

## ADA CERP RECOGNITION STANDARDS 2026 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### STANDARD 1. PURPOSE AND MISSION

#### **1.1. Provider's CE mission**

**Is a separate CE mission statement required if the organization's overall mission statement includes a section on CE?**

The CE mission statement may be included in an institution's overall mission statement. Some organizations may have separate mission statements for the CE unit, complementing the organization's overall mission statement while articulating more specific objectives for the provider's CE programming.

Whether included in the organization's mission statement or the CE unit's, the CE mission statement must define what the program aims to achieve in terms of changes in professional skills or performance, or in terms of patient outcomes. A clearly defined CE mission statement can serve as a roadmap for the provider's overall CE program.

#### **1.5. Advisory input in CE planning**

**Does my organization need an advisory committee?**

Standard 1.5 states that providers must obtain "input into the planning of its CE activities from health care professionals who are reflective of the target audience for which the provider's CE activities are designed." One way to do this is to establish a committee or advisory panel to provide input in planning CE activities and conduct periodic self-assessments; however, this is not required. Providers may obtain objective input into the planning of its CE activities from representatives of the target audience in a number of other ways. Some examples are utilizing planners, instructors, authors, or reviewers who are representative of the target audience.

### STANDARD 2. CE PLANNING

#### **2.2. Designed to change**

**How do I develop CE activities that are designed to change professional competence or performance, or patient outcomes?**

CE planning begins by identifying a gap in professional knowledge, performance or practice. Another way to think about this is to ask what do the dental professionals in your audience currently know or do and what is needed and desired in practice in order to achieve improved outcomes. Professional knowledge, skill or performance gaps can be identified in many ways, including reviews of the literature, clinical guidelines, closed claims data, patient audits, as well as by surveying learners themselves.

Once you've identified a gap and the need for education, describe the desired practice. What should the professionals be able to do after completing the activity? What are the desired patient outcomes? When planning your activity, it will be helpful to develop SMART educational objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based). Specific learning objectives will help you to select an appropriate format for the activity, and to incorporate active learning elements that reinforce the key concepts or skills

Specific learning objectives will also provide a framework for evaluating the outcome of the activity. Have the learners achieved the objectives? Are they now able to incorporate the knowledge or skills from the activity into their practice? Or, if the activity was designed to improve outcomes in a specific patient population, have there been any improvements after the professionals treating those patients completed the activity?

### **How would a provider document that it offers CE activities that are designed to change?**

As the answer to the previous question indicated, after identifying where there is a professional performance or practice gap, the provider will formulate specific objectives for an educational activity articulating what a professional should be able to demonstrate after completing the activity, or a desired impact on patient outcomes. Based on those objectives, the provider selects the educational methods that can help achieve those objectives. Active learning elements that are incorporated into the activity can facilitate this and may be helpful in evaluating whether the learning is being achieved. Active learning elements such as case discussions in which the learners participate, small group problem-solving activities, audience polling before, during, and after the activity, Q&A, and chat are some examples of active learning elements.

To document its processes, the provider should keep a record of the learning objectives for each activity, as well as a record of the educational formats used. This might be captured on a course planning form, or in a course outline listing the questions and exercises in which learners will engage.

Data collected from these exercises may also help the provider assess whether the activity achieved its objectives. Post-course surveys of the learners regarding what they plan to incorporate into their practice and follow-up surveys asking whether they have done so, will help the provider assess the impact of the CE activity on the learners. Providers that have access to data on patient care and outcomes may compare data before and after the educational activity to identify any changes or improvements. Providers should keep records of the data collected so that it may be used as part of an assessment of whether the provider is meeting its CE mission.

## **STANDARD 3. INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE**

### **3.1. Ensure content is valid**

#### **Are speakers still required to submit image authenticity statements?**

No, the CERP Standards 2026 do not require providers to collect statements of image authenticity from instructors and authors. Standard 3.1 requires recognized providers to ensure the validity of their CE course content. Standard 2.5 requires providers to communicate and collaborate with instructors regarding the educational needs, objectives, active learning formats, and assessments for the activity. When communicating with instructors and authors, providers should communicate requirements that “All recommendations for patient care in [recognized] continuing education must be based on current science, evidence, and clinical reasoning, while giving a fair and balanced view of diagnostic and therapeutic options,” as required in Standard 3.1.1. If a provider wishes to also include a requirement that instructors and authors attest that images presented in a CE activity have not been altered, the provider may do so but it is not required.

