

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Department of Public Health
Bureau of Substance Abuse Services
Alcohol and Drug Counselor Licensing
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Continuing Education Policy for Alcohol and Drug Counselors and Assistants

Effective Date: March 15, 2005

1: Purpose

This policy contains continuing education requirements for alcohol and drug counselors and assistants licensed by the Department of Public Health. Continuing education promotes and enhances the professional competence of all licensees and is required for re-licensure.

2: Definitions

For purposes of this policy the following terms shall have the following meanings, unless the context in which they are used clearly indicates otherwise:

Academic Credit Conversion Formula- the formula to convert undergraduate or graduate credit hours into hours of education or continuing education hours. The formula is: 1 credit = 15 hours. For example a 3-credit course would convert into 45 hours of continuing education.

Continuing Education Hour – a unit of not less than 50 minutes of actual instruction time in an approved continuing education course, program, seminar or workshop.

Continuing Education Program – any course, program, seminar or workshop which provides

information or knowledge which contributes directly to the professional competence of alcohol and drug counselors and assistants and which meets the requirements of this policy.

Department- the Department of Public Health

Licensee- a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor I, a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor II, or a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor Assistant.

Licensure Period – the two-year period between license renewals which begins on the issue date of the license and ends on the expiration date of the license.

Recognized Entities – an accredited educational institution, professional organization, training institute, governmental body, recognized certifying body or other entity which has been recognized or authorized by the Department to sponsor, conduct or approve continuing education programs for alcohol and drug counselors/assistants. Recognized Entities include:

Accredited Colleges, Universities and post secondary educational institutions

Adcare Educational Institute

New England Institute of Addiction Studies

DPH Licensed/Approved Substance Abuse Treatment Agencies

DPH Approved/Funded Substance Abuse Educational Organizations

Providers approved by MA Boards of Registration in Social Work, Nursing, Medicine, Mental Health Professionals, and Psychology

Mass Board of Substance Abuse Counselor Certification

American Academy of Healthcare Providers in the Addictive Disorders

National Board for Certified Counselors

National Association of Alcohol and Drug Counselors

International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium,

Employee Assistance Certification Commission

3: Establishment of Continuing Education Requirement

(A) **General Requirement** - Beginning with the initial licensure period, every licensee, as a condition for renewal of his or her license, shall complete forty continuing education hours. These hours shall be completed within each licensing cycle and may not accumulate or be carried over. All such continuing education hours shall be completed in continuing education programs which meet the requirements of this policy.

(B) **Pro-rating of Continuing Education Requirements** – Those licensed prior to the issuance of this continuing education policy shall complete no less than twenty-five hours of continuing

education prior to initial licensure renewal. Forty hours of continuing education shall be required in all subsequent renewal cycles.

(C) Home Study (electronic or otherwise)- Home study can account for no more than 50% of the total hours of continuing education hours required for re-licensure.

(D) Extension of Time for Completion – The Department may extend the deadline for completion of the required continuing education only upon a showing by the licensee that completion of such continuing education by the original deadline imposes an undue hardship due to unforeseen circumstances.

4: Criteria for Approval of Continuing Education

(A) Program Content Requirements – A continuing education course or program provided by a recognized entity may be used to satisfy the continuing education requirements set forth in this policy only if that course, program pertains to:

- (1) Counselor Core Functions: screening, intake, orientation, assessment, treatment planning, counseling, case management, crisis intervention, client education, referral, reports and record keeping, and consultation with other professionals;
- (2) Pharmacology and psychopharmacology of alcohol and drugs: Drugs of abuse and drugs used in treatment of addictions;
- (3) Addiction process: models and theories of addiction; biopsychosocial effects of addiction; social and cultural context of addiction; differentiation of addiction from other medical and psychological conditions;
- (4) Treatment models and methods including: Twelve step, self-help, harm reduction, relapse prevention and new or evolving treatment models;
- (5) Interdisciplinary approaches to treatment: appropriate use of treatment modalities, assessment and diagnostic criteria to meet the needs of the individual characteristic of clients and clients with co-occurring disorders such as mental health, trauma, mental retardation, as well as populations involved with different treatment and state systems;
- (6) Professional Standards of Practice: Recognizing the needs of diverse populations relating to issues of age, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis, ethical and professional, standards of conduct, client safety policies and procedures, understanding of current and evolving issues of substance abuse treatment.

