

At the end of last year, New York offered a 45-day extension after “many” trainers had failed to complete the mandated four hours. According to a New York State Gaming Commission spokesperson, the commission “continues to review the completion rates for the first year.”

Nevertheless, the HBPA ran a survey in 2013 which found 87% of responders favorable towards continued education. So, are there other reasons to explain resistance from within the industry?

A number of trainers I spoke with mentioned the dry nature of the online courses. Alicia Benben, academic coordinator at NARA, said that this issue is very much on their radar.

“That’s a problem for all educators—how do I make what I’m teaching interesting and engaging?” said Benben, who acknowledged some of the stigmas attached by trainers to continuing education.

“One of the things that people thought at first was, ‘They’re trying to teach me how to train,’” she said. “And that’s not at all

the goal. We’re just looking to provide knowledge and information that perhaps wasn’t previously known.”

Then there’s the technical and logistical obstacles faced at the regulatory level. The Advanced Horsemanship website wasn’t yet up and running when Indiana tried to implement its continuing education program, which closely resembled the ARCI’s model rule. And so, Indiana designed and ran seminars in the spring and fall for trainers to attend in person.

Through fear, however, that Indiana would scare away those trainers unable to attend the seminars—and thus, unable to fulfill their yearly requirement for licensing—the new rule was eventually abandoned, said Joe

Gorajec, former executive director of the Indiana Horse Racing Commission.

“This is one of the few rules that really needs buy-in from all the states, or almost all the states, to work,” he said.

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