



North Carolina State Board of Dental Examiners

2000 Perimeter Park Drive
Morrisville, NC 27560

February 19, 2026

Subject: Increasing Continuing Education Requirements for NC Dental Hygienists

To the Esteemed Members of the North Carolina State Board of Dental Examiners,

Over the past year, the North Carolina Dental Hygienists' Association (NCDHA) has actively engaged with our members regarding increasing continuing education (CE) requirements for registered dental hygienists (RDHs) in North Carolina. Following an economic impact survey conducted by the North Carolina State Board of Dental Examiners (NCSBDE), we recognized that we needed more complete data and additional input from NC RDHs to move forward regarding a potential minimal CE increase.

Feedback from members indicates strong support for increasing the annual CE requirement from six (6) to **ten (10) hours**. Equally important, hygienists emphasized the need for **professional autonomy** in selecting CE topics, allowing them to focus on areas relevant to their practice and professional growth, such as jurisprudence, public health, and topics that have the potential to alleviate the current workforce shortage. While NCDHA respects the current rule (21 NCAC 16I.0201 (a)) stating that "courses shall be related to clinical patient care" we feel it is a valid request from NC RDHs to expand the scope of topics recognized as eligible CE credits. With this being said, the increase in required minimum hours is an ideal method to allow expansion of topic scope while also maintaining the current six (6) hours of required CE related to clinical patient care.

Based on this input, the NCDHA proposes the following changes to **21 NCAC 16I.0201(a)**:

- As a condition of license renewal, each dental hygienist shall completed **six ten** clock hours of continuing education each calendar year. The hours may be acquired through self-study courses. To count toward the mandatory continuing education requirement, **at least 6 clock hours of self-study courses** shall be related to clinical patient care and **no more than 4 clock hours of self-study courses may be**

considered to be primarily of benefit to the licensee. All courses must be offered by a Board-approved sponsor listed in Rule .0202 of this Section. The dental hygienist shall pass a test administered by the self-study course sponsor and obtain a certificate of completion from the sponsor.

This proposal ensures NC RDHs maintain the current guidelines for clinically relevant continuing education, while encouraging opportunities for professional growth and respecting autonomy in selecting CE topics. It balances continuing education requirements with practical considerations for the workforce, aligns with national standards, and supports high-quality patient care.

The NCDHA is committed to ongoing collaboration with the NCSBDE. We are open to further discussion regarding implementation and any additional considerations the Board may have.

On behalf of the NCDHA Executive Council, Board of Trustees, & North Carolina RDHs,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Stewart MPH-D RDH". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rachel" being the most prominent.

Rachel Stewart, MPH-D, RDH

President

North Carolina Dental Hygienists' Association

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