

# Virginia Board of Pharmacy

## Guide to Continuing Pharmacy Education Requirements

Since 1993, pharmacists who are licensed in Virginia have been required to obtain a minimum of 15 contact hours of continuing pharmacy education (CE) per calendar year in order to maintain an active license. Pharmacy technicians are required to obtain a minimum of 5 contact hours of CE per calendar year. 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. You should receive all your certificates prior to sending in the license renewal in order to properly attest that you have met the requirements. The certificates should be dated between January 1 and December 31, inclusive, of the calendar year they are used.

**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. I obtained my license in Virginia earlier this year. Do I need CE credits now to renew my license for next year?**

A. No for pharmacists. A pharmacist is exempted for the calendar year in which his or her license was first issued. CE will be required beginning with the following calendar year. Yes for pharmacy technicians.

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

A. Yes. In order to meet the CE requirements, courses must be either ACPE approved, Board approved, or certain Category 1 CME. Any credits taken that do not meet these requirements cannot be used to satisfy CE hours.

**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. ACPE approved providers must keep this information for at least five years. Some providers make it possible to print duplicates from their web sites.

**Q. Do I have to keep my certificates at work?**

A. No. However, the originals 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. The date the certificate is issued controls unless it is a "live" course. 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. Send the originals 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 verify compliance with the CE requirements:
  - 15 contact hours for pharmacists or 5 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 show a "date issued" on or prior to December 31 for the year in question.

**Note: Pharmacists are required to maintain, for three 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.**