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) offers guidance for CE planners, instructors, and authors on “Ensuring that Clinical Content is Valid” on its website: <https://accme.org/rule/ensure-content-is-valid/>

### **3.2. Prevent commercial bias and marketing in CE**

#### **If a course is non-clinical, can an author promote their book?**

No. CE activities must be “free of marketing or sales of products or services,” and instructors must not actively promote or sell products or services that serve their professional or financial interests within CE, per Standard 3.2.2. This applies to all CE activities without exception. The intent is to ensure that the educational space is protected from commercial bias and marketing.

**What if the book is offered for free outside of the education room?**

As long as there is a clear distinction between educational space and promotional space, and as long as the book is not promoted during the educational activity, offering the book outside the education room would be acceptable.

**3.3. Identify, mitigate and disclose relevant financial relationships**

**In Standard 3, is the time frame for planners and instructors to disclose relevant financial relationships 24 months prior to the program date or 24 months prior to contract signing?**

You will be collecting disclosure information from instructors during the planning phase of the activity. You will collect disclosure information from planners before you begin the planning process, so you would request information on financial relationships they may have had in the 24 months before being invited to serve as a planner. Similarly, once you have identified potential instructors as part of your invitation you would include a disclosure form requesting them to disclose all financial relationships they may have had in the last 24 months.

Once you have received this information you will review it to determine if any of the financial relationships are relevant to the content of the CE activity in which they have been asked to participate. If so, you will need to take steps to mitigate those relationships. You may wish to remind your planners and instructors that they must update their disclosures if new relevant financial relationships arise. The ACCME offers [templates](#) of disclosure forms and letters to planners and instructors on its website, as well as other [tools for managing relevant financial relationships](#).

**If an instructor is an employee of a dental lab, can the instructor mention the lab’s services during the course?**

CE activities must be free of marketing or sales of products or services, and instructors must not promote or sell products or services that serve their professional or financial interests within CE, as stated in Standard 3.2.2. Promoting the lab’s services would be in the employee’s self-interest, therefore information about the lab and its services may only be provided outside of the educational space, but not while the educational activity is occurring. If information about the lab or any other marketing activities are made available within the same space as the education, it must be at least 30 minutes before the start or 30 minutes after the end of the activity.

Another important point to keep in mind before inviting the speaker is to identify whether the dental lab is a commercial interest. A dental lab is not necessarily a commercial interest per the [CERP Glossary](#) definition. However, if a lab produces, markets, distributes or resells proprietary products that are used on patients it is considered to be a commercial interest. In that case, you would not invite an employee of that lab to serve as a course instructor unless one of the three exceptions is met:

1. the topic of the course is not related to the lab’s business lines or products;
2. the content of the course is limited to basic science research—such as pre-clinical research and drug discovery, or the methodologies of research—and the instructor does not make care recommendations, or
3. the employee is participating as a technician to teach the safe and proper use of a device and does not recommend whether or when a device is used.

If the instructor is an employee of a dental lab that is not a commercial interest—that is, the lab fills clinicians’ dental work orders but does not market or sell proprietary products that are used on

patients—the instructor may be eligible to serve as an instructor. However, the instructor must not promote the lab's services during the educational activity.

### **Before the ADA CERP Standards 2026 take effect, what format should we use for publishing disclosures of individual planners and instructors?**

Both the current CERP Standards and the Standards 2026 require providers to publish the individuals' names, the names of any commercial interests with which they have had relationships and the nature of the relationships. The current Standards require disclosure of relationships in the last 12 months; the Standards 2026 require disclosure of relationships in the last 24 months. If planners and instructors have no relationships to report, this must be published as well.

When the CERP Standards 2026 take effect in June 2026, in addition to collecting and publishing the information above, providers must also take steps to mitigate any relevant financial relationships that were disclosed. Having done so, the provider will publish the disclosures and a statement that all relevant financial relationships have been mitigated. For example, "All of the relevant financial relationships listed for [instructor/planner/author] have been mitigated."

Providers may begin this practice immediately.

