

Draft 2024 Workforce Survey
Respiratory Care Board of California
Professional Qualifications
Committee March 2024

A survey of the opinions of the Respiratory Care community about the future of educational requirements for the licensing of Respiratory Care Practitioners in California



The Respiratory Care Board of California, in response to one of its strategic goals, is studying possible changes to licensure educational requirements in the Respiratory Care Practice Act. As a member of the Respiratory Care community, we want to hear from you on this important topic.

Recommendations from Respiratory Care professional groups, such as the American Association for Respiratory Care and the California Society for Respiratory Care, as well as information from a study performed in California at the behest of the Respiratory Care Board, have prompted review of current practice standards and education thresholds for incoming Respiratory Care Practitioners providing care for patients in California.

This survey will ask your opinions of the needs, potential benefits, and hazards regarding practice standards and education requirements. To be informed of background information, read the material provided through links to key documents as you complete the survey. Although the survey can be performed on a smart phone, it is better seen and completed via a personal computer. The survey may take up to 60 minutes to complete (including reading of materials) and can be performed over multiple sessions if needed, allowing exit and re-entry saving entered responses. Survey responses will be collected through May 31, 2024.

Thank you for contributing your opinions and interacting with the Respiratory Care Board as it considers how to best serve the people of the State of California.

Gender

Male

Female

Non-binary / third gender

Prefer not to say

In which age range do you fit?

18 - 24	▲
25 - 29	
30 - 34	
35 - 39	
40 - 44	
45 - 49	
50 - 54	
54-59	
60 -64	
65-69	▼

What is the highest educational level from which you graduated

High School

Associate's Degree

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Doctorate Degree

In what Zip Code do you reside

Professional status

RCP

Industry

Student

Public

Are you licensed by the California Respiratory Care Board

Yes

No

What is your license number?

Are you currently or planning to pursue your first, or an additional degree?

Yes

No

What degree are you pursuing?

At what educational level did you begin your practice in
Respiratory Care

On the Job Trainee

Associate Degree

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

In what type of facility do you currently practice (select all that
apply)

Acute Care Hospital

Academic Hospital

Skilled Nursing Facility

Continuing Care Retirement Community

Step down/Subacute Facility (adult or pediatric)

Residential Care Facility for the Elderly - all types

Home & Community Based Facility (Pediatric Day Care, Adult Day Health,
Congregate Living)

Home Care (In-home residential care, home health agency, medical device
retailer)

Sleep Lab

Pulmonary or CardioPulmonary Lab

Research

Educational Institute

Other

Physician Clinic

None of the above

In what other type of facility do you practice?

Do you practice any of the following specialty tasks (check all that apply):

Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO)

Insertion and Maintenance of Vascular Catheters

Insertion and Maintenance of Arterial Lines

Hyperbaric Oxygen (HBO)

Conscious Sedation

Pulmonary Function Testing

Interventional Pulmonology

Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Inter-facility Transport

Rapid Response Team

Research

Case Management

Physician Practice Support

Are you a member of any of the following Professional groups?
(check all that apply)

American Association for Respiratory Care

California Society for Respiratory Care

American Lung Association

American Thoracic Society

California Thoracic Society

American College of Chest Physicians

Society of Critical Care Medicine

American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Other

None of these groups

What other Professional group are you a member of?

Are you a member of a Labor Union?

Yes

No

What Labor Union are you a member of?

Have you attended a California Respiratory Care Board meeting in the last two years, (either in-person or on-line)?

Yes

No

The Respiratory Care Board of the State of California commissioned a study of the California Respiratory Care Workforce, which was conducted in 2015 – 2016.

Tim Bates, and his colleagues at the Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies from the University of California San Francisco released their findings in May 2017, [{Link to Document}](#).

