

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PHYSICIANS**

### **What types of medical licenses are available in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and what are the requirements?**

Full license: You must hold an active full license to practice medicine independently in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. An active licensee must earn CPD credits and maintain malpractice insurance.<sup>1</sup> The full license fee is \$600.00. In certain cases, the Board may issue a full license with restrictions.

Administrative license: An administrative license is for a physician whose primary responsibilities are administrative or academic. It does not include authority to diagnose or treat patients, issue prescriptions for controlled substances, delegate medical acts or prescriptions authority, or issue opinions regarding medical necessity. The administrative license fee is \$600.00.

Initial licensure for graduates of medical schools in the United States, Canada or Puerto Rico: An applicant is required to have completed two (2) years of postgraduate training medical training in an ACGME or AOA approved or accredited Canadian program to be eligible for a full license. This applies to applications received by the Board on or after February 1, 2012. Please see 243 CMR 2.02(2)(c) for additional information.<sup>2</sup>

Initial licensure for graduates of International Medical School & graduates of Fifth Pathway Programs: An applicant that is a graduate of an international medical school or a fifth pathway program must have completed at least two (2) years of training in an ACGME or AOA approved or accredited Canadian program in order to be eligible for licensure. Effective January 1, 2014, graduates of international medical schools must have completed three (3) years of training in an ACGME or AOA approved or accredited Canadian program at a satisfactory level in order to be eligible for licensure. Please see 243 CMR 2.03 (1)(d).<sup>3</sup>

Limited license: Limited licenses are issued to physicians enrolled in post-graduate medical education programs in teaching hospitals in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. All such training must be done in ACGME or AOA accredited programs, or in a sub-specialty clinical training or fellowship program in a training facility, which has an approved program in the parent specialty. A physician who holds or who has ever held a full Massachusetts license is not eligible for a limited license. The limited license fee is \$100.00.

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant 243 CMR 2.02 (2) (i) licensees that engage in direct or indirect patient care must maintain medical malpractice insurance. Licensees that do not engage in direct or indirect patient care or whose patient care in the Commonwealth is limited to professional service rendered at or on behalf of federal, state, county or municipal health care facilities are not subject to medical malpractice insurance requirements.

<sup>2</sup> ACGME is an acronym for Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. AOA means the American Osteopathic Association.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of subspecialty clinical fellowship programs, the Board may accept postgraduate training in a hospital that has an ACGME or AOA or accredited Canadian postgraduate training program in the parent specialty.

Temporary license: A temporary license is a full license with a duration of no more than 9 months. A temporary license is not issued while a full or limited license is in process. In Massachusetts, a temporary license may be issued only to the following individuals:

- 1) a visiting physician who is licensed to practice in another jurisdiction and who has a temporary faculty appointment certified by the dean of a medical school;
- 2) to a physician licensed in another state to act as a substitute physician in Massachusetts for three months; or
- 3) to a physician licensed in another state to participate in a course of continuing medical education.

The temporary license fee is \$250.00. If you are eligible for a temporary license, you may download the temporary license application at the Board's website.

Volunteer license: A volunteer license is for physicians who practice medicine at work sites approved by the Board. A volunteer licensee may not accept compensation for his or her practice of medicine. A volunteer licensee is subject to the same conditions and requirements as a full licensee. The volunteer license fee is \$600.00.

**What if I once had a Massachusetts license, but I retired or allowed my license to expire? Can I reapply for a license?**

Yes. You would use either of the following license applications, depending on your particular circumstances:

Lapsed License: A lapsed license application is for a physician who was issued a Massachusetts license that expired for nonrenewal. **Contact the Division of Law and Policy if the full license was revoked or suspended by the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine.** The fee is \$700.00.

Return from Retirement: A physician who was licensed in Massachusetts and retired from the practice of medicine may submit an application to reactivate his license. The fee is \$700.00. If the physician has been out of practice for less than two years, he or she may file a Request for a Change of License status. If the physician has not engaged in a clinical practice of medicine for two years or more and intends to return to a practice of medicine that will include direct or indirect patient care, the Board may require that the physician demonstrate current clinical competency prior to reviving the license.

**I am applying for a license in another state, how do I request a verification of my previous or current Massachusetts license?**

A "License Verification Request Form" is available on the Board's website. Please follow the instructions on the form.

