Purpose

The purpose of these model guidelines for continuing competence of occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants is to provide a template for use by occupational therapy regulatory boards and state agencies when drafting or amending regulations addressing participation in continuing competence activities. The model is intended to help safeguard public health, safety, and welfare by establishing minimum guidelines that are consistent with the American Occupational Therapy Association’s (AOTA’s) Standards for Continuing Competence, and accepted practice in the profession of occupational therapy.

The following model guidelines for regulation encourage using a variety of professional development activities, including continuing education (CE), academic coursework, independent study, mentorship, participation in research, and other activities. CE has been widely accepted as a method of maintaining and enhancing professional competence. AOTA recognizes, however, that there are multiple methods by which an individual may demonstrate pursuit of continuing competence. Optional provisions are provided to encourage licensees to conduct a self-assessment and implement a professional development plan for continuing competence. AOTA believes that a structured plan for each occupational therapy practitioner’s continuing professional development (CPD) is necessary for the advancement of the profession and practitioners themselves, and is equally important to the clients they serve. AOTA defines CPD as a self-directed, reflective process of lifelong learning aimed at maintaining practitioner competence, ensuring client safety and quality outcomes, enhancing or expanding professional practice, and reaching career goals. While CPD has not yet been widely integrated into maintenance of licensure requirements in the U.S. for health professionals, we believe elements of CPD should be integrated into existing requirements; for example, the creation of a professional development plan.

Chapter 01. General Regulations

01. Definitions

A. This chapter defines the following terms.

1. **AOTA Approved Provider Program**: A voluntary process of review and approval of continuing education (CE) providers by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) based on established criteria and guidelines that assess a provider’s ability to develop and implement CE activities that are relevant to the practice of occupational therapy. Providers who are approved by AOTA will be authorized to offer AOTA continuing education units (CEUs) for CE activities.

2. **AOTA CEU**: A standard unit of measure for participation in an organized CE activity that meets the AOTA Approved Provider criteria for relevance to the foundation and/or practice of occupational therapy. One AOTA CEU is equivalent to 10 contact hours of participation in an organized CE activity, excluding meals and breaks.
3. **Board**: The [state or jurisdiction] Occupational Therapy Regulatory Board.

4. **Contact Hour**: A unit of measure for a CE activity. One contact hour equals 60 minutes in a learning activity, excluding meals and breaks.

5. **Continuing Competence**: A dynamic, multidimensional process in which an occupational therapist or an occupational therapy assistant develops and maintains the knowledge, critical reasoning, interpersonal skills, performance skills, and ethical practice necessary to perform his or her occupational therapy responsibilities.

6. **Continuing Education**: Structured educational experiences beyond entry-level academic degree work that are intended to provide advanced or enhanced knowledge in a particular area.

7. **Continuing Education Credit**: Credit given for a formalized activity in the form of contact hours or CE units.

8. **Continuing Education Unit (CEU)**: A measure for continuing education activity. One CEU is defined as 10 contact hours of participation in a learning activity, excluding meals and breaks.

9. **Peer Reviewed**: Any written work that is blind reviewed by more than one person under uniform criteria.

10. **Professional Development Plan**: A self-initiated plan to assist occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants in addressing current competence in their various responsibilities and career stages and identify areas for growth. It encourages occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants to examine each area of responsibility relative to their practice and perform a self-assessment of professional development strengths and needs in order to develop and implement an effective plan for professional development and demonstrate pursuit of continuing competence.

11. **AOTA Standards for Continuing Competence**: Standards adopted for the profession by AOTA that establish the principal criteria by which individual occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants can examine their own competence. The Standards for Continuing Competence address knowledge, critical reasoning, interpersonal abilities, performance skills, and ethical reasoning (AOTA, 2015).

12. **Professional Development**: The ongoing process by an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant to actively engage in activities that improve the knowledge and skills necessary for meeting the behaviors or tasks inherent in each professional responsibility.
13. **Reflective self-assessment**: The process of reflecting on one's professional responsibilities in relation to the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes already acquired and those needed in order to demonstrate competence in areas of responsibility.

### 02. Continuing Competence Plan for Professional Development

A. It is the responsibility of each licensee to design and implement his or her own strategy for developing and demonstrating continuing competence. Each licensee has current and/or anticipated roles and responsibilities that require specific knowledge, attitude, abilities, and skills. It is incumbent upon each licensee to examine their unique responsibilities, assess their continuing competence needs related to these responsibilities, and develop and implement a plan to meet those needs.

B. The regulatory board recognizes the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) as the standards-setting body for the profession of occupational therapy and endorses the use of AOTA’s professional development resources.

