course evaluation may be taken on-site immediately following the course presentation. An examination distributed on-site shall not be removed from the site.

ii) The post-course evaluation may be a correspondence evaluation mailed or electronically provided to the attendee and returned to the provider. The sponsor shall not distribute a post-course evaluation at the site.

iii) The post-course evaluation must consist of a minimum of 5 questions per course hour.

iv) At the sponsor's discretion, the attendee may be allowed one retake of a failed post-course evaluation in order to receive credit for certified CE.

B) Licensees who attend a certified education course without completion or passage of a post-course evaluation may apply the actual course hours toward fulfillment of the non-certified CE requirements set forth in subsection (a)(1).

C) Any approved CE sponsor may offer, in conjunction with the above-referenced college or university, a certified course. However, certified CE shall not be provided, sponsored, co-sponsored or in any way supported or financially underwritten by a CE sponsor or others who may receive patient referrals from optometrists licensed under the Act. Approved optometry programs in subsection (b)(2) are not deemed in violation of this Section. Faculty of an adjunct institution to an approved optometry program may present certified CE on the primary campus of the approved optometry program under this exception. Nothing in this Section shall prohibit the listing of courses in a professional journal or newsletter or prevent an approved school, college or university from certifying a course.

D) Transcript quality CE courses shall be deemed equivalent to the certified courses if they meet the requirements set forth in subsection (b)(2)(A).

E) CE sponsors shall state in their course materials the type of post-course evaluation which will be given and whether the applicant will be allowed to retake the evaluation.

F) Certified CE courses shall be courses in which the attendees are in actual attendance in the same room as the presenter. No online, self-instruction or correspondence courses shall be considered certified CE courses.

3) Eighteen hours of CE credit may be earned as follows (not accepted for certified CE):

A) A maximum of 12 hours per pre-renewal period for verified teaching of students at an optometry school approved by the Division. One hour of teaching at an optometry school approved by the Division is equal to one hour of CE.

B) A maximum of 4 hours per pre-renewal period for courses in practice management that includes business management.

C) As part of the continuing education requirements, licensees shall be required to complete mandatory state trainings regarding Sexual Harassment, as set forth in 68 Ill. Adm. Code 1130.400, Implicit Bias Awareness as set forth in 68 Ill. Adm. Code 1130.500, and Alzheimer's disease and other dementias (see 20 ILCS 2105/2105-365). Licensees holding controlled substance licenses must also complete Opioid Education as required by 720 ILCS 570/315.5, the Illinois Controlled Substances Act, prior to being considered eligible for renewal. Additionally, new licensees will have to fulfill the requirements of this subsection even if they are exempt from the full 30 hours of continuing education. This requirement shall become effective for all applicable license renewals on or after January 1, 2023. These courses must be repeated for each subsequent renewal period.

4) CE credit hours used to satisfy the CE requirements of another state may be submitted for approval for fulfillment of the CE requirements of the State of Illinois.

5) Credit shall not be given for courses taken in Illinois from unapproved sponsors.

6) The licensee shall maintain proof of completion of the CE requirements, in the form of CE certificates, for 3 license renewal cycles (6 years) from the end of the licensing period in which the CE course was taken.

c) CE Sponsors and Programs

1) An approved continuing education sponsor is a person, firm, association, corporation, or any other entity that has been approved by the Division pursuant to subsection (c)(2) to coordinate and present continuing education courses and programs.

2) A sponsor shall submit a sponsor application, along with the required fee set forth in Section 1320.400(a)(4), that includes:

A) Certification

i) That all courses and programs offered by the sponsor for CE credit will comply with the criteria in this Section;

ii) That the sponsor will be responsible for verifying attendance at each course or program or session thereof utilizing signature sheets or other means of attendance verification and for providing a certificate of completion as set forth in subsection (b); and

iii) That, upon request by the Division, the sponsor will submit such evidence as is necessary to establish compliance with this Section;

B) A history and the experience of the sponsor as an educational provider;

C) A copy of a sample program with faculty, course materials and syllabi;

D) The name and address of the contact person responsible for all recordkeeping; and

E) A list of all principals of the organization applying for a sponsor license.

3) Each sponsor shall submit by March 31 of each even-numbered year a sponsor application along with the required fee set forth in Section 1320.400(b)(2). With the application, the sponsor shall be required to submit to the Division a list of all courses and programs offered in the pre-renewal period, which includes a description, location, date and time the course was offered.

4) All courses and programs shall:

A) Contribute to the advancement, extension and enhancement of professional clinical skills and scientific knowledge in the practice of optometry;

B) Provide experiences that contain scientific integrity, relevant subject matter and course materials; and

C) Be developed and presented by persons with education and/or experience in subject matter of the program.

