

NC STATE BOARD OF OPTICIANS POLICY

Adopted April 22, 2020

Waiver of Continuing Education Requirements for Renewal of License During Times of State Executive Orders

Executive Summary

On April 22, 2020, the North Carolina State Board of Opticians (the "Board") met and evaluated appropriate Statutes and Board-promulgated rules that may be waived to ease regulatory burden during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, **the Board resolved that NC-licensed dispensing opticians are not required to attend or submit to the Board continuing education credits (CECs) in order to renew their licenses on or before December 31, 2020, pursuant to G.S. 90-249 and 21 NCAC 40 .0206.**

Those opticians who have already obtained CECs prior to the COVID-19 pandemic-shutdown will be allowed to use those credits toward renewal before December 31, 2021, as if they had earned the credits during 2021.

The Board shall not rescind any approval already granted to sponsors who have ConEd seminars currently scheduled and shall continue to review for approval any ConEd course submissions from sponsors, provided that such seminars are compliant with all applicable State or local orders, including but not limited to mandates regarding capacity, social-distancing, and hygiene.

Opticians who choose to attend Board-approved ConEd events after State or local orders have been lifted or eased will be allowed to use those credits for submission before December 31, 2021, as if they had attended the credits during 2021.

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*, applicable statutes or Board-promulgated rules to ease regulatory burdens.

The Board understands that, during the current COVID-19 pandemic, Licensees' attendance at continuing education seminars has been limited and/or suspended through no fault of their own; and the Board wants to provide assistance and lessen anxiety about ConEd requirements.

The Board does, however, encourage Licensees to continue their education, to the extent possible, by utilizing practical applications on websites and review professional journals and other publications, as a way of reinforcing the knowledge and skills utilized in their daily work activities, while Stay-at-Home Orders and Reopen/Transition plans remain in effect.