(B) Documentation from Licensees

Licensees are responsible for obtaining a certificate of completion of continuing education. This certificate must come from the entity that provided the continuing education and must include at a minimum:

- (1) the name of the participant (i.e. licensee) completed by the continuing education provider;
- (2) the name of the entity which provided the continuing education;
- (3) the name of the trainer or presenter;
- (4) the name of the training;
- (5) the specific dates attended;
- (6) and the number of hours of training; or
- (7) an official transcript from the accredited post-secondary institution and a course description from which the training was obtained.

(C) Requirements for Continuing Education Courses and Programs

Continuing education courses or programs are required to meet the following administrative requirements:

- (1) An outline of the course or program is prepared and distributed to all attendees. Said outline shall state the number of continuing education contact hours provided;
- (2) The course or program shall be at least fifty (50) consecutive minutes in length;
- (3) The provider or sponsor of the course or program ensures that the course or program is presented by individuals who are properly qualified and competent to do so by virtue of appropriate academic training, professional licensure or certification, and/or appropriate professional experience;
- (4) The provider or sponsor of the course or program maintains written documentation of the qualifications of the person or persons who presented the course or program;
- (5) The provider or sponsor of the course or program establishes and maintains an accurate written record of course attendance showing the date of the program or course, the location at which the program or course was given, the name of each person who attended, and the license number of each person who attended;
- (6) The licensee receives a certificate or other written evidence of his or her completion of that course or program only if he or she demonstrates satisfactory comprehension or understanding of the content of that course or program to the provider or sponsor of that course or program;
- (7) The provider or sponsor of the course or program does not issue certificates or other written evidence of completion of the course or program until the course or program is completed;
- (8) The provider or sponsor of the course or program provides all attendees with an opportunity to evaluate that course or program, on a written form provided for that

purpose, and retains all completed written evaluation forms for a period of five years after the date on which the course or program was presented;

(9) The provider or sponsor of the course or program complies with all other applicable state and federal laws, including but not limited to the Americans with Disabilities Act and any other state or federal laws relating to accessibility of such courses or programs to persons with disabilities or special needs.

(D) Continuing education obtained from non-recognized entities

Licensees submitting continuing education obtained from non-recognized entities should be aware that approval is not guaranteed. Licensees should seek approval prior to taking the course or, if the course was completed without prior approval, at least 60 days prior to the expiration date of the license. At a minimum, licensees must submit evidence that the course and provider meet the requirements of section 4 (A)- (C) of this policy.

(E) Recognized Entities and other continuing education providers

Recognized entities and other continuing education providers may be asked to furnish such information as the Department may reasonably require about any or all continuing education courses, programs or activities completed by said licensees. Failure or refusal to provide this information may result in denial of continuing education courses or programs.

5: Responsibilities of Individual Licensees

(A) Each licensee shall maintain a written record of all continuing education courses or programs he or she has completed for a period of not less than two (2) consecutive licensure periods, inclusive of the licensure period during which the course, program or activity was completed.

(B) Each licensee, as part of his or her application for renewal of his or her license, shall attest under the pains and penalties of perjury that he or she has completed the number of continuing education hours required.

(C) Upon written request by the Department, a licensee shall furnish such information as the Department may reasonably require about any or all continuing education courses, programs or activities completed by said licensee. Failure or refusal to provide timely proof of completion of the number of continuing education hours required shall constitute grounds for disciplinary action or non-renewal of license by the Department according to 105 CMR 168.000 and Chapter 111J of the Massachusetts General Laws.

(D) Falsification of reports of continuing education courses, seminars, workshops and completed hours, or misrepresentation of any material fact concerning the completion of such continuing education hours, by any licensee shall constitute grounds for disciplinary action by the Department.