### **3.4. Manage commercial support appropriately**

#### **What is the reason that a commercial supporter can't pay or sponsor a speaker directly?**

Standard 3.4 states (emphasis mine) that recognized "providers that choose to accept commercial support (defined as financial or in-kind support from [commercial interests]) are responsible for ensuring that the education remains independent of the [commercial interest] and that the support does not result in commercial bias or commercial influence in the education. The support does not establish a financial relationship between the [commercial interest] and planners, faculty, and others in control of content of the education."

Allowing a commercial supporter to pay a speaker directly would establish a financial relationship between the commercial interest and the speaker, and therefore does not meet the Standard.

#### **If a CE course is free of product endorsement but is being "sponsored" by a company, can a thank you slide of the sponsoring company follow the course?**

When a commercial interest provides financial or in-kind support for a CE activity, this is known as commercial support. Commercial support must be disclosed to learners prior to the educational activity per Standard 3.4.4. This could be done in publicity materials, a sign outside the session, and with a slide at the beginning of the presentation.

The acknowledgement of support must contain the name of the supporting company(ies), but may not contain corporate or product logos, trade names, or product group messages. If the support given was in-kind—such as the donation of supplies for a course—the acknowledgement must include the nature of the support (for example: "Equipment for this course generously provided by...")

#### **Can logos be included in a list of sponsors on signage at meeting and on website? Can company names be used without the logo?**

The names of companies providing commercial support for a CE activity must always be acknowledged to learners, but logos may not be included in the disclosure or acknowledgement of the support.

However, company and product logos may be included in paid advertising and exhibits if these are kept separate from the CE.

It's important to distinguish between these two ways that providers may accept payments from commercial interests in relation to continuing education programming.

Providers may charge a fee in return for advertising and exhibit space in conjunction with CE activities. These are considered ancillary marketing activities, and are permitted as long as they are physically separated from CE. Company and product logos are permitted in paid advertisements and lists of exhibitors. The guidelines for clearly separating advertising from CE are detailed in Standard 3.5.

The second way that providers may accept funding from commercial interests is called “commercial support.” This is when a commercial interest supplies a grant or in-kind support for a provider's CE programs. This must be managed separately from advertising. Unlike paid advertising in program guides, journals, or exhibit booths—where a company pays a fee and receives space in return—a company providing commercial support does not receive anything in return other than an acknowledgement of the support received. Because CE must be developed and implemented independent of commercial interests, it is not appropriate to include company logos in conjunction with CE activities that have received commercial support.

Commercial support requires a letter of agreement between the supporting company and the provider stating what is being given and the terms and conditions of the gift. Commercial support must be disclosed to learners prior to the start of the CE activity. Disclosure must not include the supporting companies' corporate or product logos, trade names, or product group messages. Anywhere commercial support is disclosed the commercial interest's company name must be used, but the logo must not appear. Guidelines for managing commercial support are detailed in Standard 3.4.

**If we do not include corporate logos in the official disclosure on the website and at the beginning of the program, can we still have a "thank you to our sponsors" sign with the logos on site or on a web page? And can you display sponsor logos in the conference schedule at a live event?**

It is important to distinguish between commercial support and paid advertising. Company logos may not be displayed in acknowledgements of commercial support but may be included in paid advertising.

As described in the answer above, commercial support is when a commercial interest provides funding or in-kind support for a provider's CE activity. In acknowledging the support, the provider must include the company's name, but must not include any logo. This includes a sign or web page thanking all the supporting companies for a CE program as well as acknowledgement made outside the presentation and at the beginning of the presentation. CE activities must be developed and presented free from commercial influence; it is not appropriate to include the logos of commercial interests associated with a CE activity.

However, if the provider sells advertising or exhibit space in conjunction with their CE program, companies that have paid for these may be listed in conference schedules, program guides, and other materials that do not contain CE content, and the companies' logos may be included. Standard 3.5 outlines the requirements for separating educational and advertising and exhibit spaces.

**Can I have sponsor logos on my registration website or on sponsor logos on banners/signs in the exhibit area?**

When a commercial interest provides support for a provider's CE activities, this is known as commercial support. Acknowledgment of the commercial support (or “disclosure”) must include the name of the supporting company but must not include the company's logo.