They interviewed ten Respiratory Therapy Department Directors, ten Respiratory Therapy Educators and forty Clinical Practitioners employed throughout the State of California. One of the objectives of this study was to assess the opinions of working licensed respiratory care practitioners, (RCPs), about the preparedness of new respiratory therapist graduates Respiratory Therapists on entering the workforce. Some key findings:

Directors of Respiratory Therapy education programs identified critical thinking as the single most important competency area that should receive greater emphasis in entry-level respiratory therapy education. Many of the education directors noted that employers consistently provide feedback that students' diagnostic skills are "not where they should be.

"Clinical Practitioners that participated in the focus groups reported that new graduates' diagnostic and clinical reasoning skills are underdeveloped, describing new graduates as having conceptual knowledge of tests, procedures, equipment and modes of therapy, but being unable to connect what they have learned with the patient they need to treat.

RC Department Directors felt strongly that moving respiratory therapy education to the bachelor's level would raise the field's professional standing and help create career opportunities.

Directors of Respiratory Therapy education programs expressed the belief that shifting to the bachelor's degree would allow more in-depth coverage of topics that are highly compressed in the current curriculum due to time constraints, and that it would likely increase students' exposure to clinical procedures. However, the most important factor driving support among Education Directors was the expectation that a bachelor's degree program would further encourage the development of critical thinking and clinical reasoning.

Clinical Practitioners in the focus groups saw value in the additional didactic and clinical training, believing it would produce therapists who are clinicians as opposed to technicians.

Do you agree with these findings?

Yes

No

Partially

If you do not agree with the findings above, please explain your thoughts on the subject.

How do you think the Respiratory Care Board of California can ensure new graduates are prepared to begin practicing respiratory care at the onset of licensure? (e.g. required residency programs, increased education, etc.)?

In 2008, the AARC began a series of conferences to envision the future of the profession of Respiratory Care. A single recommendation regarding Respiratory Therapy education was accepted and approved by a majority vote, to adopt a requirement for a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree for respiratory therapy students graduating after 2020, {Link to Document}.

In 2019, the AARC released a statement endorsing the requirement of a Bachelor's Degree in Respiratory Therapy (or in Health Sciences with an emphasis in Respiratory Therapy), by 2030, for all new practitioners entering the field, { Link to document}.

In 2021, the CSRC released a Position Statement supporting the graduation from Bachelor's Degree program in Respiratory Care as a minimum requirement for licensure beginning in 2030, {Link to document}.

Do you agree that increasing the requirement for entry to practice into the profession of Respiratory Care in California to a Bachelor's Degree in Respiratory Care is a necessary step ?

Yes

No

If you do not believe that increasing the requirement for entry to practice into the profession of Respiratory Care in California to a Bachelor's Degree in Respiratory Care is a necessary step, do you see a role in licensing any aspect of Respiratory Care practice that would require a Bachelor's Degree?

Yes

No

If 2030 is too soon, when would you suggest this change to take place?

The California Respiratory Care Board of California of responded to the findings of the California Respiratory Care Workforce study by adopting the following goal and objective within its 2017-2021 strategic plan: for 2017 - 2021 to:

Ensure the initial and continuous competency of all licensed Respiratory Care Practitioners (RCPs) Develop an action plan to incorporate a baccalaureate degree provision in the Respiratory Care Practice Act (RCPA) to ensure education requirements meet the demand of the respiratory care field.

This goal has been extended in the current 2023 Strategic Plan as to: Evaluate current respiratory care educational requirements and revise, as necessary, to support practice standards and patient safety.

The investigation of these issues has been delegated to the Professional Qualifications Committee (PQC) who have been studying them and conducting educational sessions at the California Respiratory Care Board of California meetings since

March 2021, [[Link to Materials](#)]

June 2021 Presentation

October 2021 Presentation

March 2022 Presentation

June 2022 Presentation

October 2022 Update

June 2023 Focus Groups Findings

Additionally, the PQC has conducted focus groups to examine the current perceptions within the field of Respiratory Care on these topics and reported its findings at the Respiratory Care Board's June 2023 meeting, a summary of these findings can be obtained here, [[link to materials](#)].

