

## North Carolina State Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters Board

### CONTINUING EDUCATION POLICY

Amended April 15, 2009

Pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 93D of the General Statutes of North Carolina, the North Carolina State Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters Board (hereafter referred to as the Board) requires all licensees to successfully attend and complete a course of courses of occupational instruction, approved or sponsored by the Board, on an annual basis as a condition for license renewal; and evidence of satisfactory attendance and completion of such course or courses shall be provided to the Board by the licensee.

As a condition for annual license renewal, the Board requires ten hours of approved continuing education credit that will assure to the general public a level of current professional competence for each licensee. Continuing Education (CE) credits may be issued by this Board for **“non-internet programs” (i.e., programs where the participants are required to be present, at one or more designated physical locations, for the continuing education presentations not downloaded from the internet or conducted via the internet; and attendance is monitored).** **Non-internet programs shall hereinafter be referred to as “CE Programs” and shall consist of “sessions”** that may be eligible for Board approval. Such CE Programs may be televised and/or telephone distance learning presentations.

CE credits may also be issued for submission of Board-approved documentation, for all 10 hours of annual credits, for **“internet self-study activities” (i.e., live, on-line presentations; prerecorded, downloaded presentations; and text-based, downloaded readings) approved by ASHA, AAA, or IHHIS for CE credits. Internet self-study activities shall hereinafter be referred to as “Self-Study.”** The required documentation for each Self-Study event involves the submission of an official transcript listing a specific participant’s attainment of an 80% or greater score on an internet-presented (i.e., on-line) examination pertaining to the content of the self-study activity. It should be noted that if it is arranged for a group of individuals to congregate at a designated physical location where attendance is monitored, in order to “collectively participate” in one or more Self-Study events; and, thus, each attendee is not individually able to take the associated examination(s) and obtain an official transcript, this Board shall issue CE credits for such a special event when the program approval and verification of attendance requirements stated in this document for CE Programs have been fulfilled. In such a case, each Self-Study event shall be operationally defined as a “session.” SEE SECTION I, 1. “SESSION” for the definition of a session. The Board, itself, may elect to conduct such a special event as its designated continuing education “make-up” event for those licensees needing to complete their continuing education requirements for annual license renewal.

For any CE Program or Self-Study event to be considered for issuance of Continuing education Units (CEUs) by this Board, its content must clearly demonstrate relevance to the fitting and selling of hearing aids which includes the areas of hearing loss and consumer related issues. As a means to meet this criterion of relevancy, the Board has identified and approved two topic content categories. **Programs/activities designed for license examination preparation,**

**factory tours, poster sessions, and open forum sessions are ineligible for consideration as continuing education events.**

In order to assign CEUs, each CE Program will be subdivided into “sessions” that are classified according to topic content. Self-Study will also be classified according to topic content. **A minimum of five contact hours (i.e., 0.50 CEUs) must be obtained annually in Category 1. The remaining, required 0.50 CEUs may be obtained in either of the Board’s two topic content categories.**

### ***SECTION I: DEFINITION OF TERMS***

**1. SESSION** – A “session is defined as an instructional/learning event, with at least two primary “educational objectives” pertaining to a single Board topic content category, and a specific period of time (i.e., clock hours) allotted for accomplishing the specified objectives.

The minimum allowable duration for a session is one hour. Poster-type sessions conducted at a CE Program are not applicable, since participants are free to determine the amount of time that they interact with multiple presenters. A session is considered to be divided into parts, if there is a published break scheduled to interrupt that session during the CE Program. All sessions lasting more than three hours must have a published break, lasting for at least 15 minutes, or the session in question will only be issued 0.30 CEUs (i.e., three hours credit). Likewise, for every three hours of continuous presentation time (regardless of the number of sessions presented during that time interval), there must then be a published break. If a session is divided into parts, all parts must pertain to the same Board topic content category; no single part can have a duration of less than one full clock hour; and the session must be clearly listed in the published program agenda as being divided into parts with attendance required at all parts in order to receive CE credit.

**2. CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT (CEU)** – One CEU (i.e., 01.00 CEUs) is defined as ten hours of credit obtained for one or more continuing education events, with documented attendance for CE Programs or documented learning for Self-Study. One hour of credit is defined as a full clock hour of instruction/learning, excluding any time allowed for such activities as meals, breaks, and/or business or committee meetings.

