Georgia Department of Public Health Guidelines for Implementation of Continuing Competence—Evidence of Active Nursing Practice (O.C.G.A. § 43-26-9)

Introduction

In 2013, Georgia law was amended to require licensed nurses to complete continuing competency/education requirements as a condition of licensure renewal. These requirements become effective as part of the 2016 renewal cycle (any license expiring on or after January 31, 2016). Licensees may select one of the options delineated on the attached Georgia Board of Nursing document (Attachment A) to fulfill the continuing competency or education requirements as a condition of licensure renewal.

The intent of the above referenced legislation is to help assure that licensed nurses in Georgia maintain competency in their practice through ongoing learning and development in the nursing profession. Priority should be placed on all nurses choosing Options 1, 2, 3 or 5 to meet the continuing competency requirement, since these options involve formal education or training. The Office of Nursing within the Department of Public Health is approved by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) as a provider of Continuing Education. The Department submits an application and fee to the ANCC every five years to maintain status as an approved provider. As an approved provider, the Office of Nursing provides a mechanism for districts, counties and state offices to submit applications for training programs to be approved for Continuing Education credit at no fee to the respective district, county or state office. The Office of Nursing provides technical assistance to districts, counties and state offices regarding the continuing education application process.

In 2015, the Georgia Board of Nursing approved a request to allow Public Health Nurses, who meet the *Georgia Department of Public Health Continuing Competency Requirements for Public Health Nurses Who Practice under Nurse Protocol Agreements*, (Attachment B) to use Option 4 to meet the competency requirements. The Option 4 allows Public Health Nurses (Registered Professional Nurses and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses) to submit verification of competency using the respective form found in Attachment A. The form requires an employer/representative to verify that the licensee has practiced at least five hundred (500) hours during the biennial renewal period <u>and</u> has performed his/her duties competently. The use of Option 4 does not mandate the employer/representative to approve the use of Option 4. It is up to each district to decide whether Option 4 may be used by public health nurses within the district.

Steps for Implementation of Option 4

- 1. Since the employer is not mandated to approve the use of Option 4 for any licensed nurse to meet licensure renewal requirements, each district should inform the licensed nurses within the district the extent to which the use of Option 4 is going to be allowed to be used by nurses within the respective district (e.g., allowed for certain nurses who meet the district's specified criteria, allowed for any nurse, or not allowed at all).
- 2. Regardless of the extent to which a district allows the use of Option 4 to meet licensure requirements, the district should inform new nurse employees about the district's policy regarding the use of Option 4 during the onboarding process.
- 3. If Option 4 is allowed to be used by nurses in a district, there must be documentation to support that the nurse has worked at least 500 hours during the biennial renewal period and that the nurse has met the criteria regarding practice under nurse protocol during the biennial renewal period, as delineated in the Attachment B.
- 4. If Option 4 is allowed to be used by nurses in a district, the district should specify the appropriate agency representative who will sign the Board of Nursing verification form found in Attachment A.
- 5. If the Option 4 is not allowed in a district, the nurses must choose one of the other options delineated in Attachment A to meet licensure renewal requirements of the Georgia Board of Nursing.



Georgia Board of Nursing Continuing Competency/Education Plan Options

In 2013, Georgia law was amended to require licensees to complete continuing competency/education requirements as a condition of licensure renewal. These requirements become effective as part of the 2016 renewal cycle (any license expiring on or after January 31, 2016). Licensees may select one of the following options to fulfill the continuing competency/education requirements. If audited, the licensee will be required to submit documentation of completion of one the following five options. Licensees who submit a renewal application, are selected for renewal audit and do not complete the audit requirements will be considered to have submitted an incomplete renewal and the license will not be renewed.