Throughout the PQC's research since 2021, the PQC has provided presentations and reported its findings, it has gathered additional information and input through lengthy discussions, public and board member feedback. One of the topics discussed was different models of how to incorporate a Bachelor's Degree into the California Respiratory Care Act. The next section of this survey will present different scenarios and ask your opinions on the suitability and feasibility of these models. In all cases, current license holders would not be affected by any of these potential changes, only licensees approved after the law has been enacted would be affected.

Scenario One

As of 2030, all new California RCP license applicants will need to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Respiratory Care, or, Health Sciences with an emphasis in Respiratory Care, to apply for state licensure. Current license holders would not be affected by this change.

Do you think this is a suitable method for incorporating a Bachelor's Degree into California's Respiratory Care Act?

Yes

No

Do you think Scenario One is feasible?

Yes

No

Please share your thoughts on whether Scenario One should be pursued.

Scenario Two

As of 2030, all new associate degree applicants will need to show they have a Bachelor's Degree in Respiratory Care, or, Health Sciences with an emphasis in Respiratory Care, within four years of attaining their California Respiratory Care License. Current license holders would not be affected by this change.

Do you think this is a suitable method for incorporating a Bachelor's Degree into California's Respiratory Care Act?

Yes

No

Do you think that Scenario Two is feasible?

Yes

No

Please share your thoughts on whether Scenario Two should be pursued.

Scenario Three

As of 2030, new RCP applicants who complete their Associate's Degree in Respiratory Therapy will be given a provisional license limiting their practice to only by direct supervision from a licensed RCP. They will be required to serve a two- year residency/internship at an academic teaching hospital in California where they must obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Respiratory Care. Current license holders would not be affected by this change.

Do you think this is a suitable method for incorporating a Bachelor's Degree into California's Respiratory Care Act?

Yes

No

Do you think Scenario Three is feasible?

Yes

No

Please share your thoughts on whether Scenario Three should be pursued.

Scenario Four

As of 2030, Associate Degree RCP licensee applicants will be given a limited license as a Respiratory Care Assistant and will work under the supervision of a licensed Respiratory Care Practitioner. A Bachelor's Degree will be required for new licensee RCP's to practice as a Respiratory Care Practitioners. Respiratory Care Assistants must have direct supervision in an Intensive Care Unit in California, or other highly independent or critical care settings or in a home care setting by a Respiratory Care Practitioner. Respiratory Care Practitioners can directly supervise as many as four (4) Respiratory Care Assistants at a time in these settings. Current license holders are Respiratory Care Practitioners.

Do you think this is a suitable method for incorporating a Bachelor's Degree into California's Respiratory Care Act?

Yes

No

Do you think Scenario Four is feasible?

Yes

No

Please share your thoughts on whether Scenario Four should be pursued.

Scenario Five

As of 2030, new RCP applicants who complete their Associate's Degree in Respiratory Therapy will be given a license as a Respiratory Care Assistant limiting their practice to only in non-acute care settings (eg: skilled nursing facilities, domiciliary care, sleep labs etc.). RCP applicants with a Bachelor's Degree in Respiratory Care, or, in Health Sciences with an emphasis in Respiratory Care, will be licensed as an RCP with a full scope of practice.

Do you think this is a suitable method for incorporating a Bachelor's Degree into California's Respiratory Care Act?

Yes

No

Do you think Scenario Five is feasible?

Yes

No

Please share your thoughts on whether Scenario Five should be pursued.

Thank you for taking the time to provide us with your insight on this important topic. Please share any additional thoughts you would like to express below.

Conditional Questions for Students

Are you currently pursuing your Bachelor's Degree in Respiratory Care or Health Science with an emphasis in Respiratory Care?

Yes

No

What school do you attend?