

This substantive policy statement is advisory only. A substantive policy statement does not include internal procedural documents that only affect the internal procedures of the agency and does not impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties or include confidential information or rules made in accordance with the Arizona administrative procedure act. If you believe that this substantive policy statement does impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties you may petition the agency under Arizona Revised Statutes section §41-1033 for a review of the statement.

ARIZONA PHYSICAL THERAPIST CONTINUING COMPETENCE REQUIREMENTS

The administrative rules that prescribe continuing competence requirements for renewal of physical therapist licensure are found at R4-24-401 through R4-24-403. The rule R4-24-401 requires:

- A physical therapist must complete 20 contact hours of continuing competences during each two (2) year licensure period.
- A licensure period begins on September 1 of even-numbered years and ends on August 31 of the following even-numbered year.
- Due to the variety of conversions used to determine continuing education units (“CEU’s”) by different organizations, the rules require “contact hours” rather than CEUs as the measurement of continuing competence activities.
- At least 10 of the required 20 contact hours must be from Category A. No more than five (5) of the required ten (10) contact hours may be obtained from non-clinical coursework.
- No more than 10 hours may be utilized from a combination of activities from Categories B and C. No more than five (5) hours from Category B and C may be obtained from non-clinical coursework.
- If a physical therapist’s initial license was granted for less than one (1) year, the licensee shall have a ten (10) contact hour continuing competence requirement for that period, all of which must be category A.
- If a physical therapist’s initial license was granted for less than two (2) years but more than one (1) year, the licensee shall have a twenty (20) contact hour requirement for that period, ten (10) of which must come from Category A.

The Arizona Board of Physical Therapy does not pre-approve any activities for continuing competence credit. A licensee can determine the acceptability of a course or activity based on the descriptions contained in the administrative rules R4-24-401 through R4-24-403. The Board adopted a motion that determined completion of the Practice Review Tool (PRT) of the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy is a Category A activity worth ten (10) contact hours. Licensees are strongly encouraged to contact the course or activity provider, sponsor or approval entity to obtain the written information necessary to ascertain in what category a course or activity may be placed.

Category A Activities

Category A activities are distinguished from Category B and C activities in that they are approved for contact hours by one of the following, regardless of whether the course is classroom-based, on-line or home study:

- 1) An accredited medical, PT or health care education program;
- 2) A national or state medical, PT or health care association, or a component of that association; or
- 3) A national medical, PT or health care specialty society.

Courses or activities that have been approved by only a licensing board are not Category A courses. Category A organization approval must be reflected on the course certificate, brochure or informational materials to ensure the course qualifies as Category A.

Category A includes continuing education courses, PT clinical specialty certification coursework, PT clinical residency coursework and post-graduate PT education from an accredited college or university. Each 60 minutes of instruction equals one (1) contact hour.

Category B Activities

Category B activities include a variety of activities that have not been approved for contact hours by any of the Category A approval organizations. Category B includes:

- 1) Study groups with a minimum of three (3) people;
- 2) Self-instruction which may be directed by a correspondence course, video, internet or satellite program; and
- 3) Attendance at in-service education program pertaining to physical therapy or relating to patient welfare and safety, including CPR certification. The number of hours claimed for CPR certification must match the number of contact hours spent on that activity.

Category B activities must relate to the practice of physical therapy, and there is a five (5) contact hour maximum for any of the sub-categories listed above within Category B. The description of each of these sub-categories in the rules contains the conversion for determining contact hour value and further defines and describes their requirements and restrictions (see R4-24-402(C) for specifics).

Category C Activities

Category C activities include a variety of activities that have not been approved for contact hours by any of the Category A approval organizations. Category C activities include:

- 1) Teaching or lecturing principally for health care professionals;
- 2) Practice management (e.g. ethics, administration, law, reimbursement, etc), and
- 3) Publication.

There is a 5 contact hour maximum for any of the sub-categories within Category C. Detailed descriptions of each of these sub-categories in the rules also contain the conversion for determining contact hour value and further defines and describes their requirements and restrictions [see R4-24-402(D)].

Activities Excluded from Continuing Competence Credit

Excluded from credit for continuing competence activities:

- 1) Staff meetings, presentations or publications directed at lay groups;
- 2) Routine teaching as part of a job requirement;
- 3) Regularly scheduled institutional activities such as rounds or case conferences;
- 4) Breaks in instructional time;
- 5) Contact hour credit for repetitions of the same activity; and
- 6) Contact hours carried over from one compliance period to another.

Affirmation of Compliance with Continuing Competence Requirements

All physical therapist licensees filing a renewal or reinstatement application shall affirm on the application that they have obtained the required continuing competence hours for renewal or reinstatement. Licensees are not to send in their continuing competence documentation with their renewal or reinstatement application. Licensees who fail to sign the affirmation statement or who have not obtained their required continuing competence are ineligible for renewal or reinstatement.

Documentation Requirements

Documentation of a continuing competence activity shall include:

- 1) The date, place, course title, sponsor, schedule, and presenter;
- 2) The number of contact hours received for the activity; and
- 3) Proof of completion, such as an abstract, certificate of attendance, sign-in log, or other certification of completion.

Continuing Competence Audits

Only those licensees who are randomly selected for audit, and those who reinstate a physical therapist license, shall submit evidence of completion of the required continuing competence activities. Notices of audit are sent via certified U.S. mail on or before October 31 following the August 31 licensure renewal

deadline. Within 30 days of receipt of a notice of audit, a licensee shall submit evidence to the Board that shows compliance with the continuing competence requirements.

The Board may conduct continuing competence audits either through the use of a volunteer committee comprised of licensed physical therapists trained in the audit process, or by Board staff.

The Board shall notify a licensee who has been audited whether the licensee is in compliance with continuing competence requirements by certified mail within 30 working days following the determination by the Board. Licensees are required to retain evidence of continuing competence activities for the preceding two (2) compliance periods.

Waiver of Continuing Competence Requirements

The Board may waive continuing competence requirements on an individual basis for reasons of extreme hardship such as illness, disability, active service in the military, or other extraordinary circumstance as determined by the Board. A licensee who seeks a waiver of the continuing competence requirements shall provide to the Board, in writing, the specific reasons for requesting the waiver and additional information that the Board may request in support of the waiver.

Non-compliance and Disciplinary Action

A licensee found not in compliance with continuing competence requirements shall have six months from the notice of noncompliance to satisfy the continuing competence requirements. A licensee may request a hearing to contest the Board's decision under A.R.S. Title 41, Chapter 6, Article 10. At the conclusion of the six month extension for compliance, the Board may impose penalties for failure to comply with continuing competence requirements under A.R.S § 32-2047 following a hearing conducted under A.R.S. Title 41, Chapter 6, Article 10. The Board may also take disciplinary action pursuant to A.R.S. §32-2044. Grounds for Disciplinary Action when a licensee affirms compliance with the continuing competence requirements but is found by the Board to be out of compliance.

Additional Information and Guidance

The Board has addressed the continuing competence requirements for physical therapists on several occasions in its annual newsletter. Copies of past newsletters can be found on the Board's web-site www.ptboard.az.gov.

This substantive policy statement is advisory only. A substantive policy statement does not include internal procedural documents that only affect the internal procedures of the agency and does not impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties or include confidential information or rules made in accordance with the Arizona administrative procedure act. If you believe that this substantive policy statement does impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties you may petition the agency under Arizona Revised Statutes section §41-1033 for a review of the statement.