| | Please Select Fi | rom One Of The Followi | ng Five Options | | |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| The selected option must be completed during the biennial renewal period | | | | | |
| Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 | Option 4 | Option 5 | |
| Completion of thirty (30) | Maintenance of certification | Completion of an accredited | Verification of competency by | Completion of a Board | |
| continuing education hours | or recertification by a national | academic program of study in | a health care facility or entity | approved reentry program or | |
| by a Board approved provider | certifying body recognized by | nursing or a related field as | licensed under O.C.G.A. §31-7 | graduation from a nursing | |
| [O.C.G.A. §43-26-9(b.1)(1)]. | the Board in Rule 410-12-12 | recognized by the Board | or by a physician's office that | education program [O.C.G.A. | |
| | [O.C.G.A. §43-26-9(b.1)(2). | [O.C.G.A. §43-26-9(b.1)(3)]. | is part of a health system and | §43-26-9(b.1)(5). | |
| Please submit certificates of | | | at least five hundred (500) | | |
| completion documenting | Please submit evidence of | Program of study must be a | hours practiced as evidenced | Please submit documentation | |
| thirty (30) continuing | recertification completed | minimum of two credit hours. | by employer certification on a | of completion of a Board | |
| education hours completed | during the biennial renewal | Acceptable areas of study | form approved by the Board | approved reentry program or | |
| during the biennial renewal | period. | include respiratory therapy, | [O.C.G.A. §43-26-9(b.1)(4). | graduation from an approved | |
| period. | | informatics, health care | | nursing education program | |
| | Please visit the Board's | administration, and business | Please have your employer | within the biennial renewal | |
| Please visit the Board's | website at | administration. | complete and submit the | period. | |
| website at | www.sos.ga.gov/plb/nursing, | | verification of | | |
| www.sos.ga.gov/plb/nursing | click on "Laws, Rules and | Please submit transcripts | competence/active practice | | |
| for a list of acceptable | Policies" and view Rule 410- | showing completion of | form. | | |
| providers. | 1212 for a complete list of | course(s) during the biennial | | | |
| | Board approved certifying | renewal period. Please | | | |
| | bodies | include course description(s). | | | |
| | | | | | |

Documentation may be submitted by fax to 877-371-5712; by email to nursing@sos.ga.gov; or by mail to Georgia Board of Nursing, 237 Coliseum Drive, Macon, Georgia 31217. Please be sure to include your name and license number with all submissions.



Georgia Board of Nursing Acceptable Providers for Continuing Education

Acceptable continuing education may be taken in a conventional classroom setting, through online courses, professional journals, correspondence or independent study.

1. Any provider, recognized by a national credentialing body, offering certification in the licensed nurse's specialty area of practice.

<u>Examples</u> of National Nurse Credentialing/Certification bodies include but are not limited to:

- American Nurses Credentialing Center Commission on Certification (ANCC)
- Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC)
- Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN)
- 2. Any provider, recognized by a national credentialing body, recognized by the Georgia Board of Nursing in Rule 410-12-.12, offering certification to advanced practice nurses.

<u>Examples</u> of National Nurse Credentialing/Certification bodies include but are not limited to:

- American Nurses Credentialing Center Commission on Certification
- American Midwifery Certification Board
- National Board on Certification and Recertification of Nurse Anesthetists
- 3. Georgia Nurses Association ("GNA"), including offerings given by the GNA Continuing Education Provider/Approver Unit. Information regarding the Georgia Nurses Association can be found at:
 - www.georgianurses.org
- 4. Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) in Georgia or any state AHEC that is a member of the National AHEC Organization. Information on Georgia AHEC can be found at: www.gru.edu/ahec
- 5. American Nurses Association (ANA), or ANY ANA affiliated state nurses association provider/approver unit
 - ANA www.nursingworld.org
 - GNA <u>www.georgianurses.org</u>
- 6. National League for Nursing (NLN)
 - www.nln.org
- 7. National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN)
 - www.ncsbn.org
- 8. Employer sponsored continuing education programs having a minimum of one course objective. <u>Unless the program is accredited through one of the other bodies mentioned on this document, employer sponsored continuing education may only be used for up to 50% of total contact hours.</u>

9. Any provider of professional continuing education for health care professionals.

<u>Examples</u> include offerings related to specialty areas of nursing practice such as research, case management, health policy, forensics, mental health, or complementary alternative therapies offered by bodies including but not limited to:

- Commission for Case Manager Certification (CCMC)
- Healthcare Quality Certification Board (HQCB)
- American Legal Nurse Consultant Certification Board (ALNCCB)
- 10. Professional Journals (i.e. *The American Journal of Nursing, Nursing 2013, Nursing Management* and *The Nurse Practitioner*) offering continuing education approved by appropriate bodies including but not limited to:
 - American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) <u>www.nursingworld.org/ancc</u>
 - American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) www.aacn.org
- 11. Any provider recognized by another state board of nursing within the United States.

