

## Continuing Education for Nurses

The mission of the Board of Nursing is to protect and promote the welfare of the people of Texas by ensuring that each person holding a license as a nurse in the State of Texas is competent to practice safely. In 1991, rules were adopted requiring nurses to complete 20 hours of continuing education (CE) every two years for relicensure. Continuing education in nursing is defined as programs beyond the basic preparation that are designed to promote and enrich knowledge, improve skills, and develop attitudes for the enhancement of nursing practice, thus improving health care to the public. All nurses with an active Texas license are required to complete continuing education for relicensure. Each nurse reactivating an inactive or delinquent license must also submit verification of 20 hours of CE completed in the two years prior to reactivation.

### CE Requirement

Twenty (20) contact hours (two Continuing Education Units) of continuing education are required every two years coinciding with the nurse's license renewal. A contact hour is defined as 60 minutes of a clock hour. A Continuing Education Unit (CEU) equals 10 contact hours. The CE hours must be earned within the two-year period immediately preceding the license renewal, beginning with the first day after the renewal month until the last day of the subsequent renewal. For example, if you are to renew your license in December 2010 (your birth month), the CE hours must be earned between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2010. Additional hours earned **may not** be carried over to the next renewal period.

### What CE is Acceptable?

To count toward licensure renewal, a program must have been approved by one of the credentialing agencies recognized by the Board. The credentialing agencies have met nationally-predetermined criteria to approve programs and providers of CE. The Board recognizes the following credentialing agencies:

- **American Academy of Nurse Practitioners;**
- **American Nurses Credentialing Center;**
- **American Association of Critical-Care Nurses;**
- **American Association of Nurse Anesthetists;**
- **American College of Nurse Midwives;**
- **Emergency Nurses Association (ENA);**
- **Texas League of Vocational Nurses;**
- **Licensed Vocational Nurses Association of Texas;**

- **National Association for Practical Nurse Education and Service (NAPNES);**
- **National Federation of Licensed Vocational Nurses (NFLVN);**
- **Continuing Medical Education credentialing agencies (for APNs only);**
- **National Association of Pediatric Nurse Associates and Practitioners;**
- **Colleges and Universities; and**
- **Other State Boards of Nursing.**

These organizations, in turn, approve other continuing education providers. For example, most of the state nursing associations such as the Texas Nurses Association and many of the nursing specialty organizations are accredited through the American Nurses Credentialing Center. Thus, these programs would be accepted.

### Academic courses

**Academic courses** must be within the framework of a curriculum that leads to an academic degree in nursing or any academic course relevant to nursing practice. An academic course taken for credit may be used to meet BON CE requirements if a grade of C or better or "pass" on a pass/fail system is achieved. One academic semester hour is equal to 15 contact hours. Prerequisite courses, such as mathematics, government, anatomy, physiology, etc., cannot be counted to meet any part of the required CEs for a nurse.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Successful completion of either initial or renewal courses such as ACLS, ATLS, and PALS, or national certification in a non-advanced nursing practice specialty (i.e. CCRN, RNFA, CWOCN, etc.) may be counted for CE credit, depending upon whether or not a specific course meets requirements as listed above and in compliance with Rule 216.

**Self-Paced/Online CE Programs** are acceptable for CE credit if approved by one of the credentialing organizations recognized by the BON, and provided they meet any other criteria specified in Rule 216.

### Activities Not Acceptable for CE Credit

The following activities are not acceptable for continuing education credit:

- **Basic CPR;**
- **In-service programs that provide specific information about the work setting's philosophy, procedures;**

- **On-the-job training and equipment demonstration;**
- **Refresher courses designed to update knowledge;**
- **Orientation programs designed to introduce employees to a specific work setting;**
- **Courses that focus upon self-improvement, changes in attitude, self-therapy, self-awareness;**
- **Weight loss, yoga, or personal appearance;**
- **Economic courses for financial gain, e.g., investments, retirement, preparing resumes and techniques for job interviews;**
- **Liberal Art courses in music, art, philosophy, etc., when unrelated to patient/client care; or**
- **Courses for lay people.**

### Auditing Process

The Board conducts random audits to determine compliance with the CE requirements. Written notice is mailed 90 days prior to the renewal dates for nurses chosen randomly by computer. **A nurse audited for CE compliance may not renew his/her license until proof of completion of continuing education credit is received by the Board.** Noncompliance will also result in a fine being assessed in addition to renewal fees.

### Renewing Your License

When you renew your license, you will be asked if you have completed the required 20 hours of continuing education, including any targeted CE requirements, within the previous two-year period. If you have not obtained the required CE, you cannot renew your license until requirements are met. Proof of compliance with CE requirements must also be submitted to renew a delinquent license, reactivate a license from inactive status, or when petitioning the Board for reinstatement of a revoked or surrendered license. Each nurse is responsible for maintaining his/her own records of CE programs completed. In general, records should be kept for two renewal periods (four years). Evidence of completion of CE for forensic evidence collection should be maintained indefinitely.

### First Time Renewals

A nurse newly licensed in Texas either by examination or by endorsing from another state is exempt from the continuing education requirement for the first licensure renewal. A nurse's initial license may be valid for a period ranging from six (6) to 29 months, depending on the

licensee's birth date. Following the first license renewal, the nurse must meet CE requirements for the subsequent biannual renewal periods.

