



February 2, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: All ONS Chapter Board Members

FROM: Brian K. Theil, CAE, Director, Membership and Component Relations
Brian M. Taylor, CAE, Manager, Chapter Relations

SUBJECT: **Revised ONS Policy Regarding Access to Chapter Meetings**

Section 7, Part 2a., of the ONS Chapter Policy Manual specifies that each year chapters are required to hold at least four meetings of their general membership. These meetings provide important educational opportunities for ONS members at the local level, and many chapters hold more than the minimum number. These meetings are a mix of both CNE and non-CNE programs, depending on whether or not they are sponsored.

In recent years, changes in pharma guidelines, both federal and state regulations, and parameters set by members' employing institutions have impacted chapter meeting programs and attendance. This issue arises, planned or not, each year at Leadership Weekend and often during Regional Chapter Officer Programs. In addition, ONS occasionally receive complaints from individual members who have been denied entry to one (or more) of their chapter's education programs.

While ONS has no control over federal, state, or employer rules, and reasonable attendance restrictions based on logistical accommodations is understandable, participation restrictions imposed by meeting sponsors is an issue that the ONS Board of Directors felt needed to be addressed.

To supplement the information gathered on this subject from the chapter Annual Reports, a brief survey of chapter presidents was conducted in December 2015. In all, 107 chapters responded, with key items as follows.

- The average number of education meetings held by responding chapters in 2015 was 9.
- 62% of responding chapters reported that more than half of their chapter education programs were non-CE industry-sponsored dinner programs.
- 19% reported that all of their meetings were non-CE industry-sponsored dinner programs.
- 24% reported meeting attendance limitations based on space (e.g., maximum number that could be accommodated by the facility or that the vendor was willing to pay for).
- For those who held industry-sponsored programs, 34% reported restrictions on who could attend imposed by the sponsoring companies. Those restrictions were:
 - Only RN-licensed members were permitted to attend
 - Only NP members were permitted to attend
 - Retired members were not permitted to attend
 - Student members were not permitted to attend
 - Members who were employed by competing companies were not permitted to attend
 - Government employee (federal, state, or local) members were not permitted to attend

In addressing this issue the Board balanced the needs of both our members and the chapter leaders tasked with planning local educational programming. One of the most critical needs the chapters meet is in providing education to our members at the local level. While the majority of members would prefer that education to come with CE, others are just as happy to be receiving non-CE education, along with (usually) a nice meal. Partnering with vendors in providing dinner meetings is a “financial win” for the chapters, and an “exposure win” for the vendors, and it will be important for these relationships to continue.

However, those relationships cannot serve to exclude dues-paying ONS members from the majority—or all—of the educational offerings of their chapter. While legitimate logistical constraints can be understood, simply denying access to members based on their career status or employer is troubling, and very difficult for the so-affected members to understand.

To strike a balance, the ONS Board has approved a revision to Section 7, Part 2a., of the ONS Chapter Policy Manual, as follows:

A minimum of four (4) meetings of the chapter membership shall be held each year. **This minimum number of meetings must be open to all chapter members in good standing, regardless of member type, employment status, or other demographic characteristic.**

The above policy revision, which is in effect beginning with the 2016 reporting year, does not prevent you from continuing to implement reasonable attendance limitations based on space availability, meaning that “first come, first served” meeting sign up procedures can continue, so long as all chapter members are given the same notification and opportunity to register for those meetings. In addition, this policy revision does not preclude chapters from offering additional educational programs beyond the required four, which may be sponsored by vendors, and that may limit which members are eligible to attend.

As leaders of our chapters we thank you for your understanding and for your cooperation in ensuring that a minimum number of local educational programs will be available to all ONS members each year. Should you have any questions or comments about the above please contact us at chapters@ons.org.