

CHAPTER 281  
CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

**645—281.1(154C) Definitions.** For the purpose of these rules, the following definitions shall apply:

“*Active license*” means a license that is current and has not expired.

“*Approved program/activity*” means a continuing education program/activity meeting the standards set forth in these rules.

“*Audit*” means the selection of licensees for verification of satisfactory completion of continuing education requirements during a specified time period.

“*Board*” means the board of social work examiners.

“*Continuing education*” means planned, organized learning acts acquired during licensure designed to maintain, improve, or expand a licensee’s knowledge and skills in order for the licensee to develop new knowledge and skills relevant to the enhancement of practice, education, or theory development to improve the safety and welfare of the public.

“*Hour of continuing education*” means at least 50 minutes spent by a licensee in actual attendance at and completion of an approved continuing education activity.

“*Inactive license*” means a license that has expired because it was not renewed by the end of the grace period. The category of “inactive license” may include licenses formerly known as lapsed, inactive, delinquent, closed, or retired.

“*Independent study*” means a subject/program/activity that a person pursues autonomously that meets standards for approval criteria in the rules and includes a posttest.

“*License*” means license to practice.

“*Licensee*” means any person licensed to practice as a social worker in the state of Iowa.

**645—281.2(154C) Continuing education requirements.**

**281.2(1)** The biennial continuing education compliance period shall extend for a two-year period beginning on January 1 of each odd-numbered year and ending on December 31 of the next even-numbered year. (To implement this rule change, the continuing education period for the December 31, 2000, renewal will run from July 1, 1998, to December 31, 2000.) Each biennium, each person who is licensed to practice as a licensee in this state shall be required to complete a minimum of 27 hours of continuing education approved by the board.

**281.2(2)** Requirements of new licensees. Those persons licensed for the first time during the license renewal period shall not be required to complete continuing education as a prerequisite for the first renewal of their licenses. Continuing education hours acquired anytime from the initial licensing until the second renewal may be used. The new licensee will be required to complete a minimum of 27 hours of continuing education per biennium for each subsequent license renewal.

**281.2(3)** Hours of continuing education credit may be obtained by attending and participating in a continuing education activity. These hours must be in accordance with these rules.

**281.2(4)** No hours of continuing education shall be carried over into the next biennium except as stated for the second renewal. A licensee whose license was reactivated during the current renewal compliance period may use continuing education earned during the compliance period for the first renewal following reactivation.

**281.2(5)** It is the responsibility of each licensee to finance the cost of continuing education.

**281.2(6)** The licensee shall maintain a personal file with all documentation of the continuing education credits obtained.

**645—281.3(154C,272C) Standards.**

**281.3(1)** *General criteria.* A continuing education activity which meets all of the following criteria is appropriate for continuing education credit if the continuing education activity:

- a. Constitutes an organized program of learning which contributes directly to the professional competency of the licensee;
- b. Pertains to subject matters which integrally relate to the practice of the profession;
- c. Is conducted by individuals who have specialized education, training and experience by reason of which said individuals should be considered qualified concerning the subject matter of the program. At the time of audit, the board may request the qualifications of presenters.
- d. Fulfills stated program goals, objectives, or both;
- e. Provides proof of attendance to licensees in attendance including:
  - (1) Date, location, course title, presenter(s);
  - (2) Number of program contact hours; and
  - (3) Certificate of completion or evidence of successful completion of the course provided by the course sponsor; and
- f. Contains one of the following content areas:
  - (1) Human behavior.
    1. Theories and concepts of the development of human behavior in the life cycle of individuals, families and the social environment;
    2. Community and organizational theories;
    3. Normal, abnormal and addictive behaviors;
    4. Abuse and neglect; and
    5. Effects of culture, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender.
  - (2) Assessment and treatment.
    1. Psychosocial assessment/interview;
    2. Utilization of the DSM-IV TR;
    3. Theoretical approaches and models of practice—individual, couple, and family therapy and group psychotherapy;
    4. Establishing treatment goals and monitoring progress;
    5. Techniques of social work practice; and
    6. Interdisciplinary consultation and collaboration.
  - (3) Social work research, program evaluation, or practice evaluation.
  - (4) Management, administration, and social policy.
    1. Organizational policies and procedures;
    2. Advocacy and prevention in social work practice;
    3. Management of social work staff and other personnel; and
    4. Management of social work programs.
  - (5) Theories and concepts of social work education.
  - (6) Social work ethics as they pertain to the rules of conduct.
  - (7) An area, as demonstrated by the licensee, that directly relates to the licensee's individual practice as a social worker. The licensee shall submit for consideration by the board a specific explanation of how the program relates to the licensee's individual practice setting as a social worker.