**I am currently licensed in other states, does Massachusetts have reciprocity?**

No, Massachusetts does not have reciprocity; you must apply for a full license. A full license application can be downloaded from the Board's website. You must complete the application and provide all of the documents requested, including verification of licensure in each of the states where you have ever been licensed. Most states charge a processing

fee for verification of a state license. Before mailing the state license verification form, contact the state licensing board for fee requirements.

**What are the requirements in Massachusetts for writing a prescription?**

In order to practice medicine in Massachusetts, which includes writing prescriptions, a physician must be licensed in Massachusetts and have a registration certificate from the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and a Massachusetts Controlled Substance Registration (MCSR) number from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). For more information, please see Policy 89-01: Prescribing Practices Policy and Guidelines (Adopted August 1, 1989; Amended November 17, 2010) on the Board’s website.

**Does Massachusetts have a special license for telemedicine?**

No, you must apply for a full license.

**How can I get a copy of my full license or renewal application for credentialing?**

You must send a letter to the Board to the attention of “verifications.” Indicate whether you are requesting a copy of your full license application or renewal application and enclose a check for \$5.00 made payable to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Please mail your request and the check to the Board of Registration in Medicine, 200 Harvard Mill Square, Suite 330, Wakefield, Massachusetts 01880.

**I am applying for a license in another state, how do I request a verification of my previous or current Massachusetts license?**

A “License Verification Request Form” is available on the Board’s website. Please follow the instructions on the form.

**I am going to be a camp doctor in Massachusetts for a few weeks, what type of licensure is required?**

You must apply for a full license.

**How do I obtain an application for a full medical license?**

You may download a full license application from the Board’s website and follow the instructions.

**How long does it take to process a full license application?**

- The average length of time for processing a full license is approximately 16 weeks. Applications that have malpractice, competency or legal issues will require more time to process. Following approval of your application for licensure by the Board, your wallet-sized card will be mailed to you and your certificate of licensure will be mailed within two weeks. You will be required to send a copy of your Massachusetts license to the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) ([www.DEAdiversion.usdoj.gov](http://www.DEAdiversion.usdoj.gov)) and to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health ([www.mass.gov/dph/dcp](http://www.mass.gov/dph/dcp)). In order to obtain a state

controlled substance certificate you may contact the DEA at (617) 557-2200 or the Department of Public Health at (617) 983-6704.

**I am licensed in another state and am under a probation agreement with that state's medical board. Will this affect my application for a Massachusetts license?**

Yes. It is the practice of the Licensing Committee to defer action on applications from individuals with current probation agreements in another state, until that state's license board has terminated the probation.

**I am licensed in another state where I completed a probation agreement. May I apply for a Massachusetts license?**

Yes. Your application should include verification from the other state's medical board that your probation has successfully terminated, and any other materials requested by Board staff.

**I am applying for a full license and accidentally opened the National Practitioner Databank Profile, will the Board accept it?**

No, the Board will not accept the National Practitioner Data Bank Profile if it has been opened. You should immediately download another National Practitioner Data Bank Profile.

**When do I have to renew my full license?**

Renewal of your full medical license will occur on your first birth date after the license issuance date, unless your birthday falls within ninety (90) days of obtaining initial license. If your first birth date after the issuance date falls within this time frame, you will not be required to renew your license until the following birth date. Renewals thereafter will be on a two-year birth date cycle.

**Can I apply for a temporary license while my full license is in process?**

We do not have a "temporary license" for that purpose. A temporary license may be issued under certain circumstances to a physician who has a faculty appointment at a medical school or for a locum tenens or for participation in a Continuing Professional Development program.

**What is the difference between an active, inactive and retired status?**

- **Active Status:** An active licensee may practice medicine and may prescribe medications. An active licensee must complete the Board's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements. In addition, an active licensee engaged in direct or indirect patient care, must maintain mandatory medical malpractice insurance coverage in the minimum amount of \$100,000/\$300,000.
- **Inactive License:** An inactive licensee may not practice medicine or prescribe or provide direct or indirect patient care. A licensee who is inactive is exempt from the continuing medical education requirements and malpractice liability insurance. A

physician may change from inactive to active status by completing the Active Status Request Form that is available on the Board's website.

- **Retired Status:** A retired licensee may not practice medicine or prescribe or provide direct or indirect patient care. When you no longer wish to practice medicine in Massachusetts, you may apply for a retired status. When considering retirement, the licensee may contact the Massachusetts Medical Society's legal department to request their pamphlet titled "Issues for the Retiring Physician." A retirement form is available on the Board's website.

