

Physician Assistant (PA) Continuing Medical Education (CME) Frequent Questions

Where can I reference the specific rules pertaining to continuing medical education requirements for physician assistants?

Please refer to [WAC 246-918-180](#), Continuing Education Requirements for Physician Assistants. Please also refer to [WAC 246-12](#), Administrative Procedures and Requirements for Credentialed Health Care Providers. Part 7 of this chapter specifically addresses continuing education, when it is required, how to prove compliance, auditing, acceptable auditing documentation, exemptions, how credit hours are determined, carrying over continuing education credits, taking the same course more than once during a reporting cycle. The requirements of [WAC 246-12](#) apply to all health care practitioners and are required in conjunction with [WAC 246-918-180](#) for physician assistants.

When can I start accumulating hours?

You may start accumulating continuing education hours upon initial licensure and after every renewal cycle thereafter.

What is a credit “hour” for continuing education?

[WAC 246-12-220](#) states in part: “a credit hour is defined as time actually spent in a course or other activities as determined by the regulatory entity.” A credit hour for time actually spent in a course cannot be less than 50 minutes, (excluding breaks).

How often must I report CME hours to the state?

Every two years at the time of renewal physician assistants must report 100 hours of CME. Failure to report CME renders the renewal invalid and your license is not renewed.

Do I need to send in paper documentation of my continuing education coursework along with my renewal? Will you approve continuing education courses for credit?

No. Please do not send in any of your documentation until you asked to do so. You will be required to sign an affidavit of compliance (on the back of your renewal notice.)



The Medical Commission may randomly audit up to 25% of all renewals as allowed by [WAC 246-12-190](#). Following your renewal, you may receive a notification of an audit. Only then, will you be required to provide written documentation of the dates and hours of the continuing medical education that you have obtained and reported with your renewal. The Commission will not keep your documentation on file, nor will it approve coursework. Please keep your CME documentation for at least four years after the renewal period. There is more information about acceptable audit documentation included in Chapter [246-12](#),

How many categories of continuing medical education are required?

There are two Categories of CME for physician assistants. [WAC 246-918-180](#) (3) requires a minimum of 40 hours to be earned in Category I. The remaining 60 hours can be from either Category I or Category II. The Commission believes the intent of CME is to improve and enhance the professional development of the physician assistant, and to improve the care provided to patient. Keep in mind that requirements for CME may change at any time due to new rules or legislation

Can I count continuing education hours I accumulate for other sources, (i.e. national certification with specialty organizations, etc.) towards this requirement?

Yes. [WAC 246-918-180](#)(2) provides the ability for physician assistants to use a current certification with the National Commission for Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA in lieu of 100 hours of CME).

There is one exception. If the Commission disciplines your license and CME coursework is required as a disciplinary sanction, the renewal requirement must be accumulated in addition to the sanction requirements.

We want to put on a continuing education course. What do we have to do to have it approved?

The Commission does not pre-approve CME coursework.

[WAC 246-918-180](#) (6) states in part that CME sponsors do not need to apply for prior Commission approval for a formal CME program. The continuing medical education category will depend solely upon the accredited status of the organization or institution. The Commission relies upon the integrity of the program sponsors to present CME for licensees that constitute a meritorious learning experience.

Can I carry over continuing education hours from one renewal cycle to another?

No. There is no carrying forward to the next reporting cycle of CMEs in excess of the required hours.



Where can I review/obtain a copy of the Medical Practice Act, with the updates of recent legislation, and other pertinent information?

This information can be accessed by clicking on the link to Laws / Rules ([RCW 18.71A](#)) and Rules ([WAC 246-918](#)), as well as other pertinent Laws / Rules regarding the practice of medicine on this website.

With the passing of legislation, or the amending or new adoption of rules takes place, it usually takes the Office of the Code Reviser for the state of Washington approximately three months to get the changes codified into the law. You may also sign up for Listserv notification via e-mail by going to our website. Through this service, you will receive notification via e-mail of the Commission's agendas, minutes, rule development and adoptions, and other pertinent information.

When is a practitioner exempt or able to get an extension from continuing education?

A physician assistant may get a reprieve from or granted an extension of CME requirements due to illness or other extenuating circumstances. The Commission or its designee will determine when to waive the requirements or grant an extension. This may take a while, please submit information prior to your renewal date. Contact the office at 360-236-2750 for further information.