



## AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC BOARD OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

**Family Medicine Certification Update, December 2020**

**American Osteopathic Board of Family Physicians (AOBFP)**

**John R. Bowling DO, FACOFP dist. | Chair, AOBFP**

The AOBFP has been working diligently over the last several years to improve, and streamline the Osteopathic Certification process in Family Medicine while at the same time assuring a valid system of assuring certification is a measure of excellence above and beyond competence as measured by state and national medical licensing boards.

Before certification was initiated, if you had a medical license from a state licensing board, you could open a practice, obtain hospital privileges, participate as a provider on insurance plans, and receive academic appointments. When certification began, it was a voluntary step a physician could choose to show an additional measure of excellence. As certification processes evolved and recertification was required, certification became less voluntary. Granted you can still legally practice medicine without certification, however credentialing by most hospitals, insurance plans, academic institutions, government agencies, and large clinic systems require certification as a condition of participation/employment.

In 2013, the AOA, through its Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists (BOS), instituted Osteopathic Continuous Certification (OCC). From its inception till now, OCC has been a fluid process. Maintenance of Certification (MOC), the allopathic process and OCC have received national pushback from physicians mainly because of cost, and time commitment.

Throughout the past seven years, the AOBFP, in conjunction with the AOA BOS (under whose authority we function) has been engaged with developing processes that are more flexible and reasonably priced.

I am encouraged by the tremendous effort and progress that has been made by the AOA through its Certifying Board Services (CBS) staff in improving and streamlining the certification process. As I begin my tenure as Chair of AOBFP, I will strive to continue the work of our past chair, Dr. Kieren Knapp, whose leadership has been instrumental in guiding adoption of sensible, valid, and appropriately rigorous certification processes. Your AOBFP Board and the AOA CBS is committed to this effort.

In an effort to inform of the initiatives the AOBFP has been working on and the requirements currently in place for initial certification, I have summarized the requirements below.

I: **Two pathways for Initial certification**

As of 2020, candidates have the option of obtaining certification in Family Medicine (without OMT) or Family Medicine and OMT (Pathway I or Pathway II)

- Pathway I: Family Medicine without OMT
  - Must pass the initial certification cognitive (written) exam
  - Verification of AOA/ACGME residency complete status
- Pathway II: Family Medicine and OMT
  - Must pass the initial certification cognitive (written) exam
  - Must pass the OMT performance exam
  - Verification of AOA/ACGME residency complete status
    - See website for specific requirements for non-DO residents

Those choosing Pathway I have the option to obtain certification in OMT at any time in the future as long as their Family Medicine certification is active.

II: **Early Entry Initial Certification (EEIC)**

This is a new initiative to allow residents an accelerated pathway to initial certification

- Must take the AOBFP in-service exam (ISE or ISE +) two (2) out of the three years in residency
- They are then eligible to take a shortened (175 question) cognitive (computer-based) exam
  - Reduced fee compared to traditional exam
  - Administered in January as opposed to March/April for the traditional exam
    - Remote proctored exam, can be taken at home any time during the designated testing window
- Pathways I and II are available
- Eligible for ACOFP Foundation scholarship if eligibility requirements are met.

III: **Traditional Pathway for Initial Certification**

- Must take the longer cognitive exam (275 questions)
  - Standard exam fee
  - Administered in March/April
    - Remote proctored exam, can be taken at home any time during the designated testing window.
- Eligible for ACOFP Foundation scholarship if eligibility requirements are met.

Please visit the [AOBFP website](#) for complete information about certification.