This Board’s approved CEUs are recorded to two decimal points (e.g., a session conducted for 2 clock hours would be recorded as 0.20 CEUs). For CE Programs, no credit is allowed for any session whose total duration is less than one full clock hour. For sessions lasting longer than one clock hour, 0.05 CEUs is allowed for each additional full half-hour increment (e.g., a session lasting from 3:00 to 4:45 p.m. will be issued 0.15 CEUs). All Self-Study must have been approved by ASHA, AAA, or IHHIS for at least one hour credit.

**3. CEU ACCRUAL YEAR** – The “CEU Accrual Year” is defined as the period of time during which CEUs may be accumulated for the purpose of satisfying requirements for annual license renewal. The accumulation of CEUs is based on (a) appropriate

documentation of attendance at approved CE Programs which have completion dates between April 1<sup>st</sup> of each calendar year and March 31<sup>st</sup> of each consecutive year, and (b) official transcripts for Self-Study, dated between April 1<sup>st</sup> of each calendar year and March 31<sup>st</sup> of each consecutive year, that document a participant's on-line examination score of at least 80% correct for each Self-Study have been received by the Board on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April in the same calendar year and March 31<sup>st</sup> of each consecutive year, that document a participant's on-line examination score of at least 80% correct for each Self-Study event. CE Programs must have been approved and verification of CE program attendance must have been received by the Board on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April in the same calendar year for which license renewal is being sought (i.e., the deadline for timely license renewal). Likewise, official transcripts for Self-Study must have been received by the board on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April in the same calendar year for which license renewal is being sought.

When sessions with essentially identical content have been presented at the same of different CE Programs during any two consecutive Board CEU Accrual Years, CEUs shall not be issued for the second or more occasion that the session in question is attended by any individual seeking credits from this Board. Furthermore, CEUs for the same Self-Study event shall not be issued for the second or more occasion during any two consecutive Board CEU Accrual Years.

**4. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVE** – An “educational objective” is defined as a statement of what participants with a working knowledge/understanding of specified aspects of the topic being presented.

**5. PRESENTATION FORMAT** – The “presentation format” is defined as the teaching method utilized to impart information to the participants (e.g., lecture, panel discussion, demonstration, practicum, or debate). All sessions should include time for questions/answers. For sessions relying primarily on prerecorded (i.e., audio and/or video) materials and/or computer-generated presentations, a speaker/facilitator must be present to actively interact with the participants and monitor attendance. For televised and/or telephone distance learning presentations, there must be an announced way for participants to ask questions during each session, and the published program announcement should state that a program representative will be present at each distance learning site in order to monitor attendance.

### ***APPROVED BOARD TOPIC CONTENT CATEGORIES***

The Board's two approved topic content categories are as follows:

#### **CATEGORY 1 – Amplification and Hearing Rehabilitation Issues:**

- Hearing Aid Technology: Instrument Circuitry and Acoustic Performance Data;
- Earmold/Shell Coupling Systems: Design, Selection, Modifications, and Ear Impressions;
- Hearing Aid Selection Procedures, Fitting/Adjustment (i.e., Verification) Techniques, and Servicing/Repairs; and

- Hearing (i.e., Aural) Rehabilitation Using Amplification: Auditory Training, Hearing Aid Orientation and Counseling Techniques, Hearing Aid Validation Techniques.

**CATEGORY 2 – Hearing Loss and Consumer Related Issues:**

- Biological/Physical/Behavioral Bases Underlying Normal and Pathological Hearing Processes;
- Detection/Assessment/Monitoring of Hearing Impairment (i.e., Measurement Techniques and Test Interpretation), including Intraoperative Monitoring;
- Cochlear Implants/Implantable Hearing Devices;
- Central Auditory Processing/ADHD;
- Assistive Listening Devices, Including FM Systems;
- Techniques for Development of Speech/Language in Children with Hearing Loss, or Augmentative/Alternative Communication Strategies for Children/Adults with Hearing Loss;
- Cerumen Management, Dizziness, or Tinnitus as it Directly Pertains to Persons with Hearing Loss;
- Hearing Impaired Consumers’ Views of the Hearing Health Care Industry and Consumer Complaints;
- Infection Control Issues for the Hearing Health Care Profession;
- Professional Conduct and Regulatory Issues Pertaining to the Fitting and Selling of Hearing Aids, or the Practice of Audiology or Otolaryngology; and
- Hearing Aid Business Practices (e.g., Hearing Aid Office Management, Sales Contracts, and Hearing Aid Marketing or Industry Trends).

