



**NORTH CAROLINA RESPIRATORY CARE BOARD**  
**1100 Navaho Drive, Suite 242**  
**Raleigh, NC 27609**

## North Carolina Polysomnography Competency Requirements

### Introduction

In 2000, the NC General Assembly passed the Respiratory Care Act (Article 38 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes). This Act mandated licensure for any person engaging in the practice of respiratory care. The Act identified sleep related testing as part of the practice of Respiratory Care, which meant that anyone performing sleep related testing must be a licensed Respiratory Care Practitioner (RCP) unless the person was exempted under G.S. 90-664, which exempts from licensure any person registered, certified, credentialed, or licensed to engage in another profession or occupation or any person working under the supervision of a person registered, certified, credentialed, or licensed to engage in another profession or occupation in this State who is performing work incidental to or within the practice of that profession or occupation and does not represent himself or herself as a respiratory care practitioner.

The Board approved a declaratory ruling on November 14, 2001 which determined that Registered Polysomnographic Technologists (RPSGT) meet the exemption qualification to perform sleep related testing. For many sleep centers in NC, complying with this ruling, and the revisions that followed, was difficult. In August of 2004, a request was made to the NCRCB Practice Committee to re-evaluate the declaratory ruling. The concerns with the previous declaratory rulings were discussed at the October 2004 Board meeting. At the meeting, Dr. Coyle, Board Chairperson, established a Sleep Technology Subcommittee to address the concerns of the sleep community in North Carolina. The subcommittee's goal was to discuss possible changes to the declaratory ruling and make recommendations to the Practice Committee and the Board.

The subcommittee has met on several occasions since its appointment and after much debate, agreed on changes that would attempt to satisfy all those concerned with sleep studies and protect the health, safety and welfare of the public. The subcommittee recommended, and the Board agreed, that to ensure the highest standards of patient care, and except for those persons who are licensed by another North Carolina which recognizes the conduct of sleep studies as within that scope of practice, all persons performing sleep studies who seek to be exempted, under G.S. 90-664 (1), from the requirement of being licensed as an RCP, must hold the RPSGT credential. The subcommittee further agreed on language which provides clarification of the competency requirements for the technician and trainee status. The current ruling also clarifies the competency requirements of a RCP licensed by the Board, who acts in a supervisory capacity over sleep labs. As stated previously, the RPSGT credentialed staff member is currently exempted from the requirements for RCP licensure. However, RPSGT's, who are supervisors, need to ensure that they fully understand the scope of their responsibilities in regards to supervising personnel who are not credentialed.

The Board met on October 6, 2005 and approved a ruling that exempted non-credentialed polysomnographic technicians and trainees from licensure. The ruling requires the trainees to work under the "direct" supervision of a RPSGT or licensed RCP and the technicians to work under the "general" supervision of a RPSGT or licensed RCP. In addition, each trainee and technician was given a deadline to complete the competency standards for sleep testing and to take the RPSGT exam. On the recommendation of the subcommittee chair, Bill Croft, Dr. Coyle assigned the additional task of developing guidelines for sleep labs' compliance with the Respiratory Care Practice Act to the subcommittee and this document was drafted to provide guidelines for sleep labs to ensure compliance with the North Carolina Respiratory Care Practice Act and the pertinent declaratory rulings and position statements issued by the Board.



**NORTH CAROLINA RESPIRATORY CARE BOARD**  
**1100 Navaho Drive, Suite 242**  
**Raleigh, NC 27609**

Before addressing the exemption issue, it is important to note that regardless of whether personnel qualify for an exemption, all personnel must maintain, at a minimum, certification in Basic Life Support by the American Heart Association, the American Red Cross or the American Safety and Health Institute which includes the following:

- Adult, Child and Infant Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
- Heimlich Maneuver
- Automatic External Defibrillator (AED)

**Individuals Qualifying for Exemption Status**

In order to meet the requirements for exemption under G.S. 90-664(1) to conduct sleep studies, an individual must demonstrate that one of the following circumstances applies:

1. The individual holds the RPSGT credential.
2. The individual is a Sleep Technician who meets each of the following criteria:
  - 2.1. The individual has completed a polysomnography program of at least one year duration or has a minimum of 6 months experience as a Polysomnographic Trainee with documented proficiency in all required competencies. This requirement is based on the Association of Polysomnographic Technologists (APT) standard .
  - 2.2. The individual performs sleep testing procedures leading to eligibility for the Registry Exam
  - 2.3. The individual works at all times under the general supervision of a Respiratory Care Practitioner licensed by the Board (who meets the competency requirements specified in Section 4 below) or a Polysomnographic Technologist who holds the RPSGT credential
  - 2.4. The individual does not represent himself or herself as a Respiratory Care Practitioner
3. The individual is a Sleep Trainee who meets each of the following criteria:
  - 3.1. The individual is a high school graduate with 6 months of direct patient care experience or one year of post-secondary education or is enrolled in an accredited polysomnographic educational program leading to an associate degree. This requirement is also based on the APT standard document.
  - 3.2. The individual is performing sleep testing procedures leading to eligibility for the Registry Exam
  - 3.3. The individual works at all times under the direct supervision of a Respiratory Care Practitioner licensed by the Board (who meets the competency requirements specified in Section 4 below) or a Polysomnographic Technologist who holds the RPSGT credential
  - 3.4. The individual does not represent himself or herself as a Respiratory Care Practitioner
4. Supervisory Criteria
  - 4.1. "General supervision" shall mean that the supervising RPSGT or RCP is available for supervision and consultation to the Polysomnographic Technician, by telephone or in person, and the supervisor must be readily available by telephone and able to respond on-site.
  - 4.2. "Direct supervision" shall mean that the supervising RPSGT or RCP is in the same sleep facility and actively supervising the trainee.
  - 4.3. RCP supervision can only be provided by RCP's who have met all of the sleep lab criteria for conducting sleep studies