Activities NOT accepted as Continuing Education

Offerings designed for lay persons

Offerings less than 30 minutes in duration

On-the-job orientation

On-the-job training related to new policies, procedures or equipment

Other educational activities not sufficiently professional in character to reasonably qualify as continuing education.

Definition of Continuing Education Units and Contact Hours

The Georgia Board of Nursing accepts either contact hours or CEUs (in any combination) to fulfill the continuing education requirements of O.C.G.A. §43-26-9(b.1)(1)

- One Contact Hour is equal to 60 minutes of instruction.
- Continuing Education Units are typically awarded in tenths of a point for each 60 minutes of instruction; therefore, 0.1 CEU is equal to 1 contact hour. Please use this conversion when determining total contact hours.



Georgia Board of Nursing Continuing Competence – Evidence of Active Nursing Practice

O.C.G.A. §43-26-9(b.1)(4) provides that applicants for licensure renewal may submit verification of competency by a health care facility or entity licensed under O.C.G.A. §31-7 or by a physician's office that is part of a health system. The licensee must have practiced at least five hundred (500) hours during the biennial renewal period and the employer must complete the certification form below.

| Name | Licer | nse Number | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| I certify that the above | licensee has worked at leas | st five hundred (500) hours during th | e period |
| of | _ (MMYY) through | (MMYY) and has perfo | ormed |
| his/her duties compete | ntly. | | |
| Employer/Representative N | lame | Date | |
| Employer / Representative | Signature | Title | |
| Name of Company | | Telephone | |
| Fmail | | | |

Georgia Department of Public Health Continuing Competency Requirements For Public Health Nurses Who Practice Under Nurse Protocol Agreements

Introduction

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) provides a statewide standardized system to assure ongoing competency of Public Health Nurses, consistent with all applicable statutes, rules and regulations. Key components of this system include the following activities:

- 1. Meet Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Standards
- 2. Comply with Standard Nurse Protocol Agreements
- 3. Review, revise or update Nurse Protocol agreements annually
- 4. Arrange peer review at least annually
- 5. Observe clinical skills at least annually
- 6. Review clinical records by delegating physician quarterly
- 7. Provide access to immediate consultation with delegating physician
- 8. Conduct performance review by supervisor, using a standard form, at least annually

<u>Organizational Structure and Responsibilities for Assuring Continuing Competency</u> District Health Director

DPH is structured with 18 public health districts, each with 1-16 counties within their jurisdiction. Each District has a District Health Director (DHD) who must be a physician licensed by the Georgia Composite Medical Board. The DHD is responsible for the overall quality of services provided within the district's jurisdiction. The DHD serves as the Chief Executive Officer for each of the County Boards of Health within the jurisdiction [O.C.G.A. 31-3-11(a)]. The DHD oversees the day-to-day operations of the District and the County Health Departments within the District's jurisdiction. The District Health Director serves as the link between the County Boards of Health and the Department of Public Health, works closely with the Department state office staff and reports directly to the Department Commissioner and State Health Officer, except for the Fulton County Department of Health and Wellness, whose DHD reports to the Fulton County Manager.

District Nursing Director

Each of the eighteen districts in Georgia has a District Nursing Director (DND) who must be a Registered Professional Nurse licensed by the Georgia Board of Nursing and is responsible to the DHD. The DND is responsible for all nursing related matters, including compliance with the nurse practice acts, scope of nursing practice, workforce needs, recruitment, retention, hiring, competencies, quality improvement, training and nursing policy and practice issues within the district. As a key member of the DHD's leadership/management team, the DND is responsible for assisting with conducting community needs assessments and reviewing the health status of the entire population within the jurisdiction of the district. The DND works with state office program staff regarding program specific goals, requirements, training and deliverables. The DND also works closely with the Office of Nursing on a wide range of matters pertaining to public health nursing, including nursing workforce planning and development, training, nurse protocols and nursing practice issues.

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District QA/QI Coordinator

Each District has assigned a nurse to serve as the District QA/QI Coordinator responsible for coordination of all QA/QI activities for nurses within the respective district. In some districts, the DND serves as the QA/QI Coordinator. The coordinators use the standards, principles and tools found in the DPH *Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement for Public Health Nursing Practice Manual.* The coordinator works closely with and is responsible to the DND in relation to all QA/QI activities, plans and needs.

