



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

A Member Board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS)

Frequently Asked Questions from the Public

What is ABPN Certification?

Certification by the ABPN means that a psychiatrist or neurologist:

- Successfully completed an ACGME-accredited or ABPN-approved residency training program;
- Possesses an unrestricted license to practice medicine in at least one state, commonwealth, territory, or possession of the U.S. or province of Canada;
- Fulfilled all Continuing Medical Education, self-assessment and Improvement in Medical Practice activities required for that physician's program to ensure excellence in patient care and practice improvement and;
- Passed an ABPN examination at least once every 10 years.

How can I determine if my doctor is board-certified?

The ABPN has developed a convenient way to find ABPN board-certified physicians in your area through the [ABPN verifyCERT® Certification and Status Verification System](#) (link). There are a few different search methods available including by name and specialty/location.

Instructions for searching: The search function was designed to provide you with the widest range of results based on your input selection. You can search by the EXACT last name of an ABPN Diplomate with or without a complete first name. You can search with part of a last name, with any part of a first, and/or any part or no middle name by selecting the INCLUDE option for a “wildcard” type search. The result will depend on the scope of your inputs and will provide you with a list of diplomates matching your input elements. You can select to view any number of the results by changing the output limit, the default maximum number is 20, and choosing ALL will return all the available results for your inquiry.

The American Board of Medical Specialties (the umbrella organization for ABPN and other specialty boards) also provides a comprehensive website — [Certification Matters](#) — as a resource for the public to learn more about board certification.

Is board certification the same as having a medical license?

No. Physicians are issued a medical license by their state after completing an accredited or approved training program. A medical license is required to practice medicine in the U.S. or Canada. However, board certification is not required to practice medicine. Physicians obtain and continue to maintain board certification by choice or as a requirement by their employer or insurance.

Why is board certification important?

A physician who is board certified has an ongoing commitment to expand his/her knowledge and take an exam every 10 years in addition to the state licensing requirements for practicing medicine. To remain board certified, he/she is required to continue to participate in educational activities that update and expand medical knowledge over the course of a career (see [What is ABPN Certification?](#)).

Find out more about why board certification and maintenance of certification are important physician credentials by visiting the [Certification Matters](#) website.

What is a Board-Certified Psychiatrist?

A Board-Certified Psychiatrist has completed required training, is in possession of an unrestricted medical license, fulfills all ABPN-required maintenance of certification activities and has passed an ABPN exam every 10 years.

Patients can be assured that an ABPN board-certified psychiatrist has specialized skills and knowledge to diagnose and treat problems ranging from emergencies to the long-term medical management of psychiatric disorders.

See [Definitions](#) for more information.

What is a Board-Certified Neurologist or Child Neurologist?

A Board-Certified Neurologist has completed required training, is in possession of an unrestricted medical license, fulfills all ABPN-required maintenance of certification requirements and has passed an ABPN exam every 10 years.

Patients can be assured that an ABPN board-certified neurologist or child neurologist has specialized skills and knowledge to diagnose and treat specific problems and to provide medical management for a range of problems, including emergencies and long-term care of chronic neurological disorders.

See [Definitions](#) for more information.

I would like to file a complaint about a psychiatrist or neurologist. Can ABPN assist with this?

No. Individuals who wish to file a complaint about a physician should contact their state medical board for more information. The Federation of State Medical Board website offers links to [state medical board websites](#).

What is a subspecialty certification?

Many physicians choose to specialize in a subspecialty or narrow field within a specialty. The ABPN issues specialty certificates in psychiatry, neurology, and neurology with special qualification in child neurology and subspecialty certificates in:

- Addiction Psychiatry
- Brain Injury Medicine
- Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- Clinical Neurophysiology
- Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry
- Epilepsy
- Forensic Psychiatry
- Geriatric Psychiatry
- Hospice and Palliative Medicine
- Neurodevelopmental Disabilities
- Neuromuscular Medicine
- Pain Medicine
- Sleep Medicine
- Vascular Neurology

What is maintenance of certification?

The ABPN Maintenance of Certification or MOC program assists board-certified physicians in remaining current in their field by requiring completion of continuing medical education, self-assessment and practice improvement activities tailored to a physician's area of expertise. Physicians are asked to reflect on their personal knowledge and performance, commit to a process of improvement and reevaluation over specified time frames, and continually improve care for their patients. A certain amount of MOC activities are required for a physician to remain board certified through the ABPN.

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