**NORTH CAROLINA RESPIRATORY CARE BOARD**  
1100 Navaho Drive, Suite 242  
Raleigh, NC 27609

**Practice Environment Requirements**

These requirements apply to all Polysomnographic Technicians and Polysomnographic Trainees who provide service on the premises of an acute care hospital, in a physician practice, or in, or under contract with, free-standing facilities dedicated to sleep services. The Board is not presently aware of any types of arrangements for sleep studies and so the Board has not adopted standards for any other practice context. Persons who wish to conduct sleep studies under any other arrangements should contact the Board.

**1. Facility Requirements**

In Acute Care and Free-Standing facilities providing services that are focused upon the diagnosis and therapeutic intervention of sleep-related disorders, all sleep services may be provided by the Polysomnographic Technologists, Polysomnographic Technicians and Polysomnographic Trainees upon receiving specific physician orders from a licensed physician, and in compliance with the supervision and competency requirements.

**2. Supervision Requirements**

- 2.1. A licensed physician who serves as Medical Director of the sleep testing facility must provide general supervision at all times for all of the Polysomnographic Technologists, Polysomnographic Technicians, and Polysomnographic Trainees.
- 2.2. An RPSGT or RCP must also provide the appropriate level of supervision for:
  - 2.2.1. Polysomnographic Technicians, who must work under the general supervision of an RPSGT or RCP
  - 2.2.2. Polysomnographic Trainees, who must work under the direct supervision of a RPSGT or RCP
  - 2.2.3. RCP's must also meet the minimum competency requirements before they can supervise a sleep technician and/or trainee.

**3. Minimum competency requirements**

Facilities must ensure that individuals demonstrate competency in:

- 3.1. CPAP Titration Course Essentials of Sleep Technology
  - 3.1.1. This workshop or course must include a review of sleep disordered breathing with a primary focus on CPAP titration, and must meet the minimum requirements of the Sleep Technology committee of the NCRCB and be approved by the NCRCB
- 3.2. Facilities must ensure that individuals demonstrate competency through the following Skill Evaluations:
  - Sleep Related Testing
  - Application and titration of continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) and Bi-Level therapy
  - Application and titration of supplemental low-flow oxygen
  - Application and monitoring of capnometry
  - Application and monitoring of pulse oximetry
  - Patient education on the application of the above measures for the ongoing management of sleep-related disorders

**Note:** Facilities may utilize the NCRCB approved competency evaluations or their own evaluations if they meet the NCRCB competency requirements



**NORTH CAROLINA RESPIRATORY CARE BOARD**  
**1100 Navaho Drive, Suite 242**  
**Raleigh, NC 27609**

**3.3. Time limits for trainee and technician status**

**3.3.1. A maximum of 36 months total from hire date with 12 months as a trainee and 24 months as a technician. The computation of the completion deadline for each individual will begin on hire date for each employee or the date of the declaratory ruling, whichever is later**

**3.3.2. During first 12 months as a trainee all of the following must be completed under direct supervision**

- Skill evaluations
- PAP titration course

**3.3.3. During the next 24 months up to the conclusion of the 36 month period the technician requires general supervision**

- Continue to work towards requirements to qualify for the RPSGT
- The RPSGT exam should be passed within the 36 month period

**3.3.4. Failure to meet any of the above deadlines will disqualify an individual from the exemption status provided by the NCRCB declaratory ruling, which means that the individual will no longer qualify to perform the duties outlined in the declaratory ruling**

**4. Documentation requirements**

**All facilities must have the following documentation on file and available upon request**

**4.1. As applicable**

**4.1.1 RPSGT and/or RCP credentials for supervisory personnel**

**4.1.2 Diploma or Certificate of Completion of Course Study in Polysomnography**

**4.2. Employment Dates of Exempted Personnel**

**4.3. Skill evaluations**

- Sleep Related Testing
- Application and titration of continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) and Bi-Level therapy
- Application and titration of supplemental low-flow oxygen
- Application and monitoring of capnometry
- Application and monitoring of pulse oximetry
- Patient education on the application of the above measures for the ongoing management of sleep-related disorders

**4.4. Certificate of completion of the PAP titration Course**

**4.5. Current BCLS card with**

- Adult, Child and Infant Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
- Heimlich Maneuver
- Automatic External Defibrillator (AED)

**4.6. Facility issued letter, memo or certificate of recognition for each level**