- 281.3(2) Specific criteria.** Continuing education hours of credit can be obtained by completing:
- a. A minimum of three hours per biennium in social work ethics.
  - b. A maximum of 12 hours per biennium for independent study courses.
  - c. Academic coursework that meets the criteria set forth in the rules. Continuing education equivalents are as follows:
    - 1 academic semester hour = 15 continuing education hours
    - 1 academic quarter hour = 10 continuing education hours
  - d. Self-study courses that have a mentor and prior approval as defined in the rules and are accompanied by a brief paper authored by the licensee demonstrating application of the learning objectives to practice issues.
  - e. Programs designed for the purpose of enhancing the licensee's administrative, management or other clinical skills.
  - f. Activities/programs that are sponsored/approved by:
    - (1) ASWB Approved Continuing Education (ACE) Program; or
    - (2) National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Continuing Education Unit (CEU) Approval Program.
  - g. Pro-bono/volunteer work that meets the following criteria:
    - (1) A licensee may earn a maximum of 3 of the required 27 hours of continuing education for credit during one biennium by performing pro-bono/volunteer services for indigent, underserved populations, or in areas of critical need within the state of Iowa. Such services must be approved in advance by the board.
    - (2) A licensee shall make application for prior approval of pro-bono/volunteer services by sending a letter to the board indicating that the following requirements will be met:
      1. The site for these services is identified including information about the clients, the services that will be offered, how they will be performed and the learning objectives.
      2. A contract will be established between licensee and client(s), and each party will be aware that the services are being provided without charge.
      3. The services will be subject to all the legal responsibilities and obligations related to the licensee's profession.
      4. The licensee will keep records and files of these client services pursuant to the rules of 645—Chapter 282.
      5. A representative from the site for pro-bono/volunteer services must provide a letter stating that these services are to be performed by the licensee.
      6. Upon review, the licensee will receive a letter from the board indicating prior approval for these pro-bono/volunteer services that will be done for continuing education credit.
      7. Following completion of such services:
        - The licensee must provide the board a letter stating that the services were performed as planned.
        - The representative on the site must provide a letter indicating such completion.
  - h. Instruction of a course at an approved college, university or graduate school of social work. A licensee may receive credit on a one-time basis not to exceed three hours of continuing education credit per biennium.
  - i. Instruction/presentation/moderation of continuing education programs. A licensee may receive credit on a one-time basis, not to exceed three hours of continuing education credit per biennium, for programs at which the licensee is actually in attendance for the complete program provided the licensee receives a certificate of attendance in compliance with this rule.
  - j. Authorship of papers, publications or books and preparation of presentations and exhibits. A presentation must be made before a professional audience. Presentations may receive credit on a one-time basis for the article, publication, book or the preparation of a presentation or exhibit, not to exceed three hours of continuing education credit per biennium.

**645—281.4(154C,272C) Audit of continuing education report.** After each educational biennium, the board may audit licensees to review compliance with continuing education requirements.

**281.4(1)** The board may audit a percentage of its licensees and may, at its discretion, determine to audit a licensee. A licensee whose license renewal application is submitted during the grace period may be subject to a continuing education audit.

**281.4(2)** The licensee shall provide the following information to the board for auditing purposes:

*a.* Date and location of course, course title, course description, course outline, course schedule, names and qualifications of instructors/speakers and method of presentation; or a program brochure which includes all the information required in this paragraph;

*b.* Number of contact hours for program attended; and

*c.* Individual certificate of completion issued to the licensee or evidence of successful completion of the course from the course sponsor.

**281.4(3)** For auditing purposes, all licensees must retain the information identified in subrule 281.4(2) for two years after the biennium has ended.

**281.4(4)** Information identified in subrule 281.4(2) must be submitted within one month after the date of notification of the audit. Extension of time may be granted on an individual basis.

**281.4(5)** If the submitted materials are incomplete or unsatisfactory, the licensee may be given the opportunity to submit make-up credit to cover the deficit found through the audit if the board determines that the deficiency was the result of good-faith conduct on the part of the licensee. The deadline for receipt of the documentation for this make-up credit is 120 days from the date of mailing to the address of record at the board office.

**281.4(6)** Failure to notify the board of a current mailing address will not absolve the licensee from the audit requirement, and an audit must be completed before license renewal.

**645—281.5(154C,272C) Automatic exemption.** A licensee shall be exempt from the continuing education requirement during the license biennium when that person:

1. Served honorably on active duty in the military service; or

2. Resided in another state or district having continuing education requirements for the profession and met all requirements of that state or district for practice therein; or

3. Was a government employee working in the licensee's specialty and assigned to duty outside the United States; or

4. Was absent from the state but engaged in active practice under circumstances which are approved by the board.

**645—281.6(154C,272C) Continuing education exemption for disability or illness.** A licensee who has had a physical or mental disability or illness during the license period may apply for an exemption. An exemption provides for an extension of time or exemption from some or all of the continuing education requirements. An applicant shall submit a completed application form approved by the board for an exemption. The application form is available upon request from the board office. The application requires the signature of a licensed health care professional who can attest to the existence of a disability or illness during the license period. If the application is from a licensee who is the primary caregiver for a relative who is ill or disabled and needs care from that primary caregiver, the physician shall verify the licensee's status as the primary caregiver. A licensee who applies for an exemption shall be notified of the decision regarding the application. A licensee who obtains approval shall retain a copy of the exemption to be presented to the board upon request.

**281.6(1)** The board may grant an extension of time to fulfill the continuing education requirement.

**281.6(2)** The board may grant an exemption from the continuing education requirement for any period of time not to exceed two calendar years. If the physical or mental disability or illness for which an extension or exemption was granted continues beyond the period initially approved by the board, the licensee must reapply for a continuance of the extension or exemption.

**281.6(3)** The board may, as a condition of any extension or exemption granted, require the licensee to make up a portion of the continuing education requirement in the manner determined by the board.

**645—281.7(154C,272C) Grounds for disciplinary action.** The board may take formal disciplinary action on the following grounds:

**281.7(1)** Failure to cooperate with a board audit.

**281.7(2)** Failure to meet the continuing education requirement for licensure.

**281.7(3)** Falsification of information on the license renewal form.

**281.7(4)** Falsification of continuing education information.

**645—281.8(154C,272C) Continuing education exemption for inactive practitioners.** Rescinded IAB 8/31/05, effective 10/5/05.

**645—281.9(154C,272C) Continuing education waiver for disability or illness.** Rescinded IAB 8/31/05, effective 10/5/05.

**645—281.10(154C,272C) Reinstatement of inactive practitioners.** Rescinded IAB 8/31/05, effective 10/5/05.

**645—281.11(272C) Hearings.** Rescinded IAB 8/31/05, effective 10/5/05.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 272C.2 and chapter 154C.

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