**Examples of topics that are not eligible for approval are as follows:**

- Financial Planning, or Computer Training (not related to the fitting/programming of hearing instruments), for the Business Owner/Employees, and Employment Contracts;
- The Balance Mechanism or Tinnitus, **if Not Directly Pertaining to Persons with Hearing Loss**;
- Supervision of Audiology Graduate Students, or Development/Status of the Au.D. Degree;
- Cerumen Management, **if Not Directly Pertaining to Persons with Hearing Loss**; and
- Training Designed for License Examination Preparation.

***SECTION II: REQUESTING CE APPROVAL FOR ELIGIBLE CE PROGRAM SESSIONS***

CE Programs may be submitted by any individual or collective group of individuals who are seeking CE credits from the Board, or by any formalized organization (i.e., program sponsor). The person designated on the Board’s program approval form as the program’s applicant will receive all Board correspondence dealing with the program in question. **For session approval, attendance must be open to all persons regulated by Chapter 93D of the General Statutes of North Carolina.** Proprietary sessions should be indicated on the

CE Program's agenda as "not eligible for CEUs issued by the N.C. State Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters Board."

Any CE Program that can be classified as "for members only" or an "in-service" is not applicable for Board-approved CEUs. Also, the published fee for "non-member: attendance at all CE Programs cannot appear to be set at an amount obviously intended to discourage attendance. Furthermore, if the program announcement is only published by the program sponsor on the internet, the website containing the announcement must be one that is affiliated with the hearing aid industry, should generally be known by N.C.G.S. 93D licensees, and must be accessible to all N.C.G.S. 93D licensees.

### **1. OBTAINING FORMS FROM THE OARD**

For CE Programs, the applicant should obtain from the Board a copy of its most recent revision of the program approval form entitled "APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF A PROGRAM FOR CEU ACCREDITATION" and a blank copy of its current verification of attendance form entitled "REPORT OF PROGRAM ATTENDANCE FOR ISSUANCE OF CEU CREDIT." Written requests for the forms will be sent within three calendar days of their receipt. When a CE Program has not been preapproved by this Board, participants should take a copy of the program approval form and the verification of attendance form to the CE Program site since (a) information may be needed from the program sponsor or the speakers/facilitators in order to complete the application for program approval, and (b) documentation of attendance should be obtained at the CE Program site using the verification of attendance form.

### **2. SUBMITTING THE COMPLETED APPLICATION**

A completed application consists of all information requested on the application form, the required \$40.00 administrative fee (payable to N.C. Hearing Aid Dealers & Fitters Board), **and a copy of both the published program announcement and the published time-ordered program agenda.** The agenda should list the exact time that each session begins and ends (including a listing of scheduled breaks), as well as which sessions are divided into parts. **Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 25-3-506 and 21 NCAC 22F .0103 (d), a processing fee of \$25.00 shall be charged for any check on which payment is refused by the payor bank.**

CEU accreditation may be sought and granted prior to the starting date of the CE Program in question (i.e., preapproval) or the application for program approval may be submitted subsequent to program attendance (i.e., postapproval). CEUs must be obtained between April 1 and March 31 and will count for the renewal of the subsequent year, which begins the day after March 31. For example, CEUs earned at a program which starts on March 31 and ends April 1 or later will be counted as follows: CEUs earned on March 31 will count for the year ending March 31; CEUs earned after March 31 for the program which begins on March 31 will be counted for the year ending the following March 31.

#### **(a) Seeking Approval Prior to the Starting Date of the CE Program (Preapproval):**

Program sponsors may seek prior approval as a service to their members, or as an incentive for attendance by advertising to their target audience that a CE Program has been preapproved. However, the CE Program's sessions should not be advertised as "approved by the Board" until such time as the Board approval, published announcements should state that "sessions have been submitted for approval." An individual (or group of individuals) may seek prior approval as a means to project the necessity for attendance at additional CE Programs in order to fulfill all aspects of the CE requirements established by the Board for license renewal.

**CEU accreditation must be sought prior to the starting date of the first of a series of identical CE Programs that are to be presented on different dates (and possibly at different locations), during any one calendar year, when the CE Program series is collectively being submitted for approval so that only a single \$40.00 administrative fee will be required.** See SECTION I, 3. "CEU ACCRUAL YEAR," and SECTION III, 1.(b), "Documentation of CE Program Modifications," for additional information regarding CE Programs approved for presentation on multiple dates.

For programs occurring in April, requests for approval must be received by February 15<sup>th</sup>, in order to be processed prior to the program date. No program approval requests will be processed during the month of March due to license renewal activities in the Board office.

