



quarantine...
higher risk...
hand hygiene...
shelter at home...
social distancing...
flattening the curve...

These are words that have become all too familiar over the last few months. ABFM is grateful to all the family physicians and health care workers for their dedication and compassion as they serve on the front line fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. And for that, we say:

Thank you

THE PHOENIX

A Newsletter for Board-Certified Family Physicians

A Message from the President

Greetings and we hope you and your families are well. We at ABFM are humbled by your commitment to your patients, your flexibility and your tenacity as we hear the stories of your critical role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The American Board of Family Medicine recognizes that these are truly unprecedented times. We want to do everything we can to allow you to focus on what is most important: your patients, your families, and your communities. Along those lines, we are making a commitment to you that no family physician will lose their ABFM certification because of the patient care pressures associated with COVID-19.



In this edition of *The Phoenix*, you will read about the changes we have made to support you during the pandemic, including offering extended time to complete certification activity and examination deadlines; offering the same extension for board eligible and re-entry physicians; adding a COVID-19 PI Activity to allow you to receive credit for the rapid cycle changes you had to make in your practice; and addressing specific residency training adjustments for meeting board eligibility requirements after graduation. We've also worked closely with testing centers to add additional dates and will be adding COVID-19 items in future knowledge self-assessment questions. Finally, we have been proud to recognize examples of positive professionalism among family physicians as we hear about the incredible stories of responses to this crisis.

We will continue to make operational changes as needed to help support you and will work hard to communicate them with you—not only in *The Phoenix*, but in ongoing targeted emails. All this information and more can also be found on our website at theabfm.org/COVID-19.

We are proud to be associated with such an exceptional group of physicians and we want to assure you of our continued support during this crisis and beyond. Please email, text or call us if you have any questions or if there is anything we can do to help you.

Sincerely yours,

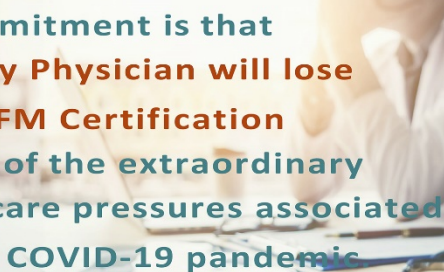
Warren Newton, MD, MPH
President and CEO





Extensions Offered for 2020 Certification Deadlines During COVID-19 Pandemic

A major priority for the American Board of Family Medicine is to support Diplomates in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. We knew immediately that we had an opportunity to ease some of the anxiety and burden that family physicians might be experiencing related to certification activity requirements. To provide additional time for Diplomates with a certification deadline in 2020 who find it difficult to complete their certification activities in 2020, ABFM has made the following adjustments:



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no Family Physician will lose
their ABFM Certification
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with the COVID-19 pandemic**

1. All Diplomates with a three-year stage ending in 2020 will have a one-year extension on completing all stage requirements.
2. For FMCLA participants in their first year, the meaningful participation guideline was changed to answering a minimum of 50 questions from 2020 in order to continue participation in 2021.
3. All FMCLA participants will have the option of an additional three months beyond each original quarterly deadline in 2020 to complete quarterly question sets. The original quarterly timeline will remain in place, but if needed, optional deadline extensions will be available.
4. Any board-eligible family physician with an eligibility end date in 2020, or anyone participating in the Re-Entry process with an end date in 2020, will have an additional year to obtain their certification.
5. Any Diplomate who also holds a Certificate of Added Qualification with an examination deadline in 2020 will have the option for an additional year to complete the examination requirement.
6. For those facing financial hardship as the result of the pandemic, we will establish a method for delaying 2020 payments.

The 2020 deadlines will remain in place and the Diplomate's next stage will still begin in January 2021, even though the additional time is being allowed for completion of activities with 2020 deadlines.



We encourage those who are able to participate in certification activities during this year to do so in order to stay current. You can find specific information about your requirements in your [Physician Portfolio](#).



New Knowledge Self-Assessments (KSAs) Now Available:

Care of Children KSA

This new activity combines the competencies currently covered in two separate KSAs of Well Child Care and Childhood Illness. This KSA covers normal childhood growth and development, surveillance and prevention, and acute and chronic illnesses seen in patients from newborn to age 18, as well as topics such as congenital abnormalities, behavioral health, trauma, and toxicity.

Palliative Care KSA

The American Board of Family Medicine has worked in conjunction with the Interstate Postgraduate Medical Association (IPMA) to develop this new KSA focused on caring for patients at the end of life. The new KSA will cover common Palliative Care symptoms; Palliative Care in special populations; legal, regulatory, cultural, and psychosocial aspects of Palliative Care; and recognizing and managing Palliative Care emergencies.

