

# ABMS and Board Certification

## What we do

American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) represents 24 specialty boards that certify physicians in the United States. Board certification was created more than 100 years ago to provide an objective evaluation of a physician's experience, knowledge, and skills. It is driven by physicians who want to achieve higher standards of care in a rapidly changing health care environment. This rigorous process, managed by the ABMS specialty Member Boards, involves participation in continuous assessment and professional development activities necessary to practice safely in a specialty.



## Why it's important

Board certification represents physicians' highest professional credential. It is a key component of the patient-physician relationship. Patients trust the medical profession to establish and maintain the standards of practice by which physicians are certified and assessed. By being board certified, physicians promise to uphold those standards and demonstrate that they have the specialized knowledge and clinical judgment to provide safe, quality patient care. Evidence shows that board certified physicians who continue to develop their knowledge and skills through continuing certification better adhere to practice guidelines, improve care processes, and have lower likelihood of disciplinary actions by state medical licensing boards.

# Board certification raises the bar of excellence in patient care

To become board certified, physicians must first meet the requirements for medical licensure then complete additional specialty training and assessment.

## LICENSURE



**Mandatory credential granted by a state licensing board providing legal permission to practice medicine**

- Indicates that a physician has met the requirements to ensure that public health, safety, and/or welfare are reasonably protected
- Requires medical degree, minimum one-year internship training, and passing an exam

## BOARD CERTIFICATION



**Voluntary credential granted by an ABMS Member Board confirming a physician's advanced knowledge, training, and skills in a specialty or subspecialty**

- Indicates that specific clinical, professional, and ethical standards are being met to provide patient care
- Requires medical degree, medical license, 3 to 7 years residency/fellowship training, program director attestation, and passing a rigorous exam process
- Includes a continuing process of professional assessment and learning activities to improve patient care quality, safety, outcomes, and experiences

## THE MEMBER BOARDS AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF ABMS

---

ABMS works with its Member Boards and Associate Members to improve the quality of graduate medical education, the standards of medical practice, and the physician certification process.

### ABMS MEMBER BOARDS

Includes the year approved as an ABMS Member Board

- 1933** Founding Member Boards:
  - American Board of Dermatology
  - American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology
  - American Board of Ophthalmology
  - American Board of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery
- 1935** American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery
  - American Board of Pediatrics
  - American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology
  - American Board of Radiology
  - American Board of Urology
- 1936** American Board of Internal Medicine
  - American Board of Pathology
- 1937** American Board of Surgery
- 1940** American Board of Neurological Surgery
- 1941** American Board of Anesthesiology
  - American Board of Plastic Surgery
- 1947** American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- 1949** American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery
  - American Board of Preventive Medicine
- 1969** American Board of Family Medicine
- 1971** American Board of Allergy and Immunology
  - American Board of Nuclear Medicine
  - American Board of Thoracic Surgery
- 1979** American Board of Emergency Medicine
- 1991** American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics

### ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF ABMS

- Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME)** National organization that evaluates and accredits institutions and organizations offering Continuing Medical Education (CME) in the United States, [accme.org](http://accme.org).
- Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)** National organization that evaluates and accredits post-MD medical residency programs in the United States, [acgme.org](http://acgme.org).
- American Hospital Association (AHA)** National membership organization representing members' perspectives and needs in national health policy development, legislative and regulatory debates, and judicial matters, [aha.org](http://aha.org).
- American Medical Association (AMA)** National membership organization uniting physicians in the United States to focus on professional and public health issues, [ama-assn.org](http://ama-assn.org).
- Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)** National membership organization for enhancing the effectiveness of academic medicine, [aamc.org](http://aamc.org).
- Council of Medical Specialty Societies (CMSS)** National membership organization providing an independent forum for discussion by medical specialists on issues of national interest and mutual concern, [cmss.org](http://cmss.org).
- Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG)** Organization that evaluates whether international medical graduates (IMGs) are ready to enter United States graduate medical programs, and offers a variety of other programs for IMGs and the entities worldwide that educate, train register/license, and employ them, [ecfmg.org](http://ecfmg.org).
- Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB)** Policy-focused organization promoting best practices in medical regulation and encouraging uniformity in how states license and discipline physicians. It collaborates with NBME to provide the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), [fsm.org](http://fsm.org).
- National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME)** Assessment organization that, along with FSMB, co-sponsors the USMLE, which is accepted by medical licensing authorities as the standard by which to judge candidates for medical licensure, [nbme.org](http://nbme.org).