C. A licensee may seek recognition by the board for an alternative professional development plan for maintaining continuing competence, provided the proposed plan is consistent with the provisions of these regulations and includes:
   1. Completion of a formal self-assessment process
   2. Establishment of professional development goals and objectives.

D. When implementing a plan for continuing competence during the current license period:
   1. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for completing activities related to developing a continuing competence plan for professional development.
   2. Documentation shall include a signed document by the licensee attesting that they have developed a professional development plan, including the components noted above in item C and consistent with the provisions of these regulations. Upon request, the licensee should be prepared to submit documentation that organizes continuing competence activities related to the licensee’s plan.

### 03. Continuing Competence Requirements for Licensure

A. Licensees applying for license renewal shall complete a minimum of 24 contact hours of qualified activities for maintaining continuing competence during the preceding 2-year renewal period. Licensees who are issued a license for a period less than the typical renewal period shall prorate the number of contact hours to 1 contact hour for each month licensed.

B. Applicants for licensure who are or have previously been licensed in another state that does not have CE or continuing competence requirements for license renewal shall show evidence of completing 12 contact hours of qualified activities for maintaining continuing competence within 1 year of submitting the application for licensure.
04. Exceptions to Requirements

A. Applicants for initial licensure as an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant who apply for licensure within 1 year of successfully completing the entry-level certification exam are exempt from continuing competence activity requirements.

B. Applicants for licensure by endorsement from a state or jurisdiction that has CE or continuing competence activity requirements for license renewal are exempt from continuing competence activity requirements.

05. Approval of Activities for Continuing Competence

A. Provider Pre-Approval
   1. Provided that the activities are consistent with the provisions of these regulations, the regulatory board shall grant pre-approval to:
      a. Activities sponsored or approved by the [state or jurisdiction] occupational therapy association
      b. Activities sponsored or approved by the American Occupational Therapy Association
      c. Activities sponsored by AOTA Approved Providers.

B. Approval of Provider Activities
   1. A provider who wishes to obtain regulatory board approval of activities for maintaining continuing competence, consistent with Section 05, shall submit to the board at least ____ days in advance of the program all required information, including:
      a. Course description
      b. Learning outcomes
      c. Target audience
      d. Content focus
      e. Detailed agenda for the activity
      f. Amount of credit offered
      g. Qualifications for the presenter(s)
      h. Sample documentation for demonstrating satisfactory completion by course participants, such as certificate of completion
      i. Statement from provider explaining how the activity will help the licensee demonstrate continuing competence.

   2. Upon review of the completed application, the regulatory board shall notify the provider as to whether the program has been approved, and if so, the number of contact hours that will be awarded.

   3. A provider of a continuing competence activity shall furnish documentation for demonstrating satisfactory completion to all participants, specifying the following information:
C. Approval of Other Activities

1. A licensee may obtain regulatory board approval of CE credits for activities not already approved. Activities must be consistent with Section 05. In order to obtain regulatory board approval, the licensee shall submit to the board the following materials:
   a. Course description
   b. Learning outcomes
   c. Target audience
   d. Content focus related to the practice of occupational therapy
   e. Detailed agenda for the activity
   f. Qualifications for the presenter(s)
   g. Sample documentation for demonstrating satisfactory completion by course participants such as certificate of completion
   h. Statement from provider or licensee explaining how the activity will help the licensee demonstrate continuing competence.

2. Upon review of the completed application, the regulatory board shall notify the licensee as to whether has been approved, and if so, the number of contact hours awarded.

06. Scope of Qualified Activities for Continuing Competence

A. To be accepted by the regulatory board, activities must be related to a licensee's current or anticipated roles and responsibilities in occupational therapy and must directly or indirectly serve to protect the public by enhancing the licensee's continuing competence.

B. Subject matter for qualified activities includes research; theoretical or practical content related to the practice of occupational therapy; or the development, administration, supervision, and teaching of clinical practice or service delivery programs by occupational therapists or occupational therapy assistants. Continuing professional development encompasses topics related to changing health, education, and other service systems that may appear to be beyond the confines of traditional occupational therapy service delivery (e.g., emerging practice areas). Specific examples of such topics include case management, administration, interprofessional team-based care, informatics, and evidence-based practice (Roessger, 2015, as cited in AOTA, 2017).

07. Qualified Activities for Continuing Competence

A. Knowledge/Competency Assessment:
1. Includes completion of knowledge and skills assessment activities, or both, related to the practice of occupational therapy, either online or in person by a state board–approved provider.

