

Virginia Board of Pharmacy

Guide to Continuing Pharmacy Education Requirements

To maintain an active license in Virginia, pharmacists are required to obtain a minimum of 15 contact hours of continuing pharmacy education (CE) per calendar year, at least three of which must be from courses or programs that are live or real-time interactive. Pharmacy technicians are required to obtain a minimum of 5 contact hours of CE per calendar year. The requirement for obtaining CE from a live or real-time interactive program does not apply to pharmacy technicians. This brochure is intended to help pharmacists and pharmacy technicians better understand the CE requirements. The Board of Pharmacy prepared this document as a guide in order to promote compliance with the statutes and regulations concerning CE.

Q. What is the minimum number of CE hours required? When do I have to take them?

A. The law requires a minimum of 15 contact hours for pharmacists and 5 contact hours for pharmacy technicians per calendar year. For pharmacists, at least three of the required 15 hours must be from courses or programs that are live or real-time interactive. Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians obtain all required CE prior to renewing their license or registration in order to properly attest that they have met the CE requirements. The certificates or transcript of awarded CE should be dated between January 1 and December 31, inclusive, of the calendar year they are used.

Q: What types of courses or programs may a pharmacist successfully complete to meet the requirement for obtaining at least 3 hours annually of “live or real-time interactive” CE?

A. The following options will satisfy the requirement for live or real-time interactive CE:

- Programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) designated with the letter “L” in the second to last section of the program number;
- Category 1 continuing medical education courses accredited by the American Medical Association (AMA), the primary focus of which is pharmacy, pharmacology, or drug therapy designated with the term “live” in the statement of credit provided to the attendee;
- Board-approved CE designated in the certificate of completion as having been approved by the board as “live or real-time interactive” CE; and
- Credit obtained from the board for:
 - A maximum of one hour for attendance at a board meeting or formal hearing; or
 - A maximum of one hour for serving as a preceptor for a pharmacy student or resident in an accredited school or program or for a foreign-trained student obtaining hours of practical experience.

Note: Counsel has advised that volunteering at a free clinic or local health department does not legally satisfy the annual requirement for 3 hours of “live or real-time interactive” CE.

Q. How do I obtain one hour of CE credit for serving as a preceptor for a pharmacy student or resident in an accredited school or program?

A. Complete the form located on the Board’s website under “Forms and Applications”. After obtaining any required signatures, maintain the form in your records for two years following renewal in case your CE is audited for compliance.

Q. If I volunteered to serve as a preceptor but was not assigned a pharmacy intern during the calendar year, am I eligible to receive one hour of CE credit?

A. No. CE credit may only be awarded to pharmacists that were assigned a pharmacy intern for the purpose of obtaining practical experience during the calendar year.

Q. Can CE be obtained by a pharmacist that supervised a pharmacy intern during a rotation, but who was not designated as the preceptor?

A. No. Board regulation only authorizes the preceptor to obtain a maximum of 1 hour of CE credit.

Q. May I use hours worked as a volunteer at a free clinic or local health department toward the continuing education requirement?

A. Yes. Up to two contact hours of the 15 contact hours required for pharmacist annual renewal and one contact hour of the 5 contact hours required for pharmacy technician annual renewal may be satisfied through delivery of pharmacy services, without compensation, to low-income individuals receiving health services through a local health department or a free clinic organized in whole or primarily for the delivery of those services. One contact hour of continuing education may be credited for three hours of providing such volunteer services, as documented by the health department or free clinic on the “Continuing Education (CE) Credit Form for Volunteer Practice” found at www.dhp.virginia.gov/pharmacy under “Forms and Applications”. Credit Note: Counsel has advised that volunteering at a free clinic or local health department does not legally satisfy the annual requirement for 3 hours of “live or real-time interactive” CE.

Q. May I carry over my extra hours to next year? What if I’m licensed in another state?

A. No. The law does not allow carryover. Although some states permit courses to be taken over a two-year period, Virginia does not. This means a pharmacist licensed in Virginia must obtain at least 15 CE hours each and every calendar year and technicians 5. However, if a pharmacist resides in another state whose requirements allow the pharmacist to spread out the required number of hours for more than one year, for example 30 hours every two years, and the pharmacist meets the CE requirements of that other state, Virginia will accept this provided the resident state board of pharmacy attests that the pharmacist has met its requirements and provided the CE requirement of the other state equates to an average of 15 hours a year over the time period allowed.

