

Residency Training and Medical Licensure Requirements



How Do I Become Board Certified?

Your pathway to Family Medicine Certification begins during your residency program, as you participate in activities that allow you to assess your own knowledge and learn the process for improving care in your practice. These are called Knowledge Self-Assessment and Performance Improvement activities and you can find out information about these on the ABFM website section [Becoming Certified](#).

Each year, your program will administer an In-training Examination (ITE) that is from ABFM – this helps to prepare you for taking your initial certification exam toward the end of your residency. The ITE results will predict how you will do on the certification exam and highlight areas in which you need further study. In order to become board certified by ABFM, you will have to pass your initial certification examination.

After you have completed the activities described above and successfully passed the exam, there are three additional steps to becoming board certified.

1

First, you must ensure that you have demonstrated professionalism and personal conduct consistent with ABFM's Guidelines for Professionalism, Licensure and Personal Conduct (*see sidebar*).

2

Second, your Program Director must attest that you have satisfactorily completed all requirements established by the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education in your last month of training.

3

Finally, you must possess an active, valid and full license to practice medicine in the United States or Canada.

When you began your training you were likely provided a training license or certificate that allows you to practice medicine under the supervision of your residency program.

This license/certificate does not need to be entered into your ABFM Physician Portfolio, as it is not the one that will be required for your initial certification at the end of residency. Rather, you will need to have an active medical license in order to become board certified. When you are nearing the end of your training, it is advantageous to obtain a medical license in the state in which you intend to practice, as doing so will facilitate receipt of your initial certification.

Professionalism Overview

Professionalism is the basis of medicine's contract with society and demands that you place the interests and welfare of your patients above your own and that you maintain standards of competency and integrity.

ABFM has specific guidelines for all board-certified family physicians that must be met throughout your career in order to remain continuously certified. As one part of these guidelines, you must hold a medical license that is currently active, valid and full in the United States, its territories, or Canada, and is not subject to any practice privilege limitations. This means that a state licensing board has granted you full medical practice privileges and that your license is not subject to practice limitations.

Visit abfm.org for a full copy of ABFM's [Guidelines for Professionalism, Licensure and Personal Conduct](#).

Stay Connected!

It's imperative that you update and maintain your current email address and postal address on file with ABFM. Important messages about your board eligibility, certification requirements, and licensure are often missed when residents do not update their contact information following completion of residency training.

DID YOU KNOW?

Answers to Your Most Commonly Asked Questions

1. Board eligibility is the term that describes the period of time between completion of residency training and achievement of initial certification in a specialty. The board-eligibility period for family physicians lasts seven years after the successful completion of an ACGME-accredited family medicine residency training program.
2. Successful completion of residency training, by itself, does not mean you have met the requirements to claim board-eligibility status. Once your Program Director verifies your completion of training, and you obtain an approved medical license that meets ABFM licensure requirements, you may claim board-eligibility status. You may request a letter documenting your board eligibility by emailing boardeligibility@theabfm.org. This may be requested by employers or credentialers.
3. ABFM permits third year residents to take their Family Medicine Certification examination prior to the completion of residency training and the start of the board-eligibility period. Once you have successfully passed the initial certification exam, in addition to having your training validated and obtaining an approved medical license, you are ready to become board certified! It takes all three of these for your board certification to be granted, so be sure that you are attending to each of these components.
4. If you enter a fellowship program following completion of residency, you will still need to have an approved medical license on file that meets ABFM requirements in order to obtain and maintain your initial Family Medicine Certification. A training license while in a fellowship program will not meet licensure requirements for certification. Alternatively, if you do not wish to obtain a full license where you are completing fellowship, you may delay your Family Medicine Certification until you finish your specialty training.
5. While ABFM receives medical license information from available state medical boards, it is up to you to assure the medical license record that is on file for you at ABFM is accurate, confirmed, and remains up to date. You can accomplish this through your [Physician Portfolio](#).
6. It is your responsibility to report any disciplinary or adverse actions taken against any medical license you may hold, or have ever held, in the past. This includes being denied licensure in any state, having restrictions placed on your medical license, or having received an action by the DEA or Medicaid/Medicare. These may result in loss of eligibility or Diplomate status. Any unreported actions could result in invalidation of your examination. All reports should be made in writing to license@theabfm.org
7. If you practice outside of the U.S. and/or Canada, you must still maintain an approved medical license in the U.S. or Canada in order to maintain your certification.
8. If you complete residency in the U.S. and want to become licensed in Canada, through Canadian reciprocity, you will first need to obtain a medical license in the U.S. in order to obtain your Family Medicine Certification. It is important to do this as soon as possible at the end of your residency training.



**American Board
of Family Medicine**

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