- (b) **Seeking Approval Subsequent to CE Program Attendance (Postapproval):** All completed applications for program approval must be received by the Board on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April in the same calendar year for which license renewal is being sought. This Board's verification of attendance form should have been completed at the CE Program site, and should accompany the application for program approval when the application is submitted subsequent to program attendance.

### **3. RECEIVING A CE PROGRAM ACCREDITATION NOTIFICATION**

For each completed application received by the Board and accompanied by a \$40.00 money order or official bank check, written notification will be issued within 20 working days. PLEASE NOTE: Program Approvals are not processed during March. Requests received during March will be processed and issued by April 25<sup>th</sup>. The written notification shall include the Board's verification of attendance form with Board-completed, approved session titles listed on the form. This form, entitled "REPORT OF PROGRAM ATTENDANCE FOR ISSUANCE OF CEU CREDIT," will also list the corresponding topic content category for each approved CE Program session, and the approved quantity of CEUs per session. It should be noted that, in order to comply with Board Rule 21 NCAC 22F .0103 (d) concerning those cases where payment of the required administrative fee is made via company or personal check, written notification shall be issued by the Board no sooner than 20 calendar days after receipt of the required fee, assuming that a completed application has also been received by the Board.

The first completed application received by the Board for each CE Program shall constitute the basis for determination of the quantity of approved CEUs to be issued. The responsibility for the accuracy of the submitted information and the right to appeal the initial decision to the Board is held by the initial applicant. Written appeals must be postmarked within 20 calendar days following receipt, by the initial applicant, of the Board's written notification of approval or denial of the application.

If subsequent applications for a particular CE Program are received by the Board, the sender will receive within 20 working days (a) a copy of the Board's written notification of approval or denial of the initial application, or (b) a letter describing the status of the initial request for CE program accreditation. The Board will honor all written requests for a copy of the Board's written notification of approval or denial of the application that was sent to the initial applicant.

### ***SECTION III: REGISTERING VERIFICATION OF CE PROGRAM ATTENDANCE***

#### **1. COMPLETING THE REPORT OF PROGRAM ATTENDANCE FOR ISSUANCE OF CEU CREDIT**

Any participant who attended a preapproved or postapproved CE Program, or who can appropriately document learning for Self-Study, can submit to the Board a request for issuance of CEUs by using the Board's form entitled "REPORT OF PROGRAM ATTENDANCE FOR ISSUANCE OF CEU CREDIT."

##### **(a) Documentation of Session Attendance at a CE Program:**

For preapproved CE Programs, the program sponsor should provide participants with a copy of the Board's verification of attendance form with Board-completed, approved session titles listed on the form. If the CE Program was not preapproved, the participant should fill in the session titles as listed on the program sponsor's agenda that is presented to participants on the day of the continuing education event, using a blank copy of the Board's verification of attendance form that the participant brought to the event.

If a participant attends all of the sessions listed on the verification of attendance form for CE Programs, the hand-written signature of the program sponsor's representative should be obtained at the bottom of each page containing the session titles, and they should record their title and the date. If the participant does not attend all of the listed sessions, the hand-written signature of the program sponsor's representative or the session speaker should be obtained for each session attended, including all parts of each session attended, in the space provided on the form for session attendance verification. An alternate verification procedure is allowed when a rubber stamp or initials are utilized by the program sponsor, as their means of verifying a participant's individual session attendance. In this case, the Board's required documentation of the participant's attendance is the hand-written signature of the program sponsor's representative at the bottom of each page of the verification of attendance form that contains session titles.

The representative should also record the total number of CEUs earned in this Board's topic content categories (i.e., Category 1 and Category 2), on each page of the verification of attendance form that contains session titles, as well as their title and the date.

**(b) Documentation of CE Program Modifications:**

For a CE Program, if any sessions were modified after publication of the program announcement or after submission to this Board for approval, the modifications must be listed on the verification of attendance form. The program sponsor's representative should sign the verification of attendance form in the area designated for CE Program modifications. **The person listed as the applicant on the program approval application should submit the documentation regarding modifications to the board within 20 calendar days after the CE Program's completion date; but, in all cases, prior to April 1<sup>st</sup> of each calendar year.**

If the CE Program submitted by a sponsoring organization was preapproved and the program modification(s) affected the total number of CEUs offered or the number (or duration) of sessions approved in Category 1, the person listed as the applicant on the program approval application shall be responsible for notifying all CE Program participants. **NOTE: Changes to a program after it has been approved by the Board may result in the Board's modification of its approval regarding the total number of CEUs approved, the session titles approved, and the approved topic content category corresponding to each session title.**