Q. May I obtain an extension?

A. Yes. A one-time extension may be possible if the request is made in writing to the Board prior to renewal. Any further extension requests will only be granted for good cause shown.

Q. What is the NABP CPE Monitor and must I sign up for this?

A. NABP CPE Monitor is a collaborative service from NABP and ACPE that provides an electronic system for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to track their completed CE credits. All ACPE-approved continuing education credits are now required to report to CPE Monitor within 60 days of completion of a course. In order to receive credit for an ACPE-approved continuing education course, you must have an e-profile ID number obtained from CPE Monitor through www.nabp.pharmacy and provide this number to receive credit for these ACPE-approved CE courses.

Q. I recently graduated from an ACPE-approved school of pharmacy in Virginia and obtained my initial pharmacist license. Do I need to obtain CE to renew my license for the first time?

A. No, the Board interprets the exemption from CE in §54.1-3314.1 C to mean pharmacists initially licensed by examination are not required to attest to having obtained CE during their first licensure renewal.

Q. I recently graduated from an ACPE-approved school of pharmacy in another state and obtained my initial pharmacist license in Virginia via score transfer. Do I need to obtain CE to renew my license for the first time?

A. No, the Board interprets the exemption from CE in §54.1-3314.1 C to mean pharmacists initially licensed by examination, to include via score transfer, are not required to attest to having obtained CE during their first licensure renewal.

Q. I am a pharmacist who has held licensure in another state for more than one year and recently endorsed/reciprocated my license to Virginia. Do I need to obtain CE to renew my license for the first time?

A. Yes, the Board interprets the exemption from CE in §54.1-3314.1 C to apply only to pharmacists who are truly in their first year of licensure as a pharmacist by examination.

Q. I am a graduate of a foreign school of pharmacy and have obtained my initial license as a pharmacist in the United States from Virginia. Do I need to obtain CE to renew my license for the first time?

A. No, the Board interprets the exemption from CE in §54.1-3314.1 C to mean pharmacists initially licensed by examination, to include foreign graduates, are not required to attest to having obtained CE during their first licensure renewal.

Q. I am a graduate of a foreign school of pharmacy who has held licensure as a pharmacist in another state and recently endorsed/reciprocated my license to Virginia. Do I need to obtain CE to renew my license for the first time?

A. Yes, the Board interprets the exemption from CE in §54.1-3314.1 C to apply only to pharmacists who are truly in their first year of licensure as a pharmacist by examination.

Q. I received my pharmacist license from Virginia in October. When will I need to renew my license for the first time and how do I comply with the CE requirement?

A. Regulation 18VAC110-21-110 states that a pharmacist newly licensed on or after October 1 shall not be required to renew that license until December 31 of the following year. Regulation 18VAC110-21-120-states a pharmacist shall be required to have completed a minimum of 1.5 CEUs or 15 contact hours of continuing pharmacy education in an approved program for each annual renewal of licensure, at least three of which must be from courses or programs that are live or real-time interactive. Therefore, unless exempted from obtaining CE as indicated in §54.1-3314.1 C and discussed above, the pharmacist must obtain 1.5 CEUs or 15 contact hours of CE between the date of issuance of the Virginia pharmacist license and December 31 of the following year.

Q. I received my pharmacy technician registration from Virginia in July. When will I need to renew my registration for the first time and how do I comply with the CE requirement?

A. Regulation 18VAC110-21-170 states that a pharmacy technician newly registered on or after July 1 shall not be required to renew that registration until December 31 of the following year. Regulation 18VAC110-21-180 states a pharmacy technician shall be required to have completed a minimum of 0.5 CEUs or five contact hours of approved CE for each annual renewal of registration. Therefore, the pharmacy technician must obtain 0.5 CEUs or 5 contact hours of CE between the date of issuance of the Virginia pharmacy technician registration and December 31 of the following year.

