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# COLORADO REVISED STATUTES

## Title 12 **Professions and Occupations**

### Article 29.5 **Acupuncturists**

Effective July 1, 2010

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## Table of Contents

12-29.5-101. Legislative declaration. ....	1
12-29.5-102. Definitions. ....	1
12-29.5-103. Mandatory disclosure of information to patients - retention of records of disclosure. ....	2
12-29.5-104. Requirement for licensure with the division of registrations - annual fee - required disclosures. ....	3
12-29.5-104.5. Licensure by endorsement. ....	4
12-29.5-105. Unlawful acts - exceptions. ....	4
12-29.5-106. Grounds for disciplinary action. ....	5
12-29.5-107. Disciplinary authority and proceedings. ....	7
12-29.5-108. Unauthorized practice - penalties. ....	9
12-29.5-109. Civil penalties. ....	9
12-29.5-109.5. Immunity. ....	10
12-29.5-110. Director - powers and duties. ....	10
12-29.5-111. Powers and duties of the executive director of the department of public health and environment. ....	11
12-29.5-112. Insurance coverage - not affected. ....	11
12-29.5-113. Scope of article. ....	11
12-29.5-114. Division of registrations cash fund. ....	12
12-29.5-115. Effective date - applicability. ....	12
12-29.5-116. Repeal of article - termination of functions. ....	12

**12-29.5-101. Legislative declaration.**

While recognizing that the rendering of acupuncture services is not part of the traditional practice of western medicine, it is the intent of the general assembly that those citizens who wish to obtain acupuncture services be allowed to do so and, in addition, that such citizens have available certain information to assist them in making informed choices when seeking such services. It is also the intent of the general assembly that the providers or practitioners of acupuncture should not misrepresent their qualifications, harm their clients, practice in an unhealthy manner, or otherwise deceive insurers or the recipients of acupuncture services.

**12-29.5-102. Definitions.**

As used in this article, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Acupuncture" means a system of health care based upon traditional oriental medical concepts that employs oriental methods of diagnosis, treatment, and adjunctive therapies for the promotion, maintenance, and restoration of health and the prevention of disease.

(2) "Acupuncturist" means any person who provides for compensation, or holds himself out to the public as providing, acupuncture services.

(3) "Director" means the director of the division of registrations in the department of regulatory agencies.

(3.2) "Guest acupuncturist" means an acupuncturist who is:

(a) Licensed, registered, certified, or regulated as an acupuncturist in another jurisdiction;

(b) In this state for the purpose of instruction or education for not more than seven days within a three-month period; and

(c) Under the direct supervision of a Colorado licensed acupuncturist or licensed chiropractor while performing such instruction or education.

(3.3) "Licensee" means an acupuncturist licensed pursuant to section 12-29.5-104.

(3.5) "Practice of acupuncture" means the insertion and removal of acupuncture needles, the application of heat therapies to specific areas of the human body, and traditional oriental adjunctive therapies. Traditional oriental adjunctive therapies within the scope of acupuncture may include manual, mechanical, thermal, electrical, and electromagnetic treatment, the recommendation of oriental therapeutic exercises, and, subject to federal law, the recommendation of herbs and dietary guidelines. The "practice of acupuncture" shall be defined by traditional oriental medical concepts and shall not include the utilization of western medical diagnostic tests and procedures, such as magnetic resonance imaging, radiographs (X rays), computerized tomography scans, and ultrasound. "Practice of acupuncture" does not mean:

(a) Osteopathic medicine and osteopathic manipulative treatment;

(b) "Chiropractic" or "chiropractic adjustment" as defined in section 12-33-102 or therapies allowed as part of the practice of chiropractic or chiropractic adjustment;

(c) Physical therapy as defined in section 12-41-103 or therapies allowed as part of the practice of physical therapy.

(4) (Deleted by amendment, L. 2002, p. 33, § 1, effective March 13, 2002.)