**If a CE Program was approved by the Board for multiple dates and a permanent change in the content and/or duration of the CE Program is initiated by the program's sponsor after one or more of the approved program dates have occurred, the remaining program dates shall constitute anew CE Program and a new application for program approval must be submitted to the Board.** Likewise, if the program sponsor decides to offer a preapproved CE Program on additional dates, such additional dates shall constitute a new CE Program and a new application for program approval must be submitted to the Board. However, the program sponsor may notify this Board that a preapproved program date was cancelled and a different date has been substituted, **within 20 calendar days after the cancelled CE Program's completion date,** without having to submit a new application for program approval.

**(c) Documentation of Learning for Self-Study:**

The Board has approved the issuance of up to 10 hours of CE credit applicable for licenses renewal, for Self-Study approved by ASHA, AAA, or IHHIS, when the activity includes an on-line examination pertaining to the material that was presented and an official transcript can be generated. The Board's SUPPLEMENT to its verification of attendance form entitled "REPORT OF

**PROGRAM ATTENDANCE FOR ISSUANCE OF CEU CREDIT” must be completed and submitted to the Board, along with the required \$15.00 perform processing fee, by April 1<sup>st</sup> of the same calendar year for which completed along with the associated on-line examinations, and an official transcript listing the examination score for each completed Self-Study event must be obtained by the participant prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April of each year, so it can be submitted to this Board by the April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for license renewal.**

An official CE Activity Transcript, that is generated on-line, is available at no cost for continuing education events presented via the Audiology Online website. interested persons should go to [www.AudiologyOnline.com](http://www.AudiologyOnline.com) and click on “Earn Your CEUs!” on the lefts side of the home page screen. Any of the activities at the Audiology Online website for which CE credits are approved by AAA, ASHA, or IHHIS will apply for this Board’s approved self-study opportunities. Other websites that offer CE credits approved by AAA, ASHA, or IHHIS and that provide official transcripts listing the participant’s examination scores can be submitted to this Board, along with the Board’s verification of attendance form, as documentation of learning for Self-Study.

## **2. SUBMITTING THE COMPLETED REPORT OF PROGRAM ATTENDANCE**

A completed report containing all required signatures and the required \$15.00 per form processing fee (payable to N.C. Hearing Aid Dealers & Fitters Board) must be submitted to this Board **for each CE Program and for each separately submitted Self-Study event.** When an applicant is requesting this Board’s issuance of CEUs, only the Board’s form entitled “REPORT OF PROGRAM ATTENDANCE FOR ISSUANCE OF CEU CREDIT” shall be accepted as complete documentation for CE Programs and partial documentation for Self-Study that also requires submission of an official transcript. Certificates of attendance issued by any entity other than this Board, itself, shall not e accepted by this Board as proof of attendance or as verification of completion of a continuing education event. **NOTE: All of the Board-allowed ten hours of annual credit for Self-Study can be submitted on a single report form, with only a single \$15.00 processing fee required to be paid, if the submitted official transcript contains the participant’s on-line examination scores for the total ten hours of credit.**

For all CE Programs with completion dates between April 1 of the preceding year and March 31 of the same year for which annual license renewal is being sought, appropriate documentation of CE Program attendance should be received in the Board office on or before the first day of April of that calendar year. Likewise, this Board’s verification of attendance form and the official transcripts for Self-study must have been received by the Board on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April in the same calendar year for which license renewal is being sought. The Board encourages licensees to submit verification and payment within 45 days of program completion whenever possible.

### **3. THE CEU ACCRUAL YEAR RECORD**

The Board will maintain a cumulative record, for up to three “CUE Accrual Years,” regarding the CEUs earned by each licensee who submits appropriate documentation and fees for (a) CE Programs that were pre-approved or post-approved by this Board, and (b) Self-Study approved by ASHA, AAA, or IHHIS for CE Credits. Licensees may obtain a summary of their credits from the Board’s official website ([www.nchalb.org](http://www.nchalb.org)). If licensee is unable to access the information from the website, a written request should be submitted to the Board Office. A request for a full copy of a licensee’s CEU record, for the 3-year period on file, will be honored by the Board and processed within 20 working days of receipt of the written request. Requests by an individual, other than a licensee, are subject to the Public Records Act and will be handled accordingly.