Q: Are pharmacy technicians required to obtain continuing education during the first year that they are registered?

A: Yes, pharmacy technicians are required to obtain 5 hours of continuing education annually. The exemption in §54.1-3314.1 C from obtaining CE during the first licensure renewal applies only to pharmacists.

Q. Do I have to obtain credits from any particular providers?

A. Yes. In order to meet the CE requirements, courses must be ACPE-approved, Board-approved, or certain Category 1 CME, the primary focus of which is pharmacy, pharmacology, or drug therapy. Any credits taken that do not meet these requirements cannot be used to satisfy CE hours. For pharmacists, at least three of the required 15 hours must be from courses or programs that are live or real-time interactive.

Q. I am a pharmacist or pharmacy technician actively taking courses in an ACPE accredited college of pharmacy. Do I have to obtain CE as well, or will my college of pharmacy coursework count as CE?

A. College of pharmacy coursework may possibly be counted, but must be approved by the Board. There is a form on the Board's website under "Forms and Applications", "Miscellaneous" to submit in order to obtain approval of a college of pharmacy course/courses. Only didactic and laboratory coursework will be considered, and the course must be completed prior to the end of the calendar year in which it is to be counted. Experiential hours, i.e. clerkships, will not be approved. Courses taken as prerequisite coursework for a college of pharmacy program are not approved.

Q. I've lost my certificates. What should I do?

A. You should obtain a replacement from the course provider. Some providers make it possible to print duplicates from their web sites. If the CE program awards credit through the NABP CPE Monitor, you may alternatively obtain a copy of your CE transcript online from the NABP CPE Monitor at www.nabp.net.

Q. Do I have to keep my certificates or CE transcript at work?

A. No. However, the originals certificates or printout of the CE transcript must be made available for audit.

Q. I've taken a course near the end of the year and didn't get my certificate until the next calendar year. How are the hours applied?

A. CE credit is awarded based on the date the certificate is issued or the date the hours are awarded. Live courses are counted on the date of attending the course.

Q. What should I do if the Board audits me?

A. Whenever the Board contacts you, you should respond promptly. Failure to respond may cause the Board to pursue disciplinary action. If the Board audits your continuing pharmacy education credits, find your original certificates and make a copy for yourself or download a copy of your transcript from NABP CPE Monitor and provide the Board with this transcript. Send the original certificates or printed transcript to the Board office by the deadline in the letter. Although not required, you may want to send your response by certified mail so that you have proof of mailing. If you have lost some or all of your certificates, you should immediately contact the respective providers for a replacement certificate and inform the Board of your actions. The Board has approved standard sanctions for CE non-compliance which can be found in guidance document 110-42.

Q. What can I do to keep my records better organized?

A. Here are some suggestions that may help you to keep your CE records organized and avoid disciplinary action:

1. Store your original certificates in a safe place where they are unlikely to be thrown out by mistake.
2. Keep a copy of your certificates, or at least a record of the course number, provider and date, in a secondary safe location (not with the originals). These are a back-up if you lose the originals.
3. BEFORE YOU RENEW YOUR LICENSE, look at your original certificates and/or the NABP CPE Monitor to verify compliance with the CE requirements:

- ♦ 15 contact hours for pharmacists, at least 3 hours of which must be from live or real-time interactive courses or programs, or 5 contact hours for pharmacy technicians (some courses may carry a different number of credits for other professions)
- ♦ ACPE approved for either pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, or both (look for the ACPE logo), or Category 1 CME courses focused on pharmacy, pharmacology or drug therapy
- ♦ each of your CE certificates or the CE transcript shows a “date issued” on or prior to December 31 for the year in question.

Note: Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are required to maintain, for two years following renewal, the original certificates documenting successful completion of CE, showing date and title of the CE program or activity, the number of CEUs or contact hours awarded, and a certifying signature or other certification of the approved provider. For programs that no longer issue CE certificates, but award credit through the NABP CPE Monitor, it is recommended that pharmacists and pharmacy technicians maintain a copy of their CE transcript from NABP for two years following renewal.