Self-reflections and self-assessments alone will not be accepted. The licensee must demonstrate engagement in activities providing feedback on current knowledge and skills to obtain credit for the activity. The licensee will articulate how this assessment is used to guide the licensee’s CE plan to meet the requirements for this licensure renewal period.

2. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for each contact hour or equivalent unit that is awarded by the provider, for a maximum of 4 contact hours earned per licensure period.

3. Documentation shall include a certificate of completion or similar document including name, activity, date, sponsoring organization, location, and time attended.

B. Continuing Education Courses

1. Includes attendance and participation as required at a live presentation such as a workshop, seminar, conference, or in-service educational program. May also include participation in other CE activities that require a formal assessment of learning. Examples include electronic or Web-based courses, AOTA Self-Paced Clinical Courses or other formalized self-study courses, AOTA CE Articles, etc. CE courses must be relevant to the practice of occupational therapy.

2. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for each contact hour or equivalent unit that is awarded by the provider and may be used for full requirement for licensure.

3. Documentation shall include a certificate of completion or similar documentation including name of course, date, author/instructor, sponsoring organization, location, and number of hours attended and amount of CE credit earned. States may request that additional information, such as licensee address and/or license number, is included on documentation.

C. Academic Coursework

1. Includes participation in on-site or distance learning academic courses from a university, college, or vocational technical adult education course related to the practice of occupational therapy.

2. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour per credit hour and may be used for full requirement for licensure.

3. Documentation shall include an original official transcript indicating successful completion of the course, date, and a description of the course from the school catalogue or course syllabus.
D. **Independent Learning**

1. Includes reading books and/or journal articles, reviewing videos, etc. related to the practice of occupational therapy.

2. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for 10 hours spent in an independent study activity, with a maximum of 4 contact hours earned per licensure period. A minimum of 8–12 pages is equivalent to 1 hour of reading.

3. Documentation shall include title, author, publisher, time spent, and date of completion. Licensee must include a statement that describes how the activity relates to a licensee's current or anticipated roles and responsibilities.

E. **Mentorship**

1. Participation as Mentee
   a. Participation in a formalized mentorship agreement with a mentor as defined by a signed agreement between the mentor and mentee that outlines specific goals and objectives and designates the plan of activities related to occupational therapy practice that are to be met by the mentee.
   b. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for 10 hours spent in activities directly related to achieving goals and objectives over a minimum of 2 months for a maximum of 2 contact hours. The Board may accept formalized mentorship programs for the amount of credit recommended by the mentor or as deemed appropriate by the Board.
   c. Documentation shall include name of mentor and mentee, copy of signed agreement, dates, hours spent and focus of mentorship activities, and outcomes of mentorship agreement.

2. Participation as Mentor
   a. Participation in a formalized mentorship agreement with an occupational therapy practitioner mentee as defined by a signed agreement that designates the responsibilities of the mentor and specific goals and objectives that are to be met by the mentee.
   b. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for each 10 hours spent in mentorship activities as a mentor over a minimum of 2 months for a maximum of 2 contact hours.
   c. Documentation shall include name of mentor and mentee, copy of signed agreement, dates, hours spent and focus of mentorship activities, and outcomes of mentorship agreement.

F. **Fieldwork Supervision/Capstone Mentoring**

1. Participation as the primary clinical fieldwork educator for OT or OTA fieldwork students.

2. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for supervision of a Level I fieldwork student and 3 contact hours for each Level II fieldwork student. A maximum of 12 contact hours may be used for this activity. Documentation shall include verification provided by the school to the fieldwork educator with student name, school, and dates of fieldwork or the signature page
of the completed student evaluation form. Evaluation scores and comments should be deleted or blocked out.

3. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for each 5 hours spent in formal mentorship activities as a mentor for an occupational therapy student in the completion of a capstone project (in accordance with ACOTE® standards) over a minimum of 14 weeks for a maximum of 2 contact hours.

G. Professional Writing
1. Publication of a book, chapter, or article related to the practice of occupational therapy.
2. A licensee may earn:
   a. 14 contact hours as author of a book
   b. 10 contact hours as author of a chapter
   c. 10 contact hours as author of a peer-reviewed article
   d. 5 contact hours as author of a non-peer-reviewed article
   e. 10 contact hours as editor of a book
   f. 5 contact hours as an editor of a peer-reviewed journal or professional article/chapter.
3. Documentation shall consist of full reference for the publication, including title, author, editor, and date of publication; or copy of acceptance letter if not yet published.

