



**American Pharmacists Association**<sup>®</sup>  
Improving medication use. Advancing patient care.

**APhA**

## **APhA Certificate Training Program Certificates of Achievement Guidance Document**

### ***Specifically for the APhA Immunization Program***

#### New Policy

As of August 1, 2015, all Certificates of Achievement issued by the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) for APhA's *Pharmacy-Based Immunization Delivery* certificate training programs will include the following text:

#### **Current**

**The training associated with this APhA Certificate of Achievement is based on current immunization standards and recommendations at the time of training. It is the responsibility of the immunizer to engage in continuing professional development and education to meet the immunization standards and practice expectations set forth by the immunizer's state board of pharmacy and/or the policies and procedures of the organization that employs the immunizer. This Certificate of Achievement does not expire, but in accordance with existing immunization standards, immunizers should maintain and have accessible proof of current continuing professional development in the area of immunizations and a certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) or Basic Cardiac Life Support (BCLS).**

#### Rationale

Due to the large number of immunizers who use APhA's Certificates of Achievement as proof of training, it is APhA's intent to ensure that immunizers stay current with ongoing changes in the clinical area and maintain their knowledge and skills related to patient care.

#### Guidance

Following the receipt of an APhA Certificate of Achievement, it is the immunizer's responsibility to apply the knowledge and skills learned and then to keep current with changes to clinical and practice guidelines, new or changing evidence and therapeutic options, and changes in regulatory guidelines.

*Specific to the Pharmacy-Based Immunization Delivery certificate training program, APhA recommends the following:*

- Practitioners will begin immunizing within 12 months of completion of this training.
- Practitioners should complete an annual immunization update continuing pharmacy education (CPE) activity (1–2 hours) that provides updated information regarding guidelines and recommendations of the Advisory

Committee on Immunization Practices, National Vaccine Advisory Committee, and other immunization authorities.

- Practitioners must maintain written proof of current CPR/BCLS certification.

Any immunizer who wishes to document his or her continued competency has the following options:

1. The immunizer can provide proof of ongoing continuing professional development or continuing pharmacy education in the specific topic area to assure a third party (e.g., employer, state board of pharmacy, payer) that all knowledge and competencies are current. It is not a requirement that the education be provided by APhA.
2. The immunizer can retake a certificate training program to earn a current Certificate of Achievement. APhA releases new versions of each certificate training program every 3 years in alignment with the expiration of the associated Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) activity numbers.

## FAQs

**Q: Does this policy mean that my Certificate of Achievement expires or becomes invalid?**

A: No, APhA is not expiring or invalidating any certificates.

**Q: In the context of this new statement, what does “current” mean?**

A: APhA updates the live seminar slides of this training program two to three times a year. These changes are primarily driven by the results of the three ACIP meetings held each year in February, June, and October. Immunizers need to understand how often the environment is changing and implement a means to stay up to date. APhA recommends at least an annual update is needed to stay “current.”

**Q: Once my Certificate of Achievement is no longer current, do I have to retake an APhA certificate training program?**

A: No, APhA does not require any participant to retake one of our training programs. It is up to immunizers to maintain their ongoing continuing professional development within the requirements of their state board of pharmacy and/or employer.

**Q: What do you mean by continuing professional development?**

A: Continuing professional development (CPD) is a structured approach to learning to help ensure competence to practice, encompassing knowledge, skills, and practical experience. CPD can involve any relevant learning activity, whether formal and structured or informal and self-directed.

**Q: What are some examples of continuing professional development?**

A: On February 4, 2015, ACPE released *Guidance on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for the Profession of Pharmacy*. This document provides specific activities that fall under the following categories: Continuing Education, Academic/Professional Study, Scholarly Activities, Teaching and Precepting, Workplace Activities, and Professional/Community Service.

**Q: Why is APhA implementing this policy?**

A: Due to the large number of immunizers who use APhA's Certificates of Achievement as proof of training, it is APhA's intent to ensure that immunizers stay current with ongoing changes in the clinical area and maintain their skills related to patient care.

**Q: Who is going to check to see that I have maintained my education? APhA?**

A: APhA will not be checking to ensure that immunizers have maintained their education and skills. Immunizers must be aware of the regulations and guidance provided by their state boards of pharmacy and their employers.

**Q: If I took a certificate training program many years ago and I need a reprint of my Certificate of Achievement, will APhA still provide it to me?**

A: Yes, APhA will provide reprints of older Certificates of Achievement; however, the reprint will contain the original date that the program was completed along with this statement:

**The training associated with this APhA Certificate of Achievement is based on current immunization standards and recommendations at the time of training. It is the responsibility of the immunizer to engage in continuing professional development and education to meet the immunization standards and practice expectations set forth by the immunizer's state board of pharmacy and/or the policies and procedures of the organization that employs the immunizer. This Certificate of Achievement does not expire, but in accordance with existing immunization standards, immunizers should maintain and have accessible proof of current continuing professional development in the area of immunizations and a certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) or Basic Cardiac Life Support (BCLS).**

**Q: I am a student at a school/college of pharmacy and took this certificate training program as a P1 or P2. Does this mean that the training is not current as soon as I graduate?**

A: The clinical environment is changing very quickly and therefore all immunizers need to keep current. For students taking a training course early in their education, APhA recommends that the students continue to participate in patient care activities each year where they can utilize the skill sets, participate in annual continuing education updates (even if they do not need CPE credit), and subscribe to newsletters to keep up with current recommendations.

**Q: As a student, I am not yet licensed so I cannot claim CPE credit. Does this affect my ability to show that my training is current?**

A: Students do not need CPE credit to show they are staying current through literature reviews, education offerings (with or without associated CPE credit), and successfully maintaining their skills through ongoing use.

**Q: Why do I need to have proof of CPR or BCLS certification before I begin immunizing?**

A: The Certificate of Achievement from the American Pharmacists Association's *Pharmacy-Based Immunization Delivery* certificate training program states that immunizers should maintain and have accessible proof of current certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) or Basic Cardiac Life Support (BCLS). This aligns with existing immunization guidelines, policies and procedures for immunization practices throughout the healthcare system.

**Q: What type of CPR is acceptable?**

A: Every immunizing pharmacist should take and maintain a CPR or BCLS certification. The specifics surrounding which type of certification you need depends on your employer and/or your state requirements. Some require only training at the basic level while others require training at the Basic Life Support (BLS) for Healthcare Providers level. Depending on the age of the patients you plan on immunizing, you may need an infant or children CPR class. Some states or employers may accept an online course if it's for CPR recertification. Before administering immunizations, it is the responsibility of immunizers to check the specific regulations of their state board of pharmacy and that of their employer (if applicable). Information about the most commonly available classes may be found by visiting [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org).

**Q: Do I have to be certified in CPR or BCLS before I participate in APhA's certificate training program?**

A: It is not a requirement of the American Pharmacists Association that a participant obtain CPR or BCLS certification prior to participating in the certificate training program but program participants should first check with the policies and procedures of their employer or school to ensure they are meeting proper requirements. Check with your state laws and regulations regarding any requirements related to CPR or BCLS certification prior to administering vaccines.