

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL DOCTORS

**Q: How many total hours of continuing medical education am I required to complete each year?**

**A:** All medical doctors must complete forty (40) hours in the twenty-four (24) months preceding their licensure renewal. Unless exempted by statute, two (2) of the forty (40) required hours must relate to controlled substance prescribing, which must include instruction in the Department's treatment guidelines on opioids, benzodiazepines, barbiturates and carisoprodol and may include instruction on topics such as medicine addiction, risk management tools and other topics approved by the Board.

Example: If your medical license renewal expiration is October 31, 2024, forty hours of CME must be completed between November 1, 2022 and October 31, 2024.

You may complete all or none of your required hours in a single year within your two year CME cycle, so long as forty total hours are completed within the appropriate two year timeframe.

**Q: Who is statutorily exempted from the two (2) hour controlled substance prescribing CME?**

**A:** Medical doctors and osteopathic physicians who are board certified by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), American Osteopathic Association (AOA) or the American Board of Physician Specialties in one (1) or more of the following specialties or subspecialties do not have to complete the two (2) hour controlled substance prescribing course(s):

- i. Pain management;
- ii. Anesthesiology;
- iii. Physical medicine and rehabilitation;
- iv. Neurology; or
- v. Rheumatology.

**Q: How do I know whether a particular course is acceptable to the Board?**

**A:** In order to be accepted by the Board, hours must be awarded by an organization accredited as a sponsor of continuing medical education by the Accrediting Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), and the hours must be designated or certified by the awarding organization as meeting the criteria for AMA Category 1 credits or be designated by the AAFP as meeting the criteria of the AAFP's prescribed credit, or be designated by the AOA as meeting the criteria of the AOA's prescribed credits for continuing medical education.

**Q: How do I know whether my controlled substance prescribing CME will be accepted by the Board?**

**A:** Because the Board does not approve any particular CME course Board staff is unable to “approve” CME in advance of a provider’s completion. However, as long as the CME course or courses total two (2) hours, awards AMA Category 1 or AAFP prescribed credits and includes instruction in the Tennessee Department of Health’s treatment guidelines on opioids, benzodiazepines, barbiturates and carisoprodol, the course will be accepted. The course must be Tennessee-specific. ***We cannot accept any prescribing course, unless it specifies on its face that it includes the Tennessee-specific content.***

**Follow this link to find courses which attest to meeting the Boards TN specific prescribing requirement:**

[https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/healthprofboards/medicalexaminers/CE\\_Prescribing.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/healthprofboards/medicalexaminers/CE_Prescribing.pdf)

**Q: What if I fail to complete all forty (40) required CME hours in the two years preceding my license renewal?**

**A:** The Board of Medical Examiners has adopted a policy to address a licensee’s failure to obtain the requisite number of CME hours. That policy (available here: [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/healthprofboards/medicalexaminers/ME\\_CE\\_Policy\\_110320.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/healthprofboards/medicalexaminers/ME_CE_Policy_110320.pdf)) imposes the following penalties on the provider:

- i. The physician must pay a civil penalty in the amount of one hundred dollars (\$100) for each hour of Category I CME that he or she is deficient;
- ii. The physician must make up the amount of CME hours that he or she is deficient, and
- iii. The physician must complete ten penalty hours.

These penalties will be imposed through an Agreed Citation, which will be posted to the Board’s monthly disciplinary action report and linked to the physician’s verification page. A physician’s failure to comply with the policy may result in further disciplinary action.

**Q: I would like to request a waiver of my CME hours. What criteria must I meet in order for a waiver to be considered?**

**A:** The Board may waive a physician’s CME requirements for a two year licensure renewal timeframe in cases where illness, disability or other undue hardship beyond the control of the licensee prevents a licensee from complying. ***Requests for waivers must be sent to the Board prior to the end of the renewal period during which the continuing medical education is due and prior to application for renewal.***

**Q: How long must I retain proof of completion of my CME?**

**A:** All licensees must retain independent documentation of completion of all CME hours for a period of four (4) years from the end of the calendar year in which the CME was completed. Proper documentation may consist of any one of the following:

- i. Original certificates or photocopies of original certificates from course providers verifying the licensee’s attendance and/or completion of hours;

- ii. Original letters or photocopies of original letters from course providers verifying the licensee's attendance and/or completion of hours;
- iii. Documentation from the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) indicating acquired CME hours.

**Q: My license is retired. Do I have to complete CME?**

**A:** No, you do not have to complete CME if your license is retired; however, should you later choose to reinstate your license and reenter clinical practice, the Board may consider whether you have completed CME as part of its deliberations concerning your readiness to reenter practice.

**Q: My license is expired. How many CME's must I submit when I apply for reinstatement of my license?**

**A:** Submit documentation of successful completion of twenty (20) hours of CME for each twelve (12) month period or less preceding the reinstatement request, up to eighty (80) hours.

Example: If your license has been expired for three and a half (3.5) years, you must submit eighty (80) hours of CME. If your license has been expired for three (3) years, you must submit sixty (60) hours of CME.

**Q: My license is retired or inactive. How many CME's must I submit when I apply for reinstatement of my license?**

**A:** Submit documentation of successful completion of twenty (20) hours of CME for each twelve (12) month period or less preceding the reinstatement request, up to forty (40) hours.

Example: If your license has been retired or inactive for one and a half (1.5) years, you must submit forty (40) hours of CME. If your license has been retired or inactive for six (6) months, you must submit twenty (20) hours of CME.

**Q: I have a full and unrestricted medical license in Tennessee; however, I am still in a residency or fellowship training program. Do I have to complete CME?**

**A:** Licensees enrolled in good standing in ACGME-approved residency or fellowship training program can receive up to twenty (20) hours of Tennessee continuing education credit for each year of enrollment. To receive credit for your education, you must submit a letter from the director of your program which confirms your good standing, your date(s) of participation and that the program is ACGME-approved. You are still required to obtain two (2) of Tennessee-specific controlled substance prescribing education. For more information, consult the Board's "[Policy Regarding Continuing Education Programs for Those in Training Programs.](#)"

**Q: My license is inactive. Do I have to complete CME?**

**A:** No, you do not have to complete CME if your license is inactive; however, should you later choose to reinstate your license and reenter clinical practice, the Board may consider whether you have completed CME as part of its deliberations concerning your readiness to reenter practice.

**Q: I hold a Special Volunteer License, an Inactive Pro-Bono License, or a St. Jude's License, am I required to complete CME's?**

**A:** Yes.