**12-29.5-103. Mandatory disclosure of information to patients - retention of records of disclosure.**

(1) Every acupuncturist shall provide the following information in writing to each patient during the initial patient contact:

(a) The name, business address, and business phone number of the acupuncturist;

(b) A fee schedule;

(c) A statement indicating that:

(I) The patient is entitled to receive information about the methods of therapy, the techniques used, and the duration of therapy, if known;

(II) The patient may seek a second opinion from another health care professional or may terminate therapy at any time;

(III) In a professional relationship, sexual intimacy is never appropriate and should be reported to the director of the division of registrations in the department of regulatory agencies;

(d) A listing of the acupuncturist's education, experience, degrees, membership in a professional organization whose membership includes not less than one-third of the persons licensed pursuant to this article, certificates or credentials related to acupuncture awarded by such organizations, the length of time required to obtain said degrees or credentials, and experience;

(e) A statement indicating any license, certificate, or registration in acupuncture or any other health care profession which was issued to the acupuncturist by any local, state, or national health care agency, and indicating whether any such license, certificate, or registration was suspended or revoked;

(f) A statement that the acupuncturist is complying with any rules and regulations promulgated by the department of public health and environment with respect to this article, including those related to the proper cleaning and sterilization of needles used in the practice of acupuncture and the sanitation of acupuncture offices;

(g) A statement indicating that the practice of acupuncture is regulated by the department of regulatory agencies and the address and phone number of the director of the division of registrations in the department of regulatory agencies; and

(h) A statement indicating the acupuncturist's training and experience in the recommendation and application of adjunctive therapies and herbs as defined by traditional oriental medical concepts.

(2) Any changes in the information required by paragraphs (a) to (f) of subsection (1) of this section shall be made in the mandatory disclosure within five days of the said change.

(3) The acupuncturist shall retain a copy of the written information specified in subsection (1) of this section, dated and signed by the patient, from the time of the initial evaluation until at least three years after the termination of treatment.

**12-29.5-104. Requirement for licensure with the division of registrations - annual fee - required disclosures.**

(1) Every acupuncturist shall apply for licensure with the division of registrations by providing an application to the director in the form the director shall require. Said application shall include the information specified in section 12-29.5-103 (1) (a) and (1) (d) to (1) (g), and shall include the disclosure of any act that would be grounds for disciplinary action against a licensed acupuncturist under this article.

(2) Any changes in the information required by subsection (1) of this section shall be reported within thirty days of said change to the division of registrations in the manner prescribed by the director.

(3) In order to qualify for licensure, an acupuncturist shall have:

(a) Successfully completed an education program for acupuncturists that conforms to standards approved by the director, which standards may be established by utilizing the assistance of any professional organization whose membership includes not less than one-third of the persons licensed pursuant to this article; or

(b) Qualifications based on education, experience, or training which are substantially similar to those provided by paragraph (a) of this subsection (3) which are documented in the form required by the director and accepted by him in lieu of such education program.

(4) Every applicant for licensure shall pay license, renewal, and reinstatement fees to be established by the director in the same manner as is authorized by section 24-34-105, C.R.S. All licenses shall be renewed or reinstated pursuant to a schedule established by the director of the division of registrations within the department of regulatory agencies and shall be renewed or reinstated pursuant to section 24-34-102 (8), C.R.S. The director of the division of registrations within the department of regulatory agencies may establish renewal fees and delinquency fees for reinstatement pursuant to section 24-34-105, C.R.S. If a person fails to renew his or her license pursuant to the schedule established by the director of the division of registrations, such license shall expire. Any person whose license has expired shall be subject to the penalties provided in this article or section 24-34-102 (8), C.R.S.

(5) Every acupuncturist shall report to the director every judgment or administrative action, as well as the terms of any settlement or other disposition of any such judgment or action, against the acupuncturist involving malpractice or improper practice of acupuncture, whether occurring

in Colorado or in any other jurisdiction. The acupuncturist shall make such report either within thirty days after the judgment or action or upon application for licensure or reinstatement, whichever occurs earlier.

(6) As a condition of licensure, every acupuncturist shall purchase and maintain commercial professional liability insurance with an insurance company authorized to do business in this state in a minimum indemnity amount of:

(a) Fifty thousand dollars per incident and fifty thousand dollars per year, if practicing as a sole proprietor or general partnership;

(b) Three hundred thousand dollars per incident and three hundred thousand dollars per year, if practicing as a limited liability company or a corporation.

(7) The director shall issue a license to practice acupuncture to any acupuncturist who is registered to practice acupuncture in this state prior to March 13, 2002.

#### **12-29.5-104.5. Licensure by endorsement.**

(1) The director shall issue a license by endorsement to engage in the practice of acupuncture in this state to any applicant who has a license in good standing as an acupuncturist under the laws of another jurisdiction if the applicant presents satisfactory proof to the director that, at the time of application for a license by endorsement, the applicant possesses substantially equivalent credentials and qualifications to those required for licensure pursuant to this article.