Newly Revised KSAs Available This Summer:

Hypertension KSA

This newly revised ABFM KSA activity will focus on diagnosis and risk stratification of a patient with hypertension, recognition and management of hypertensive crisis, evaluation for secondary causes of hypertension, both pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic methods of treatment, and managing hypertensive patients with comorbid conditions or as part of special populations.

Heart Disease KSA

This new ABFM-developed KSA activity will focus on the pathophysiology, diagnosis, and management of coronary artery disease, including recognition and treatment of acute coronary syndrome, EKG interpretation, classification of types of heart disease, acute, chronic and advanced pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic treatment, and management of acute decompensated HF.

**NEW
TEST
CENTER
DATES**

**FAMILY MEDICINE &
SPORTS MEDICINE
CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION**

**JULY
7-31**



**AUG
1-4**





The Center for Professionalism & Value: *Responding to a Pandemic and its Devastating Effects on Primary Care*



Seemingly overnight, the COVID-19 pandemic altered the lives and livelihood of family physicians and their patients in immediate and lasting ways. The [Center for Professionalism and Value in Health Care](#) (CPV) quickly responded to help investigate the impact of the pandemic on family physicians by listening to their stories and conducting surveys to better understand the rapid reduction of in person visits and adoption of virtual visits. This information was used to inform policymakers, payers and agencies that could help support and strengthen family medicine. We worked with our partners at the ABFM-funded [Larry A Green Center](#) in their efforts to disseminate a new weekly survey on primary care needs and ensure that this information reached an array of policy stakeholders and amplifiers such as the [Primary Care Collaborative](#), the Commonwealth Fund, the Milbank Memorial Fund, National Governor's Association, key legislative staff, and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

Notably, CPV leadership published an important article in Health Affairs ([The COVID-19 Tsunami: The Tide Goes Out Before It Comes In](#)) that described the dire financial situations and the existential threat facing primary care. The stories in this piece shone light on practices needing to lay off staff or close due to operating margins predicting that cash flow would run out in a matter of a few weeks or months. As part of this, the CPV rapidly designed and deployed a new portion of their website dedicated to COVID-related efforts, including a novel [COVID Practice Revenue Calculator](#) to help practices engage in self-advocacy, and for policymakers to understand the real impact of rapid declines in volume by putting real numbers to the estimated losses expected.



The CPV will continue to study reductions in visit volumes; efforts to maintain continuous, coordinated care via telehealth; shifts in staffing; and potential impacts on vulnerable, rural and urban populations as the pandemic evolves. They have engaged senior leaders at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as partners and potential funders for a survey of [PRIME registry](#) practices across 47 states to ensure that the voices of small, solo, and rural practices that are struggling financially and clinically in response to the pandemic are at the table. This survey will be sent biweekly over the next year to gather information on the impact of these changes. We also published a call for additional surveillance of the impacts of COVID-19 and future pandemics in primary care and demonstrated the [PRIME registry's capacity to help](#).

Additionally, the CPV is working with colleagues from around the world to create and implement a multinational survey of the primary health care response to COVID-19 across a range of international networks with results directed back to the [World Organization of Family Doctors](#) (WONCA) and [World Health Organization](#) (WHO). Our intention is to describe the power of primary care in mitigating the effects of this pandemic in other countries, in support of the desperate need to strengthen payment models and support of primary care globally for future pandemics, including the United States.

Finally, anticipating the need to gather information for longer term studies on primary care practices and the patients they serve, we have been hosting a series of virtual conversations among our dynamic cohort of young diplomats, the Pisacano Scholars. We can already anticipate that by curating and organizing this repository of COVID-19 conversations, there will be a powerful story to tell about early and mid-career physicians and their reactions to the monumental change that COVID-19 caused in their personal and professional lives.



Front Lines to Front Pages—Positive Professionalism in the Time of COVID-19

From the first reports of COVID-19, the American Board of Family Medicine kept a close watch on the experiences of family physicians across the country as they rapidly adjusted to provide care in new and different ways. Not surprisingly, it was abundantly clear that you have continued to care for your patients and communities with the highest levels of professionalism and dedication, even as the crisis intensified. You pivoted to rapidly deploy telehealth to keep your patients, work environments and staff safe from potential infection—in many instances doing so without the guarantee of being paid for your services. Many of you have worked with limited or improvised personal protection equipment (PPE). Some of you have been on the front line for testing of Patients Under Investigation, and others have provided emergency department and hospital-based care for those who were ill, while sacrificing time spent with your loved ones at home.

