Continued Competency — A Colorado Approach

Most consumers already assume that when a professional is re-licensed they are fully competent to do their job. For the most part, their assumption is correct. However, with today’s fast-paced, technology-driven world, it is necessary for professionals to continually update their skills and knowledge in the field. Relying solely on on-the-job experience is not always sufficient. We seek a new approach to ensure competency among professions.

Continued Competency is a movement that requires professionals to demonstrate their competency in their field, usually by means of assessment against a standard, ranging from an initial self assessment, to a peer review, or even published articles in a recognized journal. Currently in many areas, we rely solely on continuing education requirements, which allow the professional to attain further knowledge via classroom work, but the number of hours sitting in the classroom does not accurately show that the professional is competent in terms of changing professional practices and modified job requirements.

In order to seek input from the professions that will be held accountable to this standard, DORA requests feedback and partnerships with interested professionals and associations to develop a statewide Continued Competency initiative that makes sense for Colorado. DORA’s goal in instituting Continued Competency is to develop a system that protects Colorado consumers, fits our types of practices and our regulatory environment, and supports Colorado’s professional culture.

We stand committed to the following principles as we solicit input and pursue partnerships to develop Colorado’s Continued Competency system:

- There should be collaboration. A broad collaboration of stakeholders is necessary to develop effective programs. This must include licensing, accreditation and certification entities as well as associations, societies and other interested parties.
- One size does not fit all. We believe that different professionals will require different models/approaches.
- The purpose is to assure public safety and improve the lifelong learning of professionals, not catch “bad apples.”
- It is the professionals’ responsibility and benefit. Any continued competency program should be designed as a positive development in the professional’s career, not as an unwarranted intrusion or punitive burden.
- Continuing Education, while not necessarily sufficient by itself to ensure Continued Competence, may be a necessary component.
- The final responsibility to develop initiatives that work for each profession should reside with the licensing board or entity responsible for licensure.
- Any system should address the knowledge, skills, attitudes, judgment, abilities, experience, and ethics necessary for safe and competent practice in the setting and role of an individuals’ practice at the time of renewal.
- Any system must take into account existing professional development programs administered by voluntary credentialing and specialty boards or by hospitals or other employers, when the private programs meet Board-established standards.