### **How many Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credit hours are required to renew my license?**

The Board requires 100 hours of CPD credits within each renewal period. The majority of the CPD credits must relate to your primary area of practice. A minimum of 40 hours must be completed in Category 1 study and you may obtain no more than 60 hours of credit in Category 2. A minimum of ten (10) hours must be in the area of risk management.

Physicians who prescribe controlled substances, as defined by MGL. c. 94C s. 18, must have completed at least three (3) hours in opioid education and pain management as a prerequisite to obtaining or renewing a medical license. The training shall include how to identify patients at high risk for substance abuse, as well as how to counsel patients about the side effects, the addictive nature, and proper storage and disposal of prescription medicines. These credits may be used toward the required risk management credits of CPD. A free on-line resource to obtain the necessary credits can be found at [www.opioidprescribing.com/overview](http://www.opioidprescribing.com/overview).

Physicians who are seeking to renew, revive (i.e. in cases of lapsed licenses) or reinstate their licenses must have completed two (2) credits of end-of-life care issues. The two credits may qualify as either Category 1 or Category 2 credits and be used toward risk management credits. This CPD requirement is mandatory for all physicians regardless of specialty. Training may be found on the Massachusetts Medical Society's website at [www.massmed.org](http://www.massmed.org).

The Board also requires that you study the Board's regulations for two (2) hours of risk management credit. For additional CPD instructions, see the Board's website.

### **What is the difference between Category 1 and Category 2 study?**

Category 1 programs are sponsored or jointly sponsored by an institution or organization accredited to offer American Medical Association Category 1 credit for CPD activities.

Category 2 consists of study in the following areas:

- Attendance at lectures and seminars on medical subjects not accredited for Category 1.
- Preparation and publication of articles, books and exhibits relating to medicine.

- Self-instruction, such as reading medical literature, use of audio-visual materials or computer-assisted instruction.
- Medical consultation consisting of planned instruction from a consultant for not less than one hour (ordinary case consultation does not qualify for Category 1 or 2 credit).
- Participation in patient care review, including peer review, case conferences such as morbidity and mortality grand rounds, chart audits, and service on medical staff committees for tissue review, infections, pharmacy, etc., and hospital committees that oversee risk management, quality assurance and patient care assessment.
- Self-assessment. Physicians may earn credit for time spent taking self-assessment examinations not eligible for Category 1 credit.

### **What is “risk management study”?**

Risk management study must include instruction in medical malpractice prevention, such as risk identification, patient safety and loss prevention, and may include instruction in any of the following areas:

- Medical ethics
- Quality assurance
- Medical-legal issues
- Patient relations
- Utilization review that directly relates to quality assurance
- Non-economic aspects of practice management
- Electronic health records
- End-of-life care issues
- Opioid and Pain Management
- For risk management resources, see the CPD Booklet on the Board’s website.

### **Are there any Category 1 CPD courses in risk management on line?**

Physicians should contact the Massachusetts Medical Society’s Department of Medical Education Services at (800) 322-2303, or medical schools and hospital educational offices in Massachusetts. For Massachusetts-licensed physicians who practice out of state, certain Category 1 home-study courses in risk management may be available, or you may access the AMA website at [www.ama-assn.org/go/ethicalgifts](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/ethicalgifts) for 4) free category I CPDs "Gifts to Physicians from Industry" online "modules." There are also downloadable resource materials for workshops, presentations, etc.

### **Can excess CPD credits earned during one license renewal period be “saved” and used during a subsequent period?**

No, a total of 100 CPD credits must be earned during each license renewal cycle.

**Do I send documentation of CPD credits with the license renewal form?**

You do not submit documentation of CPD credits with your renewal form. Keep your own records, as the Board expects you to be able to document CPD credits. You must maintain documentation for one full license renewal cycle after the credits were earned.

**I have not completed the Board's CPD requirements for renewal of my license. How can I apply for a CPD waiver?**

A physician who cannot meet the CPD requirements may apply for a waiver no later than 30 days prior to the renewal date. The waiver request must include a written explanation of the reason for failing to complete the CPD requirements, a listing of the CPD credit hours earned and a plan for completing the CPD requirements. The Board may grant a waiver of the CPD requirement for prolonged illness of the licensee and inaccessibility or unavailability of CPD programs. A CPD Waiver Request form is available on the Board's website.

**DISCLAIMER**

This information is provided for the benefit of license applicants and licensees and is subject to change. You may refer to the Board's regulations, 243 CMR 2.00, for more information.