

NC STATE BOARD OF OPTICIANS POLICY

Adopted April 22, 2020

Continuity of Training Time During Times of State Executive Orders

Executive Summary

On April 22, 2020, the North Carolina State Board of Opticians (the “Board”) met and evaluated Board-promulgated rules that may be waived to ease regulatory burden during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the Board resolved that it will **continue to credit an Apprentice or Intern (a “Trainee”) with training time, pursuant to 21 NCAC 40 .0314, when said Trainee trains in a jurisdiction in which State or local officials have issued an order restricting the Trainee’s ability to train inside an optical business.** This continuation of credit shall be allowed while any such order remains in effect, provided that the Board encourages the Trainee to continue to engage in home-based optical study during this time, to the extent possible.

Discussion

Emergency situations created by natural disasters, or public-health-related circumstances may necessitate State or local governments to issue Shelter-in-Place or Stay-at-Home Orders; seasonal storms (ice/snow, and violent rainstorms, or hurricanes) or the COVID-19 pandemic are examples of situations that could occur.

During these times, the Board staff monitors communications from the Office of the Governor, State Human Resources, State Department of Health and Human Services, and various other State entities, to balance the economic well-being of North Carolinians with the need to regulate the practice of opticianry for the protection of consumer’s health, safety and welfare. In balancing these interests, the Board may waive, by use of its discretionary authority via 21 NCAC 40 .0113 *Waiver*, Board-promulgated rules to ease regulatory burdens.

The Board understands that, during the current COVID-19 pandemic, Trainees may not be able to fulfill their weekly training requirements inside an optical place of business through no fault of their own and wants to encourage Trainees to continue their training and pursuit of licensure, to the extent possible.

Even when Trainees may not be physically training in a registered Training Establishment with their trainers, the Board encourages Apprentices to continue working on their required certificate programs. The Board further encourages Interns to apply practical applications on websites and review professional journals and other publications, so they may reinforce the knowledge and skills obtained in their work under their trainers or while completing their AAS degrees. All trainees should pursue remote training activities that are available to them while such orders remain in effect.