In a desire to share stories of extraordinary care, ABFM has chosen to highlight examples of **positive professionalism** by Diplomates on our social media channels, emphasizing the importance of leading the way in professional behavior related to the pandemic.

Jeffery VanWingen, MD, a Michigan-based family physician, created a [YouTube video](#) to demonstrate disinfecting groceries to limit potential contamination in the home. Inspired by his son to use social media to share COVID-19 public tips, Dr. VanWingen's [first video](#), which we shared, has over 26 million views since being published on March 24, 2020.



Massachusetts family physician Kristina Gracey, MD, went out of the office and into the home of patients to maintain important vaccine timelines and provide preventive care as concerned parents began to cancel well-child visits.



Working to solve PPE shortages, Ohio family physician Laurie Hommema, MD, and her husband, an engineer, developed an innovative cleaning process for large quantities of N95 masks. @OhioAFP
#positiveprofessionalism #familymedicine #covid19



A husband and wife may have helped solve the hospital mask shortage
She's a doctor, he's an engineer. Their conversation led to a new system that can decontaminate 80,000 masks a day.
© nbcnews.com

Ohio family physician Laurie Hommema, MD, and her husband, an engineer, developed an innovative cleaning process for large quantities of N95 masks at the height of PPE shortages. Dr. Hommema's work to find a solution for a major problem faced broadly across health care systems was shared over 30 times on the [ABFM Facebook page](#) and was featured by nearly every national news organization.

Residents and medical students have also been deeply impacted by the sudden changes in how care is provided. The University of Wyoming Educational Health Center (UWEHC) took immediate action to ensure patient care didn't suffer and education opportunities continued. Wyoming family physician Cynthia Works, MD, says, "Our clinic and residency leadership has stepped up and lived up to the description of 'servant' leaders, as they have guided not only the clinic, but also have helped the Casper community by playing key roles in the response to COVID."

We will continue to highlight the dedication and commitment of family physicians during this extraordinary period of time. We encourage you to stay engaged with ABFM and watch for more stories of family physicians demonstrating **#positiveprofessionalism**. Share any examples that you know about with us by emailing rmorris@theabfm.org.

#positiveprofessionalism



New Performance Improvement Activities Expand Practice-Relevant Options

Recently Added: COVID-19 Self-Directed PI Activity

The American Board of Family Medicine has developed a COVID-19 Self-Directed PI Activity that provides a mechanism for you to meet your PI requirement by telling us about the unprecedented and rapid changes that you had to make in the ways that you deliver care during the pandemic. This activity will apply to all family physicians, regardless of practice type or scope. Changes in care delivery across many dimensions of care can be submitted, including virtualization of visits, establishment of screening protocols, set up of tent screening or parking lot triage of patients, as well as inpatient and emergency department care to handle the incoming patients with a diagnosis of COVID-19. In addition to describing the interventions or changes you made, you will include a description of how these changes impacted your ability to deliver safe and effective care and what lessons you learned in the process.

ABFM also launched six new PI Activities during the month of April that will meet the PI requirement for Family Medicine Certification:

Asthma PI Activity guides you in the development of a customized clinical quality improvement project that includes a focus on one of the following:

- **Asthma Action Plan**
- **Optimal Asthma Control**
- **Pharmacologic Therapy for Persistent Asthma**
- **Use of Appropriate Medication for Asthma**

Cardiovascular PI Activity guides you in the development of a customized clinical quality improvement project that includes a focus on one of the following:

- **Controlling High Blood Pressure**
- **Heart Failure Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme Inhibitor or Angiotensin Receptor Blocker Therapy**
- **Ischemic Vascular Disease Use of Aspirin or Another Anti-platelet**
- **Statin Therapy for the Prevention and Treatment of Cardiovascular Disease**

Efficiency and Cost Reduction PI Activity guides you in the development of a customized clinical quality improvement project that includes a focus on one of the following:

- **Appropriate Testing of Children with Pharyngitis**
- **Appropriate Treatment for URI**
- **Low Back Pain imaging**
- **Use of Head CT for Minor Blunt Head Trauma**

Patient Safety PI Activity guides you in the development of a customized clinical quality improvement project that includes a focus on one of the following:

- **Closing the Referral Loop: Receipt of Specialist Report**
- **Documentation of Current Medications in the Medical Record**
- **Falls: Screening for Future Fall Risk**
- **Use of High-Risk Medications in the Elderly**

Pediatrics PI Activity guides you in the development of a customized clinical quality improvement project that includes a focus on one of the following:

- **Appropriate Treatment for URI**
- **Childhood Immunization Status**
- **Primary Caries Prevention Intervention as Offered by Primary Care Providers**
- **Use of Appropriate Medication for Asthma**

These new PI activities can all be found in your [Physician Portfolio](#) and are all built on a new delivery platform that ABFM deployed last fall to improve participants' experience with completing this certification requirement. If you have ideas for new PI activities for ABFM to consider adding to the options for family physicians to choose from, please let us know at:

awilliamson@theabfm.org.



