



State of Connecticut Office of Higher Education

February 14, 2023

Dear Stone Academy Student,

On February 6, 2023, Stone Academy notified the Connecticut Office of Higher Education (OHE) of its decision to close. This includes all three of the school's campuses: West Haven, Waterbury, and East Hartford. The OHE wants to ensure that students have a comprehensive understanding of the various concerns and challenges facing Stone Academy, which precipitated the closure of the school.

The OHE is the state agency that has regulatory oversight over private career schools in Connecticut, including Stone Academy. This oversight includes authorizing private career schools to operate and offer instruction in Connecticut, addressing student complaints, and ensuring schools maintain compliance with the statutes and regulations of Connecticut. The practical nursing program at Stone Academy is also regulated by the Connecticut Board of Examiners for Nursing (BOEN) within the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH).

The concerns are outlined below:

National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) Pass Rates:

Every practical nursing program in Connecticut needs to maintain annual NCLEX first-time pass rate of 80%. This means that for each school offering of the practical nursing program, 80% of first-time test takers need to pass the NCLEX. If the program does not meet the annual benchmark, the school is subject to additional review. If the program does not meet the 80% pass rate for 3 consecutive years, it may be removed from the list of approved programs and closed.

The NCLEX pass rates for 2022, at all three campuses were far below the required 80% pass rate. The highest pass rate was 70% and the lowest pass rate was 43%. In addition, the East Hartford day program had failed to reach the 80% benchmark for 3 consecutive years and the BOEN voted to remove them from the list of approved programs during the November 2022 board meeting.

Ned Lamont, Governor · Timothy D. Larson, Executive Director
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The 2022 NCLEX Pass Rates are below:

East Hartford (Day)	67%
East Hartford (Evening)	43%
Waterbury (Day)	58%
Waterbury (Evening)	70%
West Haven (Day)	47%
West Haven (Evening)	43%

Utilizing Unqualified Instructors:

OHE determined that approximately 20% of Stone Academy’s instructors were not qualified to teach in the practical nursing program.

Invalid clinical experiences (“campus clinicals”):

OHE and DPH determined that Stone Academy was offering “campus clinicals” to students. These campus clinical hours were being counted towards the clinical hours practical nursing students needed to complete their program and take the NCLEX. However, the DPH regulation does not allow for any clinical experiences on campus. OHE and DPH determined that the campus clinical hours are invalid hours that cannot be counted towards the requisite number of clinical hours.

Recording Attendance:

During two different site visits, OHE found that Stone Academy failed to properly document the attendance of students at classroom and clinical experiences. This includes inaccurately recording when individual students were late or left early from these experiences.

Other compliance issues with OHE:

The OHE conducted a site visit on July 29, 2022, and found a number of compliance issues that Stone Academy was asked to address. OHE also did a follow-up site visit on December 13, 2022 and found that Stone Academy failed to address some issues raised at the July 29, 2022 visit, including those outlined above: recording of attendance and evaluation of its faculty. OHE provided notice to Stone Academy on December 20, 2022 of a compliance conference meeting and outlined a list of eight concerns.

OHE meet with Stone Academy for the compliance conference on January 9, 2023. As a follow-up and prior to making any decision to revoke the certificate of authorization for Stone Academy, OHE determined that a full audit was necessary to determine the scope of the problem and to identify a baseline for each student. Stone Academy agreed to this audit and signed an Agreement. The Agreement became effective on January 27, 2023, after it was signed by OHE. Stone Academy has failed to comply with the Agreement. The audit has not been

conducted. Based on above, OHE is taking steps to have a clear understanding of where students stand in terms of their ability to graduate because of issues around students being taught by unqualified instructors and receiving invalid clinical experiences.

Compliance issues with Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES):

Stone Academy is currently institutionally accredited by ABHES. ABHES enhances the quality of education and training and promotes institutional and programmatic accountability through systematic and consistent program evaluation. On Friday February 10, 2023, ABHES issued a show cause letter, outlining twelve very significant compliance issues. Some of these were as a result of the findings of OHE and DPH.