### **Late Renewals**

If you allow your license to expire, you will be required to show proof of completion of 20 hours of continuing education, including any targeted CE requirements, within the past two years. This applies whether you have been delinquent for one day or longer.

### **Requirements for the Advanced Practice Nurse (APN)**

A licensee who is authorized by the Board to practice as an Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) is required to obtain 20 contact hours of targeted continuing education in the advanced practice role and specialty area recognized by the Board. Obtaining 20 hours within your advanced practice specialty area will satisfy the requirements to renew both your RN license and APN authorization. The Board approves four broad categories of Advanced Practice Nurses including Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), Nurse Midwife (CNM), Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA), and Nurse Practitioner (NP). In addition to the 20 contact hours of continuing education in the advanced practice role and specialty, an Advanced Practice Nurse who has Prescriptive Authority must also complete at least five additional CEs at the APN level in pharmacotherapeutics within the preceding two years. Category I Continuing Medical Education (CME) contact hours will meet requirements for continuing education for APNs.

### **Inactive/Retired/Volunteer Retired Status**

If you are not practicing nursing, you may place your license on inactive status when you receive your license renewal notification. Continuing education is not required as long as you are inactive. Should you wish to reactivate and you have been inactive for less than four years, you must show proof of completion of 20 hours of continuing education within the two years prior to your request for reactivation. If you have not practiced nursing in any jurisdiction for four or more years, and have not been practicing as a nurse in another state, in addition to the CE hours, you will be required to complete a nursing refresher or extensive orientation course.

Nurses over the age of 65 are eligible for "Retired" status. The requirements for reactivating a retired license are the same as those for inactive status.

Effective January 2, 2006, a nurse who is at least 65-years-old may also request "volunteer retired nurse" authorization (Section 301.261 of the Nursing Practice

Act). Rule 216.3(d) requires a nurse who wishes to provide only voluntary charity care to obtain 10 hours of CE for each 2-year authorization renewal cycle. An Advanced Practice Nurse authorized as a volunteer retired RN in a specific APN role and specialty may renew his/her volunteer retired advanced practice authorization through completion of 20 hours of CE targeted to the APN's role and specialty.

### **Where to Find CE Offerings**

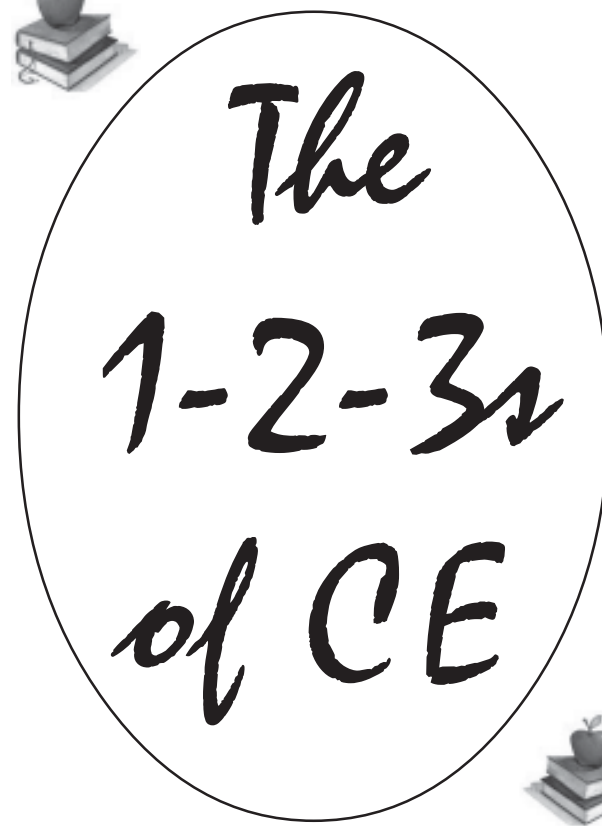
Many continuing education offerings can be located on the internet. You may also contact local colleges, universities, nursing schools, or large hospitals to find out about their schedule of offerings and to be placed on their mailing list. Many nursing journals contain a schedule of offerings. Your professional nursing association is another resource.

### **Forensic Evidence Collection CE**

Effective September 1, 2005, the Nursing Practice Act was amended, adding the CE requirement, *Forensic Evidence Collection in Continuing Education*. This targeted CE requirement applies to all nurses practicing in emergency room settings as either their home unit, floating, contracted, or other duties that involve functioning in an ER setting or role. This is a one-time requirement per nurse effective September 1, 2006. Compliance with this requirement is ongoing for any nurse who begins practicing in an ER setting as there is no expiration date for this requirement under Texas Occupations Code § 301.306 (NPA).

Frequently asked questions on this targeted CE may be viewed on the BON web page at <ftp://www.bon.state.tx.us/faq-fe-ce.pdf>.

*Please retain this informational material for a quick reference on continuing education. Feel free to copy it and share it with others. The rule specific to CE for nurses is 22 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 216. A copy of the CE rule may be downloaded from the BON web site. Additional copies of this brochure may be obtained by downloading it from the Texas Board of Nursing's web site located at [www.bon.state.tx.us](http://www.bon.state.tx.us). You may also send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Board's office, 333 Guadalupe, Suite 3-460, Austin, Texas 78701, Attn: C.E.*



## Understanding & Complying with the Continuing Education Requirements for Nurses in Texas



**Texas Board of Nursing**