24.159.301 DEFINITIONS

(1) "Accrediting organization" means a professional organization that establishes standards and criteria for continuing education programs in nursing, advanced nursing, medicine, and other health care specialties.

(2) "Advanced practice registered nurse" or "APRN" means a registered nurse licensed by the board to practice as an advanced practice registered nurse pursuant to 37-8-202, MCA, and ARM 24.159.1414. Four types of APRNs are recognized by Montana law:
   (a) nurse practitioner (NP);
   (b) certified nurse midwife (CNM);
   (c) certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA); and
   (d) clinical nurse specialist (CNS).

(3) "Board" means the Montana Board of Nursing.

(4) "Certifying body" means a national certifying organization that has been approved by the board to use psychometrically sound and legally defensible examinations for certification of nursing specialties.

(5) "Charge nurse" means the nurse who is in charge of patient and/or resident care during a nursing shift. An LPN may serve as a charge nurse in the absence of an RN in a long-term care facility, pursuant to 37-8-102, MCA.

(6) "CNOR" means the documented validation of the professional achievement of identified standards of practice by an individual registered nurse providing care for patients before, during, and after surgery.

(7) "Competency" means performing skillfully and proficiently the functions that are within the role of the licensee, and demonstrating the interrelationship of essential knowledge, judgment, and skills.

(8) "Contact hours" means the time period of instruction determined by the continuing education provider and indicated on the participant's certificate of completion. One academic semester credit equals 15 contact hours; one academic quarter credit equals 12.5 contact hours.

(9) "Continuing education" means a planned learning activity that occurs in a classroom, online, audio-conference, video-conference, or as independent study. All continuing education must be approved by an accrediting organization or provided by an accredited academic institution of higher learning, a continuing education provider, or a certifying body.

(10) "Continuing education provider" means an entity approved by an accrediting organization to provide continuing education programs.

(11) "Department" means the Department of Labor and Industry as provided for in Title 2, chapter 15, part 17, MCA.
24.159.2101 STANDARDS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

(1) Continuing education for nurses is formal training that:
   (a) provides new knowledge and skills to assist with advanced clinical decision making;
   (b) offers greater depth of knowledge and skills in a particular area of nursing role or practice;
   (c) enhances professional attitudes and behaviors;
   (d) advances career goals;
   (e) promotes professional development and currency in nursing practice;
   (f) supports innovation and creativity in nursing practice;
   (g) implements change within the individual’s nursing practice and within healthcare; or
   (h) addresses new and developing standards of nursing practice.

(2) To qualify as contact hours, continuing education courses must be approved by an accrediting organization or provided by an academic institution of higher learning, a continuing education provider, or an APRN certifying body.

(3) Licensees seeking reactivation or reinstatement of an inactive license must complete 24 contact hours of continuing education during the two-year period immediately preceding application for reinstatement.

24.159.2102 BIENNIAL CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

(1) All licensees must verify on the renewal application the completion of continuing education contact hours during the two-year license renewal period:
   (a) practical nurses must complete a minimum of 24 contact hours during the two-year renewal period;
   (b) registered nurses must complete a minimum of 24 contact hours during the two-year renewal period; and
   (c) APRNs must complete a minimum of 40 contact hours during the two-year renewal period that meet the requirements set forth in ARM 24.159.1425, in addition to the ten contact hours of the continuing education required for maintaining prescriptive authority, as set forth in ARM 24.159.1468.

(2) Excess continuing education contact hours may not be carried over for credit during the following two-year renewal period.

(3) The board may prorate the contact hour requirement for nurses who are licensed for less than two years.

(4) Licensees holding dual nursing licensure are required to meet the continuing education requirements for only the most advanced level of licensure.

(5) Licensees seeking reactivation or reinstatement of an inactive license must complete 24 contact hours of continuing education during the two-year period immediately preceding application for reinstatement.
(6) Licensees may submit a written request prior to the renewal deadline for a waiver or time extension for all or a portion of continuing education requirements on the grounds of extreme hardship. (History: 37-1-131, 37-1-319, 37-8-202, MCA; IMP, 37-1-131, 37-1-306, 37-1-319, MCA; NEW, 2010 MAR p. 2651, Eff. 11/13/10.)

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24.159.2104 NONACCREDITED ACTIVITIES (1) The following activities may not be used by a licensee to satisfy the continuing education requirements set forth in this chapter:

(a) classes in basic life support, first aid, or cardiopulmonary resuscitation;
(b) repetition of a continuing education class with identical content and course objectives within a single renewal period;
(c) agency-specific orientation or in-service program designed for work at a specific institution or for a specific employer that teaches and tests for skill competency or addresses institution-based or employer-based standards of nursing practice;
(d) personal development activity that educates individuals on topics pertaining to financial management, personal hygiene or beautification, personal conduct, or other topics that do not pertain to the practice of nursing or healthcare;
(e) self-directed study such as reading of texts or journal articles for which continuing education contact hours have not been awarded by an accrediting organization;
(f) participation in clinical practice or research for which contact hours have not been awarded by an accrediting organization;
(g) attendance at professional meetings or conventions, except those portions for which continuing education contact hours have been awarded by an accrediting organization;
(h) participation in community service or volunteer practice; and
(i) participation as a member in a professional organization. (History: 37-1-131, 37-1-319, 37-8-202, MCA; IMP, 37-1-131, 37-1-306, 37-1-319, MCA; NEW, 2010 MAR p. 2651, Eff. 11/13/10.)

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24.159.2106 AUDITING OF CONTACT HOURS

(1) The board may conduct a retrospective random audit of the completion of continuing education by licensees during each two-year renewal period.

(2) The board shall notify licensees of the audit by U.S. mail.

(3) Licensees shall respond to the notice of audit by the date specified in the notice by submitting proof of completion of continuing education for the renewal period specified by the board. Proof may consist of copies of the continuing education certificates issued by the continuing education provider, transcripts with course descriptions or other verified documentation of course completion.

(4) Licensees must retain proof of completion of continuing education for the period of no less than two years following the last day of the renewal period during which the continuing education was obtained.

(5) The audit may include five percent of each license category during each renewal period.

(6) Failure to respond to a board notice of audit may result in disciplinary action against the licensee. (History: 37-1-131, 37-1-319, 37-8-202, MCA; IMP, 37-1-131, 37-1-306, 37-1-319, MCA; NEW, 2010 MAR p. 2651, Eff. 11/13/10.)

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