



POSITION STATEMENT
60 Hour Continuing Dental Education Re-Licensure Requirement
March 24, 2008

The Florida Academy of General Dentistry proposes the increase of dental continuing education hours required for re-licensure from 30 hours to 60 hours biennially.

United States dental schools train and matriculate 4,500 students yearly. During the four year pre-doctoral program, dental schools only have time to expose and train students on less than 10% of the knowledge base of dentistry. The curriculum of many dental schools is designed on a “competency based” model which trains students on a broad range of basic knowledge that will benefit patients in most, but not all, situations. Patients and practice demands will, over time, go beyond the scope of dental school training and education. Additionally, practitioners have an ethical obligation to stay current with the rapid advances of dentistry. During the 1950’s practice era, the knowledge base was estimated to double every 25 years. This was just about the practice lifetime for some practitioners. It is now projected that the information revolution we are experiencing will double the knowledge base of dentistry every 4-5 years. Current practitioners will have to learn the equivalent of their dental school education several times over in their practice careers to stay current in dentistry. The current requirement of one weekend class per year is woefully inadequate to maintain an educational level and skill set contemporary with professional trends and practice methods.

Life-long learning is an obligation which is an essential component of professional licensure. According to the American Dental Association Code of Ethics, “The privilege of dentists to be accorded professional status rests primarily in the knowledge, skill and experience with which they serve their patients and society. All dentists, therefore, have the obligation of keeping their knowledge and skill current.¹ The Continuing Education (CE) requirement was established as the way our profession advises members of the minimum number of hours that must be maintained to stay proficient with the changes in the methods of the profession. In the United States, 31 of 50 states agree that 30 hours are inadequate to stay current with the ever increasing knowledge base and already have higher CE requirements than does Florida.

The Florida Academy of General Dentistry proposes that re-licensure requirements be increased to 60 hours biennially to fulfill dentists’ ethical obligation to serve the public by keeping their knowledge and skill current. This re-licensure may be fulfilled by two weekend classes per year, which should not be an undue burden for practitioners in a state with such a wealth of continuing education classes and conventions. Alternatively, online seminars are

plentiful and correspondence classes are available which will prevent economic hardship to practitioners who do not wish to travel. Additionally, Florida statutes already allow seven relicensure hours to be earned every two years for providing pro bono dental care to the underserved.

The greater significance of a well educated dental professional is the continual benefit to the public. Increasing the mandatory continuing education requirement would provide a great advantage to the public at large. The increase would provide the benefit as a non-statutory governing and upgrade effect to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the professional. There is also the benefit that the CE increase does not add any administrative burden or regulatory cost for the Board of Dentistry. The public health at large is benefited and protected by dentists expanding their knowledge and keeping current with the latest research.

Respectfully submitted by,

The Florida Academy of General Dentistry

1. American Dental Association. ADA Principles of ethics and code of professional conduct. Pa Dent J (Harrisb) 1993;60(6):27-30.