(2) The director shall specify by rule what shall constitute "substantially equivalent credentials and qualifications" for the purposes of this section.

(3) The director shall establish a fee to be paid by any applicant for licensure by endorsement.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "in good standing" means a license that has not been revoked or suspended, or against which there are no disciplinary or adverse actions.

#### **12-29.5-105. Unlawful acts - exceptions.**

(1) Nothing in this article shall interfere with, or be interpreted to interfere with or prevent, any other licensed health care professional from practicing within the scope of his or her practice, as defined in this title.

(1.5) (a) It is unlawful for any person to practice acupuncture without a valid and current license on file with the division of registrations, unless the acupuncturist is practicing pursuant to section 12-36-106 (3) (1) or has met the requirements of subsection (2) of this section.

(b) It is unlawful for any person to:

(I) Engage in the practice of acupuncture without being licensed; or

(II) Use the title "licensed acupuncturist", "registered acupuncturist", or "diplomate of acupuncture", or use the designation "L.Ac.", "R.Ac.", or "Dipl. Ac.", unless such person is practicing pursuant to section 12-36-106 (3).

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section to the contrary, a person in training may practice acupuncture without a valid and current license on file with the division if such practice takes place in the course of a bona fide training program and:

(a) All acupuncture acts and services performed by such persons are performed under the direct, on-site supervision of a licensed acupuncturist, who shall be responsible for all such acts and services as though the licensed acupuncturist had personally performed them; and

(b) The names and current residence addresses of all of such persons have been reported to the director by or on behalf of the licensed acupuncturist supervising such persons.

#### **12-29.5-106. Grounds for disciplinary action.**

(1) The director may deny licensure to or take disciplinary action against an acupuncturist pursuant to section 24-4-105, C.R.S., if the director finds that the acupuncturist has committed any of the following acts:

(a) Violated the provisions of section 12-29.5-105;

(b) Failed to provide the mandatory disclosure required by section 12-29.5-103 or provided false, deceptive, or misleading information to patients in the said disclosure;

(c) Failed to provide the information required by section 12-29.5-104 (1) or provided false, deceptive, or misleading information to the division of registrations;

(d) Committed, or advertised in any manner that he or she will commit, any act constituting an abuse of health insurance as prohibited by section 18-13-119, C.R.S., or a fraudulent insurance act as defined in section 10-1-128, C.R.S.;

(e) Failed to refer a patient to an appropriate practitioner when the problem of the patient is beyond the training, experience, or competence of the acupuncturist;

(f) Accepted commissions or rebates or other forms of remuneration for referring clients to other professional persons;

(g) Offered or gave commissions, rebates, or other forms of remuneration for the referral of clients; except that, notwithstanding the provisions of this paragraph (g), an acupuncturist may pay an independent advertising or marketing agent compensation for advertising or marketing

services rendered on his behalf by such agent, including compensation which is paid for the results of performance of such services, on a per patient basis;

(h) Failed to comply with, or aided or abetted a failure to comply with, the requirements of this article or any lawful rules or regulations adopted by the executive director of the department of public health and environment, including those regulations governing the proper cleaning and sterilization of acupuncture needles or the sanitary conditions of acupuncture offices, or any lawful orders of the department of public health and environment or of court;

(i) Failed to comply with, or aided or abetted a failure to comply with, the requirements of this article or any lawful rules or regulations governing the practice of acupuncture adopted by the director, or any lawful orders of the director or of court;

(j) Engaged in sexual contact, sexual intrusion, or sexual penetration, as defined in section 18-3-401, C.R.S., with a patient during the period of time beginning with the initial patient evaluation and ending with the termination of treatment;

(k) Departed from, or failed to conform to, minimal standards of care of similar practitioners under the same or similar circumstances, whether or not actual injury to a patient is established;

(l) Continued in the practice of acupuncture while subject to any physical or mental disability which renders the acupuncturist unable to treat patients with reasonable skill and safety or which may endanger a patient's health or safety, or continued in the practice of acupuncture while afflicted with a communicable, infectious, or contagious disease of such a serious nature as to render the acupuncturist unable to treat patients with reasonable skill and safety or which may endanger a patient's health or safety;

(m) Continued in the practice of acupuncture while addicted to or dependent upon alcohol or upon any habit-forming drug or while abusing or habitually or excessively using any such habit-forming drug or any controlled substance as defined in section 12-22-303 (7);

(n) Committed and been convicted of a felony or entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere to a felony; and

(o) Published or circulated, directly or indirectly, any fraudulent, false, deceitful, or misleading claims or statements relating to acupuncture or to the acupuncturist's practice, capabilities, services, methods, or qualifications.