H. Presentation and Instruction
1. First time or significantly revised presentation of an academic course or peer-reviewed or non-peer-reviewed workshop, seminar, in-service, electronic or web-based course, etc. related to the practice of occupational therapy.
2. A licensee who serves as an instructor, speaker, or discussion leader of a CE program will be allowed CE course credit for actual presentation time, plus actual preparation time of up to 2 hours for each hour of presentation. Preparation time shall not be allowed for presentations of the same course and will only be allowed for additional study or research. In no case shall credit for actual time of presentation and preparation be given for more than 12 hours during any renewal period.
3. Documentation shall include a copy of official program/schedule/syllabus including presentation title, date, hours of presentation, and type of audience or verification of such signed by the sponsor.

I. Research
1. Development of or participation in a research project relevant to the practice of occupational therapy.
2. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for each 10 hours spent working on the development of a research project or implementation of a research project, including data collection and analysis, to a maximum of 10 hours per renewal cycle.
3. Documentation includes verification from the primary investigator indicating the name of research project, dates of participation, major hypotheses or objectives of the project, and licensee's role in the project.

J. Evidence-Based Project
1. Development of or participation in an evidence-based project related to the practice of occupational therapy (e.g., AOTA critically appraised topic, quality improvement projects).

2. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for each 10 hours spent working on an evidence-based project to a maximum of 10 contact hours per renewal cycle.

3. Documentation includes verification from the project manager or administrator indicating the name of the evidence-based project, dates of participation, major hypotheses or objectives of the project, literature review, and licensee's role in the project.

K. Grants

1. Development of a grant proposal related to the practice of occupational therapy.

2. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for each 10 hours spent working on a grant proposal to a maximum of 10 contact hours per renewal cycle.

3. Documentation includes name of grant proposal, name of grant source, purpose and objectives of the project, and verification from the grant author regarding licensee's role in the development of the grant if not the author.

L. Professional Meetings & Activities

1. Participation in board or committee work with agencies or organizations in professionally related areas to promote and enhance the practice of occupational therapy.

2. A licensee may earn 2 contact hours for participation on a committee or board for 1 year minimum for a maximum of 6 hours per renewal cycle.

3. Documentation includes name of committee or board, name of agency or organization, purpose of service, and description of licensee's role. Participation must be validated by an officer or representative of the organization or committee.

M. Community Participation/Engagement

1. Participation or engagement in community organizations to promote and enhance the practice of occupational therapy.

2. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for every 10 hours of participation in community organizations or events for a maximum of 6 contact hours per renewal cycle.

3. Documentation includes name of community organization, purpose of service, and description of licensee's role. Participation must be validated by a representative of the organization.

N. Board Certification and Specialty Certification

1. The regulatory board shall recognize completion of activities that result in Board or Specialty Certification or re-certification by AOTA or other approved providers consistent with evidence and best practice (e.g., Certified Hand Therapist) during the current licensure period.

2. A licensee may earn 5 contact hours for each board or specialty certification credential earned or re-certified during the current licensure period.

3. Documentation includes certificate of completion or other documentation from the recognized certifying body that identifies satisfactory completion of the requirements for obtaining board or specialty certification or re-certification.
O. Post Professional Fellowship Program

1. The regulatory board shall recognize completion of an AOTA Approved Fellowship Program.

2. A licensee may earn 1 contact hour for every 2 hours spent in fellowship activities in an AOTA-approved Fellowship Program to a maximum of 24 hours per renewal cycle.

3. Documentation includes certificate of completion or other documentation from the AOTA-approved Fellowship Program attended.

08. Waiver of requirements

A. Under extenuating circumstances, the regulatory board may waive all or part of the continuing competence activity requirements of these regulations if an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant submits written request for a waiver and provides evidence to the satisfaction of the regulatory board of illness, injury, financial hardship, family hardship, or other similar extenuating circumstance that precluded the individual’s completion of the requirements, on a case-by-case basis.

09. Documentation/Reporting Procedures

A. Licensees shall maintain the required proof of completion for each continuing competence activity as specified in these regulations. The required documentation shall be retained by the licensee for a minimum of 2 years following the last day of the license renewal period for which the continuing competence activities were earned.

B. Licensees should not send their continuing competence activity documentation to the regulatory board unless audited or otherwise requested by the board.

10. Audit of Continuing Competence Activities

A. The regulatory board shall perform a random audit or full review of licensees' continuing competence activity requirements at least once during each licensing period.

B. A licensee who is audited shall complete the requirements of the audit by the deadline specified by the regulatory board.

C. A licensee who fails to comply with the continuing competence activity requirements of these regulations may be subject to disciplinary action that may include suspension or revocation of license.

11. Other Provisions

A. Licensees may not carry over continuing competence activity contact hours from one licensure period to the next.

B. Licensees may not receive credit for the same continuing competence activity more than once.
References