Resident's Corner: *COVID-19 Impacts 2020 Graduating Resident Training*



The American Board of Family Medicine has observed how the lives of family medicine residents and faculty are being impacted during the pandemic as they step up to serve their patients and communities using new delivery methods, while at the same time trying to balance their personal and family needs.

On March 18, 2020, the American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM) published a statement regarding COVID-19 and residency training accommodations related to residency training guidelines for board eligibility (theabfm.org/COVID-19). Our most important principle

informing these initial, and likely to be ongoing, changes in training requirements was that no resident would lose their board eligibility based on clinical and educational changes that were necessitated by the pandemic.

To ease the burden on residents and faculty, ABFM made the following accommodations to resident training requirements:

- Ensuring that any time a resident must be away from training for mandated quarantine or personal illness related to COVID-19 does not count against their minimum time away from training requirements,
- Allowing the inclusion of virtual visits and visits in other settings (e.g., car-side visits, screening programs) to count toward graduating residents' 1650 minimum visit number,
- Allowing Program Directors and Clinical Competency Committees to approve residents for board eligibility if they deem them to be ready for autonomous practice, even in the face of forced changes in rotations and other training requirements

Additionally, COVID-19 forced our testing partner, Prometric, to have to close their test centers in mid-March, requiring ABFM to reschedule the April 2020 exam dates for both PGY-3 residents and other family physicians registered to take the examination at that time. As soon as we were notified of the reopening of Prometric's test centers, we quickly secured new examination dates in July and August (July 7 through August 4, 2020), so that there will be minimal, if any, delay for graduating residents to become board certified. This also allows ABFM to maintain its pattern of offering two examination date options in 2020.

ABFM is committed to focusing on the needs of all faculty and residents and will continually be evaluating for any further decisions that might be needed about certification requirements or extensions beyond your 2020 graduating residents.

Over the longer term, we do anticipate that the pandemic will bring significant changes in future aspects of clinical care and residency training. We'll be ready at ABFM to work with you on future changes as needed.



ABFM Announces Recipients of AAFP Chapter Pilots

The American Board of Family Medicine is grateful for the opportunity to work with AAFP Chapters to mutually serve its members who are ABFM Diplomates or candidates in support of their certification journey. In 2019 ABFM introduced an outreach initiative that gave us the opportunity to meet with AAFP Chapter Executives and their members in their “home” chapters, as well as to provide enhanced and personalized education about certification activities and requirements to these physicians. We have learned much from this process, which has already made a positive difference in our communication strategies and our programmatic planning. Everyone benefits when we are working together on behalf of family medicine and family physicians!

Earlier this year, the ABFM Board of Directors endorsed the addition of a State Chapter Pilot Project opportunity for 2020 providing support to chapters seeking to create innovative ways to address member needs that would also align with ABFM’s Strategic Plan 2019–2025. Ten chapters were selected for support in 2020–2021, encompassing a variety of exciting initiatives including virtualization of meetings and group KSAs; enhancing resident preparation for practice; increasing student interest in family medicine; and creating individual and group options for practice improvement activities.

ABFM wishes to congratulate the following chapters for their successful proposals and is excited to work with their leadership and members to learn from the process and spread these ideas to others after the pilots are completed.

Alaska Academy of Family Physicians
California Academy of Family Physicians
Georgia Academy of Family Physicians
Missouri Academy of Family Physicians
New Jersey Academy of Family Physicians
North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians
Ohio Academy of Family Physicians
Oklahoma Academy of Family Physicians
Oregon Academy of Family Physicians
South Dakota Academy of Family Physicians

ABFM is proud to support each of these Chapters with their initiatives. The ongoing collaboration with ABFM diplomates’ “home” chapters will help us to continue to improve the value of certification. By better understanding the local environments and needs, we can better support physicians in their certification efforts. We look forward to supporting these types of initiatives and communicating on their progress throughout the coming year.

If you have questions regarding certification, please contact help@theabfm.org or you can call our **Support Center** at 877-223-7437 Fax: 859-335-7516

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