

Statement in Support of Required Continuing Education

Lately there has been some discussion about the difficulties inherent in approving continuing education. The single nationwide entity that has held primary responsibility for this task for the past 20 years is the same entity that pressed many states forward into state-wide licensure. They provided the much of the model legislation currently in use, provided a licensing exam that was psychometrically tested and validated, and had a list of approved continuing education providers with good track records. With all the critical elements in place, states could approve and enact licensure without the enormous expenditure of developing all the above, which can easily run \$500,000 or more.

The NCBTMB started having a lot of problems, most notably that they were not accountable to ANYONE, and they could change qualifications and rules at their whim, and they did. Complaints went unheeded, and the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards was formed, with a mission of "Supporting the Mission of Public Protection". 42 state and territory regulating agencies are now members, and the question of who will certify continuing education providers is becoming a factor. A few states are dropping CE requirements altogether, and the Federation has no plans to begin certifying providers.

The Federation created a task force to study continuing education, which issued a recommendation that requirements be limited to ethics and areas that required intervention by state boards. Their recommendation was for 6 hours per year. They stated that they support professional development, but are leaving requirements for it to the membership organizations.

Rationale (<https://fsmtb.org/content/?id=66>)

This recommendation creates a new model specifically designed for regulatory needs regarding public protection. It standardizes the licensure renewal requirements which facilitate uniformity and portability of licensure. Licensure renewal requirements for therapists will be simplified. The economic burden on the therapist to maintain licensure is reduced although therapists are encouraged to pursue additional, non-mandatory professional development of their choosing. This recommendation increases consumer confidence in the professional integrity of the licensee while promoting current knowledge of safe practices and increasing access to quality education.

As a Therapist with 30 years practice, and additional experience as an instructor, I feel that the Federation has committed a major fumble with these recommendations. Their recommendation does nothing to increase consumer confidence, and will in fact erode it. I beg this Board not to sign on.

Almost every licensing board in the State of NC has, as a stated part of it's mission, "to ensure standards of competency and to protect the public health, safety and welfare." This Board is no exception. I would argue that ensuring professional competency requires continuing education, and that to abandon it puts public safety in danger. Ladies & Gentlemen of the Board I have practiced in 5 states. I've worked under almost every

condition and circumstance from 5 star spas to medical offices. I've been offered full-time teaching positions, and the Directorship of The Spa at Grandover, and I've turned it all down because what I really love is daily practice. I started teaching as an adjunct in '92 so I could have competent therapists to hire. Let's be honest, there is only so much you can cram into 500 hours of education, and by the time you get all the COMTA and state required learning in, you have precious little time for any hands on practice. Therapists come out of school very green and need a lot of work to become real professionals, especially in the therapeutic part of our field. You can have all the book learning in the world, but if you can't deliver it with your hands, you have nothing to give to a client. By abandoning a continuing education requirement, or stripping it down to bare ethics, we are saying to these therapists, "you know everything you need to know". They don't. Even worse, should they attempt to professionally practice a more advanced technique they have only the vaguest idea of and no real education in, damage to the public isn't merely possible, it's almost guaranteed.

In the world today, almost every professional must do continuing education to maintain either their license or their position. Doctors, Dentists, CPAs, Cosmetologists, Estheticians, Social Workers, Psychologists, Lawyers, Paralegals, Police officers, firefighters.....the list is so extensive that it's now a part of the public consciousness that professionals do continuing ed.

I agree that a lot of continuing education in our field leaves a good deal to be desired, and that there are approved courses that should never have been approved. But difficulties with certification are no reason to throw the baby out with the bath water. I would argue that adopting the Federation's recommendations on Continuing Education effectively abandons this Board's core mission of public safety.

Yes, I am an Approved Provider of Continuing Education. I teach a few times a year, usually on specific conditions, but I'm not here to ensure my income stream. I'm here, and I take this position, because I love this field and I love my work. I practiced back in the day when we had to register as "adult entertainment". I do not want to see our profession start losing the credibility we've worked so hard to achieve by abandoning professional development.

There is an argument to be made that since we have no current way to place a Therapist's license on "inactive" status, that these requirements can be a burden to someone who must choose not to practice for a time, often due to medical or family needs. I would support a process by which a therapist could place their license on "inactive status" for a time, and re-instate it by doing their continuing ed, and an taking an updated jurisprudence exam online.

Thank you for your time.

Kay Warren, CE Provider
January 29, 2014

Sources on Continuing Education Requirements

All of these licensing entities require continuing education, some call it continuing competence.

NC Board of Physical Therapy Examiners

<http://www.ncptboard.org/>

NC Real Estate Commission

<http://www.ncrec.gov/Commission/Mission>

NC Medical Board

http://www.ncmedboard.org/faqs/list/category/continuing_medical_education_cme/

NC Board of Cosmetology

http://www.ncmedboard.org/faqs/list/category/continuing_medical_education_cme/

Certified Public Accountants

<http://nccpaboard.gov/cpe/>

Chiropractors

<http://nccpaboard.gov/cpe/>

Dentists

http://www.ncdentalboard.org/continuing_education.htm

Acupuncturist

<http://ncalb.com/reqsandregs.php>

psychologists

<http://www.ncpsychologyboard.org/continuingeducation.htm>

social workers

<http://ncswboard.org/page/continuing-education-information>

Attorneys

<http://www.nccle.org/>

Paralegals

<http://www.nccertifiedparalegal.gov/faq.asp>