(2) The director may accept, as prima facie evidence of the commission of any act enumerated in subsection (1) of this section, evidence of disciplinary action taken by another jurisdiction against an acupuncturist's license or other authorization to practice if such disciplinary action was based upon acts or practices substantially similar to those enumerated in subsection (1) of this section.

(3) (a) The director or an administrative law judge shall have the power to administer oaths, take affirmations of witnesses, and issue subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of all relevant papers, books, records, documentary evidence, and materials in any hearing, investigation, accusation, or other matter coming before the director pursuant to this

article. The director may appoint an administrative law judge pursuant to part 10 of article 30 of title 24, C.R.S., to take evidence and to make findings and report them to the director.

(b) Upon failure of any witness to comply with such subpoena or process, the district court of the county in which the subpoenaed person or licensee resides or conducts business, upon application by the board or director with notice to the subpoenaed person or licensee, may issue to the person or licensee an order requiring that person or licensee to appear before the director; to produce the relevant papers, books, records, documentary evidence, or materials if so ordered; or to give evidence touching the matter under investigation or in question. Failure to obey the order of the court may be punished by the court as a contempt of court.

### **12-29.5-107. Disciplinary authority and proceedings.**

(1) A proceeding for discipline of a licensee may be commenced by the director when the director has reasonable grounds to believe that a licensee has committed any act prohibited by section 12-29.5-106 (1).

(2) Disciplinary actions may consist of the following:

(a) Revocation or suspension of licensure;

(b) Placement of the licensee on probation and setting the terms of that probation; and

(c) (I) Issuance of letters of admonition. When a complaint or investigation discloses an instance of misconduct that, in the opinion of the director, does not warrant formal action by the director but that should not be dismissed as being without merit, a letter of admonition may be issued and sent, by certified mail, to the licensee.

(II) When a letter of admonition is sent by the director, by certified mail, to a licensee, such licensee shall be advised that he or she has the right to request in writing, within twenty days after receipt of the letter, that formal disciplinary proceedings be initiated to adjudicate the propriety of the conduct upon which the letter of admonition is based.

(III) If the request for adjudication is timely made, the letter of admonition shall be deemed vacated and the matter shall be processed by means of formal disciplinary proceedings.

(2.5) When a complaint or investigation discloses an instance of conduct that does not warrant formal action by the director and, in the opinion of the director, the complaint should be dismissed, but the director has noticed indications of possible errant conduct by the licensee that could lead to serious consequences if not corrected, a confidential letter of concern may be issued and sent to the licensee.

(3) Complaints of record on file with the director and the results of investigations shall be closed to public inspection during the investigatory period and until dismissed or until notice of hearing and charges are served on a licensee. The director's records and papers shall be subject to the provisions of sections 24-72-203 and 24-72-204, C.R.S.

(4) When a complaint or an investigation discloses an instance of misconduct that, in the opinion of the director, warrants formal action, the complaint shall not be resolved by a deferred settlement, action, judgment, or prosecution.

(5) (a) If it appears to the director, based upon credible evidence as presented in a written complaint by any person, that a licensee is acting in a manner that is an imminent threat to the health and safety of the public or a person is acting or has acted without the required license, the director may issue an order to cease and desist such activity. The order shall set forth the statutes and rules alleged to have been violated, the facts alleged to have constituted the violation, and the requirement that all unlawful acts or unlicensed practices immediately cease.

(b) Within ten days after service of the order to cease and desist pursuant to paragraph (a) of this subsection (5), the respondent may request a hearing on the question of whether acts or practices in violation of this article have occurred. Such hearing shall be conducted pursuant to sections 24-4-104 and 24-4-105, C.R.S.

(6) (a) If it appears to the director, based upon credible evidence as presented in a written complaint by any person, that a person has violated any other portion of this article, then, in addition to any specific powers granted pursuant to this article, the director may issue to such person an order to show cause as to why the director should not issue a final order directing such person to cease and desist from the unlawful act or unlicensed practice.