However, when a company purchases ad space—such as banners, ads in program schedules, etc.—or rents an exhibit booth, the company's logo may be included. These ancillary marketing activities

must be managed separately from commercial support and must be physically separated from the CE space. Standard 3.5 outlines the requirements for separating educational and advertising and exhibit spaces.

### **How do we handle in-kind donations for hands-on courses?**

In-kind donations from commercial interests, such as supplies donated for a CE course or the loan of equipment, is considered a form of commercial support. As outlined in Standard 3.4, commercial support must be given directly to the provider, who has ultimate control over how the funding or donations are disbursed. A letter of agreement between the provider and the supporting company must be signed before the course, stating what is being given and the terms and conditions. The provider is also responsible for disclosing or acknowledging the commercial support. Per Standard 3.4.4 (emphasis mine), “The accredited provider must disclose to the learners the name(s) of the [commercial interest(s)] that gave the commercial support, and the nature of the support if it was in-kind, prior to the learners engaging in the education.” For example, a disclosure of in-kind support may begin, “Equipment for this course generously provided by...”

### **3.5. Manage ancillary activities in conjunction with CE**

**We send reminders to registered attendees in advance of a CE activity that include brief product messages from endorsed vendors offering services to dental offices like insurance or marketing the practice. Can we still do this?**

Paid advertisements may be included in information distributed about a CE activity as long as the information does not contain educational content, as stated in Standard 3.5.2.d. Advertisements should be clearly marked as such.

**Could we have a CE session in the exhibit hall as long as it is away from all booths?**

Standard 3.5 requires that education activities must be kept separate from marketing activities. Where space is at a premium and it is necessary to use the same room for CE and for exhibit space, the provider must take measures to separate the CE activity from the exhibits. This might be done by creating a physically separate, screened area for CE activities; or the separation could be created by time. For example, the exhibits could close 30 minutes before the CE session and reopen 30 minutes after the CE session ends.

## **STANDARD 4. EVALUATION**

**How would a provider assess the outcomes of its activities?**

Standard 4 requires that a provider analyzes changes in learners’ knowledge, performance, or practice, and/or patient outcomes achieved as a result of its CE programs.

Providers can use a variety of ways to identify whether there are changes in learners’ knowledge, performance, or practice. Information and data on learners’ knowledge and performance may be gathered during and after an activity. Data collected from polls or questionnaires conducted before, during, and after an activity can measure a change in learners’ responses. Information captured from discussions, Q&A, chat, instructor observation, etc., can be summarized to indicate where learners demonstrate achievement or where more training may be needed. Data collected from survey or quiz results, or other exercises related to the activity’s learning objectives, can help the provider assess whether their objectives—the desired changes—are being met.

Providers that have the ability to measure the impact of an educational activity on patient outcomes may compare patient care and treatment outcomes data before and some time after an activity to assess whether or not there has been a change in patient outcomes as a result of professionals engaging in the activity. A summary report of key metrics pre- and post-course could demonstrate the

provider's process for assessing whether or not the activity had the desired impact on patient outcomes.

Providers should keep records of the data collected so that it may be used as part of their organization's periodic analysis of whether it is meeting its CE mission.

**Is a CE evaluation needed before we issue a certificate to the participant and is evaluation optional?**

ADA CERP Standards do not require providers to collect post-course evaluations from learners as a condition for receiving CE credit statements. Standard 4 only requires that providers analyze changes in learners' knowledge, performance or practice, and/or patient outcomes achieved as a result of its CE program. Providers may use a variety of methods to do this, including gathering information from learners about changes in knowledge, performance, or practice through assessments during or after an activity, surveys, or by gathering information on patient outcomes or other data.

A provider may choose to use submission of a post-course evaluation or survey as a requirement for obtaining verification of CE credits earned; however, this is not required by ADA CERP Standards.

**STANDARD 5. PATIENT PROTECTION**

**How does a program document that it has standard infection prevention/control protocols and that it ensures instructors are up to date on patient safety protocols/emergency response? Does a handbook satisfy this?**

Providers that offer courses in which patients are treated—either by the instructors or learners—must have protocols and procedures in place to ensure patient safety and privacy. Standard 5 lists the areas that must be addressed by the provider's policies and procedures. These can be documented by course preparation manuals, staff check lists, communications with authors and learners verifying licensure and appropriate insurance coverage, and patient communications.