County Nurse Manager

Within each of the 159 County Health Departments is a County Nurse Manager or Nursing Supervisor responsible for the onsite supervision of nursing personnel and they report to the DND. They use the standards and tools in the *Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement for Public Health Nursing Practice Manual* to plan the initial and annual training required of nurses and to assess clinical competencies of the nurses. They are responsible to the DND.

Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Standards

The Georgia Department of Public Health, Office of Nursing, in partnership with the state office programs and the 18 public health districts, coordinates the development of Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) standards for public health nursing practice. These standards are used by public health nurses at the local level to assure that public health nursing practice is consistent with all applicable statutes and rules of the Georgia Board of Nursing and the Georgia Pharmacy Board. For those APRNs exercising prescriptive authority, they must meet the requirements of the Georgia Board of Nursing, Georgia Pharmacy Board and the Georgia Composite Medical Board. The *Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement for Public Health Nursing Practice Manual*, which may be viewed at http://dph.georgia.gov/resourcesformsmanuals, provides the specific requirements and provides tools for the following:

- 1. Annual verification of nursing licenses by the Georgia Board of Nursing
- 2. Training requirements for practice under nurse protocol by specific program area (e.g., Women's Health, Child Health, Tuberculosis, HIV-AIDS, and Infectious Diseases)
- 3. Tool for documenting satisfactory completion of required training
- 4. Requirements and tools for annual peer review
- 5. Requirements and Checklist for observing clinical skills
- 6. Requirements and tools for clinical record review
- 7. Requirements regarding the provision of immediate access to consultation with delegating physician

Standard Nurse Protocol Agreements

Registered Professional Nurses (RNs) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) who are agents or employees of a county board of health or the Georgia Department of Public Health are among those authorized to practice under nurse protocol (O.C.G.A. § 43-34-23 and O.C.G.A.§ 43-34-25). Under this authority, a physician may delegate the performance of certain medical acts to RNs and APRNs who are agents or employees of a county board of health or the Department of Public Health. These medical acts may include any of the following:

- 1. Ordering dangerous drugs
- 2. Administering dangerous drugs

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- 3. Ordering medical treatments
- 4. Ordering diagnostic studies
- 5. Dispensing dangerous drugs

The delegated medical acts must be performed by the RN or APRN in accordance with a current nurse protocol, which has been signed by the RN or APRN and the delegating physician, and in accordance with a drug dispensing procedure. In addition, the RN or APRN practicing under a nurse protocol agreement must comply with all rules and regulations established by the Georgia Board of Nursing and the Georgia Pharmacy Board.

The standard nurse protocols are posted at http://dph.georgia.gov/resourcesformsmanuals. Groupings of standard nurse protocols with examples include the following:

- Tuberculosis (e.g., Uncomplicated Pulmonary Tuberculosis)
- <u>Sexually Transmitted Infections (e.g., Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis)</u>
- Child Health (e.g., Impetigo, Head Lice, Scabies, Pin Worms)
- Women's Health (e.g., Oral Contraceptives)
- <u>HIV/AIDS-Related</u> (e.g., Continuation of Antiretroviral Therapy, Diarrhea, Herpes Zoster, Oral Candidiasis, Seborrheic Dermatitis)
- Other Infectious Diseases (e.g., Preventive Treatment of Contacts to Pertussis, Preventive Treatment to Contacts of Haemophilus Influenza Meningitis)

There must be documentation that each public health nurse meets the following requirements:

- Successful completion of a baccalaureate-level health assessment course
- Successful completion of a clinical preceptorship and performance of the following competencies:
 - 1. Evidence-based knowledge of and ability to perform health assessments for assigned populations served
 - 2. Ability to communicate effectively via written, oral, electronic, and other means with various, diverse individuals and populations
 - 3. Ability to elicit data for a health history that includes physical, social, cultural, nutritional, mental, developmental and environmental information
 - 4. Ability to differentiate normal/abnormal findings
 - 5. Ability to interpret and apply findings to develop an appropriate plan of care to improve health

Prescriptive Authority for APRNs

APRNs in public health who exercise prescriptive authority use the standards and tools found in *Prescriptive Authority for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses Toolkit*, which may be viewed at http://dph.georgia.gov/resourcesformsmanuals.

<u>Attachments (Source: Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement for Public Health Nursing Practice Manual http://dph.georgia.gov/resourcesformsmanuals):</u>

- A. QA/QI Standards and Tools
- B. Immunization Practice for Public Health Nurses.

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