

**Pennsylvania Department of Education
Office of Commonwealth Libraries
Bureau of Library Development**

Continuing Education (CE) Guidelines for Public Library Staff

Preamble

Act 37 of 1999, amended The Library Code (24 P.S. 4101 - 4503) and created the requirement for public library staff to receive continuing education (CE) on a regular basis in order for the public library to qualify for state aid. The standard was added to the law because quality public library service relies heavily on an informed, skilled public library workforce. The purpose of requiring continuing education is to enhance staff performance for improved public library service in the Commonwealth. By issuing these Guidelines, the Office of Commonwealth Libraries seeks to clarify the continuing education requirements for public library boards, directors and staff members.

Every day, on the job, good employees continually learn new knowledge and skills that help them perform better in our changing environment. Indeed, the information explosion, knowledge-based economy and the rapid pace of technological change propel everyone who wants to remain relevant on the job into lifelong learning. However, when faced with such an exponential growth in knowledge, more formal continuing education also has a valuable role to play in keeping employees up-to-date. These guidelines make a distinction between the ongoing informal education process involved in living a life and the more formal continuing education programs designed to impart specific knowledge or skills to the learner.

Guidelines

1. Definitions

- a) Continuing education – Education needed and/or required to maintain or upgrade skills within the broad area in which one works. Education used to prepare an employee for greater responsibility or to fulfill job requirements. Continuing education for the purposes of these guidelines denotes formalized teaching with an instructor and learning objectives.
- b) Hour of continuing education - One sixty-minute period during which the provision of continuing education is going on. The time employees spend traveling to sites, following registration procedures, at meals or at receptions do not contribute to continuing education hours.
- c) Year – The annual period covered by the library’s fiscal year, usually either January 1 to December 30 or July 1 to June 30.
- d) Workshop - A continuing education program, typically lasting less than one day to about one week, which is designed to teach practical skills or impart knowledge in a specialized area. A workshop is given to a group of people, has a defined subject area, learning objectives, and a beginning and an end.
- e) Conference - A formal, planned gathering, typically of people in a profession or occupation, with a program that may include informative sessions, workshops, vendor exhibits, and social activities. Certain sessions and workshops at conferences may be considered continuing education programs if they meet Office of Commonwealth Libraries criteria for approval.
- f) Library director - The head librarian, chief executive or administrator of a library, library system or library system member.
- g) Library staff - For purposes of these guidelines only, paid library employees who work 20 hours per week or more.
- h) Professional associations - Nonprofit membership organizations typically comprised of people who are all in the same profession or occupation.

- i) On-the-job training - Instruction often provided by a supervisor or co-worker on an informal basis to employees while they are working, on the job, to instruct them in the performance of new or changing duties or in the use of technology.
- j) Consultation - The provision of advice and counsel by an individual or group of individuals such as a consulting firm to another individual or small group such as a library board. District Library Center consultant librarians typically offer such advice and counsel on an ongoing basis to local librarians, trustees and others involved in the provision or support of library service.
- k) In-service training - Formal training sessions, similar to workshops, provided by an employer in the work setting for employees. Typically such training is done in a group setting, with instructional objectives, in a defined subject area, with a beginning and an end.

2. What are the CE requirements?

- a) For a public library or public library system to receive Quality Libraries Aid, “the library director of the local library or library system shall annually attend at least eight hours of continuing education programs approved by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries.” (Education Code (24 PA.C.S.) - Public Library Code, §9334(c)(5).
- b) For a public library or public library system to qualify for Incentives for Excellence Aid, “the local library or member library within a library system shall require at least six hours of continuing education every two years for paid staff working at least 20 hours per week in direct support of the library service.” (Education Code (24 PA.C.S.) - Public Library Code, §9335(b)(4)).

3. What kinds of CE programs will be approved by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries?

- a) Courses taken for credit from post-secondary institutions including colleges, community colleges, and business or technical schools or
- b) Workshops, conferences and institutes given by or funded by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries or
- c) Other workshops, including those offered at professional conferences, when approved by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries according to the following criteria:
 - i. The continuing education program has stated learning objectives and a clear beginning and end.
 - ii. The program of instruction or education is presented in a formal, classroom-like environment.
 - iii. The program is presented by a qualified instructor or facilitator who has knowledge of the subject matter.
- d) Continuing education programs presented through other media, such as video conferences, the Internet and other emerging technologies according to the following Office of Commonwealth Libraries criteria:
 - i. The program is presented by an accredited post-secondary institution or
 - ii. The program is presented by a qualified instructor as approved by the library board or the library director, the district library center consultant librarian or the system and
 - iii. Programs must be a workshop or course, with learning objectives, a beginning and an end, and access to an instructor.
 - iv. Documentation is required for continuing education (such as an electronic confirmation or a certificate of completion from the provider.)

4. What kinds of CE content/courses are acceptable?

- a) The CE content or course must be related to the library director's or staff member's job or deemed appropriate by the library administration.
- b) The content should expose the director or library staff member to external people and ideas, i.e., people and ideas outside of the employee's library.
- c) The content should be intended to improve the director's or staff member's job performance.
- d) Workshops conducted or organized by District Library Consultants at district meetings may be counted toward an employee's continuing education hours.
- e) Workshops and sessions held at professional conferences may be counted toward an employee's continuing education hours provided the Office of Commonwealth Libraries approves them.

5. What kinds of activities may not be counted towards fulfillment of the continuing education requirement?

- a) Consultations between the library director or library staff and the District Library Center Consultant may not be counted towards fulfillment of the CE requirement.
- b) Consultations between the library director or library staff and an outside consultant such as a building consultant or a planning consultant may not be counted towards fulfillment of the CE requirement.
- c) On-the-job training and staff orientation cannot be counted towards an employee's continuing education hours.
- d) Meetings, including district meetings where formal instruction does not occur, committee meetings of professional associations, internal or external committee meetings, meetings of work groups or task forces may not be counted toward fulfillment of the CE requirement.

6. How is mandatory continuing education hours counted?

- a) Local libraries and library systems must have written verifiable records of the hours that library directors and library staff receive continuing education each year.
- b) The hours must be documented and verified in accordance with guideline number 8, below.
- c) For purposes of tabulating continuing education hours of employees, local libraries and library systems should use the library or library system's fiscal year.
- d) Continuing education counts only during the one or two fiscal year period it is received by the employee and may not be cumulated to fulfill future year requirements. For example, a staff member who receives twelve hours of continuing education within one library fiscal year satisfies the requirement that the staff member receive at least six hours every two years. However, the "extra" six hours received above the minimum required may not be cumulated and "carried over" to meet requirements in future years.

7. Who is responsible for paying the costs associated with continuing education?

- a) Library staff must follow the continuing education policies and procedures of the local library or system.
- b) Tuition charges and other costs associated with the provision of CE to library directors and library staffs are the responsibility of the library and may be paid out of library operational funds, including state aid.
- c) Attendance at required continuing education programs should be considered part of an employee's regular, paid work hours.

8. What kind of documentation and verification should a library or library system keep?

- a) Libraries and library systems should keep on file documentation that offers reasonable proof that the library director and library staff have received the required number of hours of continuing education each one or two year period.
- b) All continuing education files must be made available for inspection by the district library center or the Office of Commonwealth Libraries.
- c) The following documents may be used to verify the employee has received the continuing education as required:
 - i. Transcripts of courses or
 - ii. A copy of the completed course exam or a report by the employee on the CE program or
 - iii. Certificates or confirmations of completion (paper or electronic) issued by the CE provider.
 - iv. The district system administrator, library director or a library board member must review a report by employee.