(b) A person against whom an order to show cause has been issued pursuant to paragraph (a) of this subsection (6) shall be promptly notified by the director of the issuance of the order, along with a copy of the order, the factual and legal basis for the order, and the date set by the director for a hearing on the order. Such notice may be served by personal service, by first-class United States mail, postage prepaid, or as may be practicable upon any person against whom such order is issued. Personal service or mailing of an order or document pursuant to this subsection (6) shall constitute notice thereof to the person.

(c) (I) The hearing on an order to show cause shall be commenced no sooner than ten and no later than forty-five calendar days after the date of transmission or service of the notification by the director as provided in paragraph (b) of this subsection (6). The hearing may be continued by agreement of all parties based upon the complexity of the matter, number of parties to the matter, and legal issues presented in the matter, but in no event shall the hearing commence later than sixty calendar days after the date of transmission or service of the notification.

(II) If a person against whom an order to show cause has been issued pursuant to paragraph (a) of this subsection (6) does not appear at the hearing, the director may present evidence that notification was properly sent or served upon such person pursuant to paragraph (b) of this subsection (6) and such other evidence related to the matter as the director deems appropriate. The director shall issue the order within ten days after the director's determination related to reasonable attempts to notify the respondent, and the order shall become final as to that person by operation of law. Such hearing shall be conducted pursuant to sections 24-4-104 and 24-4-105, C.R.S.

(III) If the director reasonably finds that the person against whom the order to show cause was issued is acting or has acted without the required license or has or is about to engage in acts or practices constituting violations of this article, a final cease-and-desist order may be issued directing such person to cease and desist from further unlawful acts or unlicensed practices.

(IV) The director shall provide notice, in the manner set forth in paragraph (b) of this subsection (6), of the final cease-and-desist order within ten calendar days after the hearing conducted pursuant to this paragraph (c) to each person against whom the final order has been issued. The final order issued pursuant to subparagraph (III) of this paragraph (c) shall be effective when issued and shall be a final order for purposes of judicial review.

(7) If it appears to the director, based upon credible evidence presented to the director, that a person has engaged in or is about to engage in any unlicensed act or practice, any act or practice constituting a violation of this article, any rule promulgated pursuant to this article, any order issued pursuant to this article, or any act or practice constituting grounds for administrative sanction pursuant to this article, the director may enter into a stipulation with such person.

(8) If any person fails to comply with a final cease-and-desist order or a stipulation, the director may request the attorney general or the district attorney for the judicial district in which the alleged violation exists to bring, and if so requested such attorney shall bring, suit for a temporary restraining order and for injunctive relief to prevent any further or continued violation of the final order.

(9) A person aggrieved by the final cease-and-desist order may seek judicial review of the director's determination or of the director's final order in a court of competent jurisdiction.

#### **12-29.5-108. Unauthorized practice - penalties.**

(1) Any person who practices or offers or attempts to practice acupuncture without an active license issued under this article commits a class 2 misdemeanor and shall be punished as provided in section 18-1.3-501, C.R.S., for the first offense, and, for the second or any subsequent offense, the person commits a class 6 felony and shall be punished as provided in section 18-1.3-401, C.R.S.

(2) Any person who violates the provision of section 12-29.5-106 (1) (j) by engaging in sexual contact with a patient during the course of patient care commits a class 1 misdemeanor and shall be referred for criminal prosecution.

(3) Any person who violates the provisions of section 12-29.5-106 (1) (j) by engaging in sexual intrusion or sexual penetration with a patient during the course of patient care commits a class 4 felony and shall be referred for criminal prosecution.

#### **12-29.5-109. Civil penalties.**

(1) No action may be maintained against a recipient of acupuncture services for breach of a contract involving the rendering of acupuncture services provided under such contract by an acupuncturist who has committed, with respect to such recipient, any act prohibited by section 12-29.5-106 (1).

(2) When a patient, his insurer, or his legal guardian or representative has paid for acupuncture services rendered by an acupuncturist who has committed, with respect to such

patient, any act prohibited by section 12-29.5-106 (1), whether or not said patient knew that said act or acts were illegal, he, his insurer, or his legal guardian or representative may recover, in an action at law, the amount of any fees paid for the acupuncture services and reasonable attorney fees.

(3) The criminal and civil penalties specified under this article are not exclusive but cumulative and in addition to any other causes of action, rights, or remedies a patient may have under law.