Heightened Cash Monitoring 2 with the USDE:

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid (USDE/FSA) has oversight over institutions of higher education that participate in Title IV, HEA programs, such as the Federal Direct Loan and Federal Pell Grant programs. This consists of public, non-profit, and proprietary institutions, including Stone Academy. FSA's oversight includes ensuring equal access to federal funds, disbursing federal funds to institutions, and monitoring institution's compliance with federal regulations.

On February 2, 2023 the USDE placed Stone Academy on Heightened Cash Monitoring 2 (HCM2) as a result of the compliance issues noted by OHE. In part, this requires Stone Academy to submit additional reporting to the USDE before federal funds can be drawn down by Stone Academy. For more information about HCM2, please visit: <https://studentaid.gov/data-center/school/hcm>.

When Stone Academy officially closes, students who were enrolled at the school will have several options available. Until the school closes, aside from transferring, the other options will not be available and students will have to wait until the school is closed. These depend upon your circumstance:

Partial Tuition Refund

If you have paid out of pocket for your education at Stone Academy, due to the school's closure, you may be eligible for a partial refund. To apply for a refund from the State of Connecticut Student Protection Account, please visit: <https://veoci.com/v/p/184154/workflow/yw5km2acbzkf>. Refunds will be proportional to the portion of your program not yet completed. For example, a student that has completed 50% of their program, will receive a refund of half of the tuition paid. Refunds will be of tuition only; no refunds will be issued for fees or supplies.

You will receive an official transcript from our office for the course work that you have already completed.

Loan Discharge from the US Department of Education

If you are currently receiving federal financial aid and would like to have your federal loans discharged, please visit <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/closed-school> for instruction on how to request a discharge. If you have any additional questions concerning your federal financial aid, please call (617) 289-0133 or email NYBostonSPD@ed.gov.

If you need to access information about your federal student aid history, you can log in to your account at <https://studentaid.gov/>.

Adjustment to your Veteran Affairs Benefits

If you are receiving VA benefits for your education at Stone Academy, please visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/Restoration.asp#:~:text=When%20will%20my%20entitlement%20be,your%20entitlement%20is%20restored%20immediately> for directions on how to have your benefits reinstated.

Finish your educational program at another school

You can apply to other schools that offer a practical nursing program or medical assistant program, to see if they will accept your credits and transfer you into their program.

Below are the schools offering practical nursing programs in Connecticut:

Lincoln Technical Institute
Griffin Hospital School of Allied Health Sciences
Porter and Chester Institute

Below are the schools offering medical assisting programs in Connecticut:

Medical Assisting Programs in Connecticut:

American Institute
American Institute of Healthcare & Technology
American Professional Education Services, Inc.
Griffin Hospital of Allied Health Careers
Lincoln Technical Institute
Porter and Chester Institute

In the meantime...

OHE is currently working with Stone Academy to secure all student files including transcripts and financial ledgers, in order to get them to students as soon as possible.

As a student, we understand that you will have questions about what your next steps are. We would like to be responsive to your concerns as quickly as we can. **The first step is to complete our student information survey:** <https://forms.office.com/g/pWMn7szZ5F>. This survey will

help us keep track of how many students are affected. This is also an opportunity for you to leave questions or concerns and have someone from OHE reach out to you. OHE will also be holding information sessions to assist you with your educational matters including the options available to you. We will notify you when we have the dates, times, and locations of the information sessions as soon as they are determined.

If you have special extenuating circumstances that require urgent attention, you can contact our office at (860) 947-1816 or email us at: ohc.pcs@ct.gov. Otherwise, please utilize our survey to ask questions you may have concerning your circumstances.

Please continue to monitor any emails you receive from our office as we will be sending updated information regarding this situation as it becomes available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Larson", with a large, stylized initial "T" and "L".

Timothy D. Larson
Executive Director