



To: COARC Accredited Programs

From: William L. Croft, Ed.D., Ph.D., RRT, RCP, Executive Director

Date: October 8, 2020

Re: Federal Law Requirements

In mid-September, the North Carolina Respiratory Care Board (NCRCB) was made aware of the notice sent by the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) to respiratory therapy programs regarding a federal policy that went into effect on July 1, 2020. This policy requires all institutions to make public whether a program will fulfill educational requirements for specific professional licensure or certification. These CoARC requirements apply to all programs offered via all modalities (distance education or in-person). Institutions are required to disclose, for each state, whether or not the program meets such requirements and whether the institution had not made such a determination. For the reasons stated above, the NC Respiratory Care Board is providing this clarification of the degree requirements for licensing in NC.

In 2000, the General Assembly decided the practice of respiratory care affects the public health, safety, and welfare and that licensing the persons who provide respiratory care is necessary to ensure competency and quality of care. NC. Gen. Stat. § 90-647. NCRCB was established under the Respiratory Care Practice Act (RCPA) "to protect the public from the unqualified practice of respiratory care and from unprofessional conduct by persons licensed pursuant to this Article." To ensure this mission is fulfilled, the statute requires in part as stated in § 90-653 (a) that "each applicant for licensure under this Article shall meet the following requirements: (3) Submit to the Board written evidence, verified by oath, that the applicant has successfully completed the minimal requirements of a respiratory care education program as approved by the Commission for Accreditation of Allied Health Educational Programs, or the Canadian Council on Accreditation for Respiratory Therapy Education; and (5) Pass the entry-level examination given by the National Board for Respiratory Care, Inc."

When the *RCPA* passed in 2000, respiratory therapy programs in NC were accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Allied Health Educational Program (CAAHEP), which replaced the Joint Review Committee for Respiratory Therapy Education in 1996. In 2008,

CoARC began the process of becoming an independent accrediting commission. Since CoARC became a freestanding accreditor of respiratory care programs on November 12, 2009, all existing CAAHEP programs were granted accreditation status by CoARC based on the information provided on the CoARC website. Since CAAHEP programs were codified in the RCPA, its successor organization CoARC is considered the recognized accrediting body by the NCRCB. Therefore, NCRCB considers graduates of CoARC-accredited programs to meet the licensing eligibility requirements since they qualify to take the NBRC entry-level examination in accordance with § 90-653 (a) (5). Upon completion of the degree program and after successfully passing the NBRC exam, students are eligible for active licensing when they complete all portions of the application process.

On Behalf of the Board, we hope this statement clarifies any concerns that you or your colleagues might have in this matter.

Sincerely,

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