5) The tuition fees charged for programs conducted by approved sponsors shall be reasonable and directly related to the sponsor's actual expense in conducting the programs.

6) All programs given by approved sponsors shall be open to all licensed optometrists and not be limited to the members of a single organization or group and shall specify the number of CE hours and categories that may be applied toward Illinois CE requirements for licensure renewal.

7) Certificate of Attendance

A) It shall be the responsibility of the sponsor to provide each participant in a program with a certificate of attendance signed by the sponsor. The sponsor's certificate of attendance shall contain:

i) The name, sponsor number and address of the sponsor;

ii) The participant's name and optometry license number;

iii) A detailed statement of the subject matter;

iv) The number of hours actually attended in each topic;

v) The date of the program;

vi) Whether the course qualifies for certified continuing education.

B) A separate certification of passage or failure of the post-course evaluation shall be issued by the approved certifying institution when the course is for certified CE credit.

C) The sponsor shall maintain these records for 3 license renewal cycles (6 years) from the end of the licensing period in which the CE course was presented. These records shall include all test materials utilized for certified courses.

8) The sponsor shall be responsible for assuring verified continued attendance at each program. No renewal applicant shall receive CE credit for time not actually spent attending the program.

9) Upon the failure of a sponsor to comply with any of the foregoing requirements, the Division, after notice to the sponsor and hearing before and recommendation by the Board in accordance with 68 Ill. Adm. Code 1110 (Rules of Practice in Administrative Hearings), shall thereafter refuse to accept for CE credit attendance at or participation in any of that sponsor's CE programs until such time as the Division receives reasonably satisfactory assurances of compliance with this Section.

d) CE Earned in Other States

1) A licensee who requests credit toward CE compliance in Illinois for CE hours earned in another jurisdiction shall submit an out-of-state CE approval form along with a $25 processing fee within 90 days prior to or after the course. The Board shall review and recommend approval or disapproval of this program using the criteria set forth in this Section.

2) If a licensee fails to submit an out-of-state CE approval form within the required 90 days, late approval may be obtained by submitting the application along with the $25 processing fee plus a $50 per hour late fee not to exceed $300. The Board shall review and recommend approval or disapproval of this program using the criteria set forth in this Section.

3) The Board has determined that the Council on Optometric Practitioner Education (COPE), Transcript-quality (TQ), and Continuing Education with Examination (CEE) approved courses are acceptable for out-of-state CE. If a licensee attends an out-of-state COPE/TQ approved course, the licensee will not be required to submit the out-of-state CE approval form and the $25 processing fee.

4) Online courses are not eligible for out of state CE credit.

e) Certification of Compliance with CE Requirements

1) Each renewal applicant shall certify, on the renewal application, full compliance with CE requirements set forth in subsection (a).

2) The Division may require additional evidence demonstrating compliance with the CE requirements. It is the responsibility of each renewal applicant to retain or otherwise produce evidence of such compliance for a period of 5 years.

3) When there appears to be a lack of compliance with CE requirements, an applicant will be notified and may request an interview with the Board, at which time the Board may recommend that steps be taken to begin formal disciplinary proceedings as required by Section 10-65 of the Illinois Administrative Procedure Act [5 ILCS 100/10-65]. These proceedings may result in fines and/or disciplinary action.

f) Waiver of CE Requirements

1) Any renewal applicant seeking renewal of a license under Section 1320.420 who has not fully complied with the CE requirements of Section 1320.180 shall submit to the Division a renewal application, the renewal fee set forth in Section 1320.400(b)(1), a statement setting forth the facts (including time frames) concerning the non-compliance, and a request for waiver of the CE on the basis of the facts. If the Division, upon the written recommendation of the Board, finds from such affidavit or any other evidence submitted, that good cause has been shown for granting a waiver, the Division shall waive enforcement of the requirements for the renewal period for which the applicant has applied.

2) Good cause is defined as an inability to devote sufficient hours to fulfilling the CE requirements during the applicable pre-renewal period because of:

A) Full time service in the armed forces of the United States of America during a substantial part of such period; or

B) Extreme hardship, which shall be determined on an individual basis by the Board and shall be limited to documentation of:

i) An incapacitating illness documented by a currently licensed physician;

ii) A physical inability to travel to the sites of approved programs; or

iii) Any other similar extenuating circumstances.

3) If an interview with the Board is requested at the time the request for the waiver is filed with the Division, the renewal applicant shall be given at least 20 days written notice of the date, time and place of the interview by certified mail, return receipt requested.

4) Any renewal applicant who submits a request for waiver pursuant to subsection (f)(1) shall be deemed to be in good standing until the Division's final decision on the application has been made.

(Source: Amended at 48 Ill. Reg. 6008, effective April 5, 2024)