State Affiliate News

State Society Meetings and Compliance With CME Sponsorship Rules: ASCO Can Help

When it comes to planning a continuing medical education (CME) program, there is both good news and bad news for state oncology societies. The bad news is that the guidelines and documentation requirements that meeting planners must follow have grown more complex and cumbersome in recent years. What then is the good news? ASCO, through the implementation of new initiatives in its Education, Science & Career Development department, has been able to expand the customized help it can offer to the state societies in planning accredited activities. The service is offered as a benefit of being a state affiliate society of ASCO, and continues to be available at no charge.

Since the summer of 2006, several new developments have boosted the organization's ability to collaborate more effectively in the planning of quality educational meetings. For one, ASCO has made a shift toward a paperless application for the planning and execution of jointly sponsored CME meetings. Furthermore, in November, the Education, Science & Career Development department hired a new staff member whose major focus will be to help state societies with CME programming. Jennifer Taylor, ASCO's new CME Program Coordinator, brings substantial educational experience to this position and comments that she "looks forward to using that background to help facilitate a smooth joint sponsorship application process for state affiliates."

Joint Sponsorship Takes the Limelight

"ASCO recently went through its reaccreditation process with the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education [ACCME]," explains Anne Grupe, CME Program Manager. The experience of conducting a self-study of ASCO's CME Program highlighted additional resources that were needed to further build the joint sponsorship program into its current form. Those initial findings were confirmed by the recommendations of the reaccreditation surveyors, who recognized ASCO's high standard for educational meetings. The surveyors suggested that existing resources be offered to the state affiliates to enhance their ability to plan meetings in a manner that ensures collection of the required CME documentation.

Based on this feedback, ASCO's CME Subcommittee responded. "The CME Subcommittee reaffirmed ASCO's commitment to engage in joint sponsorship with state societies," recalls Edith Mitchell, MD, Chair of the CME

Subcommittee. "The opportunities for education and collaboration at the state or regional level are an important niche to further the dissemination and, ultimately, implementation of diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventative measures to treat patients with cancer."

"There were several new initiatives that were approved by the Subcommittee and put into place," says Grupe. Taking advantage of ASCO's technological resources, an online joint sponsorship application was developed and launched. State societies can now visit the Web site to upload everything they need to apply for joint sponsorship, and applications can be managed and reviewed online by the ASCO CME team.

Another benefit of the online system is that Education, Science & Career Development has created templates for virtually all of the elements involved in planning and executing a meeting. They offer invitation packets, conflict of interest management documentation, and evaluation forms. Using these templates is just the beginning—ASCO staff members are positioned to assist state affiliates with the development and review of many CME components, such as conflict of interest materials, goal and outcomes statements, evaluations, and on-site materials acknowledgments to ensure all necessary elements are included. Taylor and Grupe encourage state societies to contact ASCO's CME Team as early as possible when planning their meetings, to take full advantage of these additional educational planning resources. An added benefit to participating in ASCO's joint sponsorship application process is that the content developed during planning can also be used for grant applications when soliciting commercial support.

This partnership will become particularly important now that the ACCME has released its Updated Accreditation Criteria, requiring CME activities to focus specifically on their impact on physicians' performance gaps, competencies, and patient outcomes. ASCO will be able to assist state societies to develop educational needs statements, learning objectives, and evaluation plans that will highlight the role that jointly sponsored CME activities play in addressing and improving clinical practice in oncology.

True Partnerships

Lori Aubrey serves as the Administrative Director of the Northern New England Clinical Oncology Society. ASCO has helped her plan meetings, and she has found the

Joint Sponsorship Questions

Contact: Jennifer Taylor, CME Program Coordinator
Telephone (703) 519-2092
E-mail: js@asco.org

The Joint Sponsorship Application (www.asco.org/js) for CME credit is a three-part process:

- Part I to be submitted 120 days (4 months) before activity, or earlier.
- Part II to be submitted 60 days before activity.
- Postactivity materials are due 60 days after activity.

partnership enormously valuable. She says that the working relationship between ASCO and the states societies reflects a spirit of true partnership. Aubrey observes that the CME program focuses on collaboration and exhibits a desire to partner with state societies to plan effective educational meetings.

Grupe concurs. She also notes the assistance that state societies have provided to each other to streamline and update some of the planning processes and required forms for their CME activities—this collaboration was further highlighted at a special workshop led by ASCO CME staff during this year's State Affiliate Leadership Conference, to guide executive

directors through the joint sponsorship process and provide a toolkit for developing CME activities.

Cost-Effective Quality Service

Again, all of the CME services offered through ASCO are free of charge to state societies. In the Society's recent reaccreditation by the ACCME, ASCO received the honor of Accreditation with Commendation. Of all the organizations that apply, approximately 10% achieve this level of distinction. This kind of recognition demonstrates how working with a top-notch organization such as ASCO can benefit state societies planning their continuing education meetings.

Navigating the Paperwork Maze

"Putting on a meeting has become an incredibly detailed process with so many forms to be signed and filed. If you have several speakers for each session, the papers just multiply. You need to document everything, and the requirements keep changing," says Aubrey.

"If you don't do meetings all the time, you're just not going to be adept at it. There are too many technicalities involved," she explains. "It's like a maze to weave through, with different contingencies for different situations. Although planning a meeting can be daunting and scary, the staff at ASCO are so helpful. They have all the resources that you need."

DOI: 10.1200/JOP.0724502

RESOURCE FOR FELLOWS

Oncology fellows can interact with colleagues and peers by subscribing to ASCO's fellows listserve. The fellows listserve is an unmoderated online discussion, which means that all replies to an e-mail are posted immediately to the entire group of subscribers. There is no better way to keep up with your peers and ask those tough questions than ASCO's fellows listserve. To subscribe, visit ASCO.org and click the Education & Training tab, Faculty & Training Program Directors, Listserve Information.