#### **12-29.5-109.5. Immunity.**

The director, the director's staff, any person acting as a witness or consultant to the director, any witness testifying in a proceeding authorized under this article, and any person who lodges a complaint pursuant to this article shall be immune from liability in any civil action brought against him or her for acts occurring while acting in his or her capacity as director, staff, consultant, or witness, respectively, if such individual was acting in good faith within the scope of his or her respective capacity, made a reasonable effort to obtain the facts of the matter as to which he or she acted, and acted in the reasonable belief that the action taken by him or her was warranted by the facts. Any person participating in good faith in lodging a complaint or participating in any investigative or administrative proceeding pursuant to this article shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability that may result from such participation.

#### **12-29.5-110. Director - powers and duties.**

(1) In addition to any other powers and duties conferred by this article, the director shall have the following powers and duties:

(a) To adopt such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this article;

(b) To establish the fees for licensure and renewal of licenses in the same manner as is authorized by section 24-34-105, C.R.S.;

(c) To accept or deny applications for licensure and to collect the annual license fees authorized by this article;

(d) To inspect on a complaint basis any premises where acupuncture services are provided to ensure compliance with this article and the rules and regulations adopted pursuant thereto;

(e) To contract with the department of public health and environment or others to provide appropriate services as needed to carry out the inspections authorized with respect to the proper cleaning and sterilization of needles and the sanitation of acupuncture offices;

(f) To make investigations, hold hearings, and take evidence with respect to any complaint against any licensee when the director has reasonable cause to believe that the licensee is violating any of the provisions of this article and to subpoena witnesses, administer oaths, and compel the testimony of witnesses and the production of books, papers, and records relevant to those investigations or hearings. Any subpoena issued pursuant to this article shall be enforceable by the district court.

(g) To conduct any other meetings or hearings necessary to carry out the provisions of this article;

(h) Through the department of regulatory agencies, and subject to appropriations made to the department of regulatory agencies, to employ administrative law judges on a full-time or part-time basis to conduct any hearings required by this article. The administrative law judges shall be appointed pursuant to part 10 of article 30 of title 24, C.R.S.

(i) To seek, through the office of the attorney general, an injunction in any court of competent jurisdiction to enjoin any person from committing any act prohibited by this article. When seeking an injunction under this paragraph (i), the director shall not be required to allege or prove the inadequacy of any remedy at law or that substantial or irreparable damage is likely to result from a continued violation of this article.

(j) To order the physical or mental examination of an acupuncturist if the director has reasonable cause to believe that the acupuncturist is subject to a physical or mental disability which renders the acupuncturist unable to treat patients with reasonable skill and safety or which may endanger a patient's health or safety; and the director may order such an examination whether or not actual injury to a patient is established;

(k) To report to the United States department of health and human services, pursuant to applicable federal law and regulations, any adverse action taken against the license of any acupuncturist.

**12-29.5-111. Powers and duties of the executive director of the department of public health and environment.**

The executive director of the department of public health and environment shall promulgate rules and regulations relating to the proper cleaning and sterilization of needles to be used in the practice of acupuncture and the sanitation of acupuncture offices.

**12-29.5-112. Insurance coverage - not affected.**

Nothing in this article shall be construed to affect any present or future provision of law or contract or other agreement concerning insurance or insurance coverage with respect to the provision of acupuncture services.

**12-29.5-113. Scope of article.**

The provisions of this article shall not apply to those persons who are otherwise licensed by the state of Colorado under this title if the provision of acupuncture services is within the scope of such licensure. It is not intended nor shall it be interpreted that the practice of acupuncture constitutes the practice of medicine within the scope of the "Colorado Medical Practice Act", article 36 of this title.

**12-29.5-114. Division of registrations cash fund.**

It is the intention of the general assembly that all direct and indirect costs incurred in the implementation of this article be funded by annual registration and license fees. All fees collected by the director shall be transmitted to the state treasurer, who shall credit the same to the division of registrations cash fund, created by section 24-34-105, C.R.S.

**12-29.5-115. Effective date - applicability.**

This article shall take effect July 1, 1989, and shall apply to practicing acupuncturists on or after January 1, 1990.

**12-29.5-116. Repeal of article - termination of functions.**

(1) This article is repealed, effective July 1, 2013.

(2) The licensing functions of the director of the division of registrations as set forth in this article are terminated on July 1, 2013. Prior to such termination, the licensing functions shall be reviewed as provided for in section 24-34-104, C.R.S.

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