

MOA MEMBERS
FROM SUE A. WEINGARTNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
JULY 20, 2009

Board Certification Update

With the recent approval by the AOA House of Delegates to support the formation of the American Board of Optometry, the MOA is committed to continuing to strive to keep our members fully informed and provide you with the most up to date information through the process information to all MOA members about the board certification and maintenance of the certification process that will be developed.

We do not expect the process will be finalized in the immediate future. The members of the team project will have to sign off on a memorandum of understanding, legal incorporation papers and IRS approvals, etc. Do not expect much until the first of the year.

Additionally, we have been assured that your AOA dues moneys will not be used to pay for this process. All AOA time and expenses are being carefully tracked and will be reimbursed by the new American Board of Optometry, which will be funded through its fees.

Key Points

- • Board Certification will be a ***VOLUNTARY*** process. You may choose not to pursue board certification. This will not affect your ability to continue to practice as you do now.
- • There is not currently a mechanism in place at this time to recognize optometric board certification or to prove continued competency.
- • Leadership believes there is a real threat to continued acceptance on insurance panels and adequate reimbursement for services if we do not have a process for maintenance of certification in place. Board certification is seen as a means to that maintenance of certification.
- • Maintenance of certification is not meant to be tied to state licensure. It is a process designed to show continued competency.
- • It is our understanding that all CE hours gained at MOA CE events and other CE events will count toward certification for those who elect to apply for certification.
- • There will be several routes to reach certification for those who elect to apply.
- • The model approved calls for 150 points to be attained within three (3) years of application for certification. The points may be gained via residency, fellowships, continuing education, distance learning courses, and other CE. Members are given five (5) points per year of active licensure for up to 150 points for those who apply for board certification within the first three (3) years from the date on which the American Board of Optometry accepts applications.
- • After certification, the model calls for maintenance of certification and for completion of a board certified examination weighted toward your areas of interest. Other board certified medical specialties report passage rates of 97% to 98% on these exams.
- • Board certification will be conferred for 10 years.
- • The process of Board Certification begins with the formation of the American Board of Optometry (ABO).

What will MOA do for you?

- Provide up-to-date information as the ABO process is put into place.
- Provide input as needed on your behalf to the AOA and the ABO regarding this process.
- The association commits to helping any member become board certified who chooses to do so. We will be looking at and taking suggestions from members about how best to achieve this

The Motion

Seven hours of deliberation were given on the following motion, made by Dr. David Cockrell, AOA Appointee to the Joint Board Certification Project Team:

"That the American Optometric Association House of Delegates endorses the concept of general Board Certification and Maintenance of Certification for Optometry and authorizes the AOA to participate in the development, formation, implementation and governance of the American Board of Optometry (ABO) and that the American Optometric Association House of Delegates recommends that they American Board of Optometry (ABO) adopt the following founding principles and develop a process for Board Certification and Maintenance of Certification based predominantly on the draft model proposal...Read full amended motion as passed below.

The support was to form an American Board of Optometry to develop a means to receive board certification. Remember that board certification is a voluntary option. No one has to become board certified. It is not tied to licensure.

Why might you want to go through board certification to show maintenance of certification?

- Maintenance of certification has been discussed by many third party entities and CMS.
- Being proactive means that Optometry can help control how board certification will look for you.
- It means that you won't have to go through years without being able to be paid by any third party carrier or the government while a maintenance of certification process is put into place after it is required.
- Medical associations will not be able to use the ammunition that Optometrists are not board certified by arguing that Optometrists are one of the only medical groups that don't have this distinction. Board certification will deprive them of this argument against our efforts when we try to expand the scope of our practice through legislative process or to ensure that Optometrists are not discriminated against in future legislation. (The AMA has a practice series that attacks each non-M.D. group. In the 106 pages of downgrading Optometrists, they cited "no board certification" countless times.)

Optometry, not just the AOA but the optometric profession in general, has decided that this is the starting

point to make sure that the process is in place. The point was made that if Optometry chooses to wait until Board Certification and/or Maintenance of Certification was mandated by third party programs or CMS, it will be too late. This process will take several years to develop and be available to utilize.

In addition to this memo, please take time to read the message from AOA President, Dr. Randy Brooks and be sure to follow the links he has inserted into his comments.

[message from AOA President, Dr. Randy Brooks](#)

Explanation of the House of Delegates Voting Process

Each state is allowed 1 delegate per 50 members. Montana had 2 delegates, both of whom attended the entirety of the House of Delegates' proceedings.

As stated in the AOA Bylaws, Article II, Section 3: Student, honorary or associate members shall not be counted at all and any members who pay less than the full active member dues (not taking into account the reductions in dues permitted... shall be counted as ½ member. A member shall be eligible to be counted if the proper amount of dues owed by that member for all financial quarter periods ending not less than 60 days before the first day of annual congress...have been paid and received by .

Each affiliated association (such as a state affiliate) shall be entitled to 1 vote for each 10 of its members (membership defined above). Montana's 2 delegates had 11 votes for the 2009 House of Delegates. Affiliates are allowed to name alternate delegates in case the official delegate cannot attend.

All votes are cast by one delegate. Unless a roll call vote is made, votes are cast by voice and the Speaker of the House calls whether the Ayes or Nays passed the vote. In the event that the voice count cannot be determined, or at the request of a delegate, a roll call vote is taken. One delegate from each affiliate goes to the microphone at the time the affiliate is called and casts all votes on behalf of his or her affiliate. This roll call is recorded. Before each motion is called for a vote, there is usually a request for time to caucus. During this time, the voting delegates of each affiliation can confer with each other to determine the best way to cast their votes.

Delegates do not cast votes on their own or according to their own wishes. Delegates are representatives of their members and vote as an affiliate.

Why did Montana delegates cast the vote 6-5?

At our annual conference membership meeting in May, the Montana membership asked that members be sent a survey regarding their wishes regarding the proposal for board certification as it was proposed and existed at the time; further, that the Montana delegates vote "the will of Montana optometry". The delegation included the following officers: Dr. Mike Hansen, President; and Dr. Dirk Beyer, 1st Vice President.

The survey was resent repeatedly asking members for their opinions. We received feedback from 55% of our members; 45% did not respond. The following is the result of that survey:

Yes 18 27 3% of votes

No: 42 -63.6% of votes
Undecided: 6 -9.1% of votes
Did Not Vote: 54

Our delegates' 6 votes in favor and 5 votes against were viewed as an accurate reflection of feedback received from our members, assuming the 54 who did not vote were not asking them to oppose the proposal but leaving the vote to the delegates present during the House of Delegates' debate and discussion.

Montana was the second to last state to vote; our votes did not affect the outcome.

AOA Press Release

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 27, 2009 - At the annual meeting of the American Optometric Association (AOA), members voted last Friday 1,126 to 887 in favor of establishing the American Board of Optometry (ABO) as the entity to develop and implement the framework for board certification and maintenance of certification.

The AOA is one of six optometric organizations that formed the Joint Board Certification Project Team (JBCPT) in 2007 to examine the issue of optometric board certification and propose a model for certification and maintenance of certification that is attainable, credible, and defensible.

"Our members' actions Friday suggest that optometrists see the need for a mechanism to clearly demonstrate continued competency to patients, legislators and payers," said Randy Brooks, O.D., president of the AOA. "The creation of the American Board of Optometry will provide a unified national platform to establish and demonstrate competency and value and will position our profession solidly for the future."

The approval process of certification includes board certification and maintenance of certification for optometry and authorizes the AOA to participate in the development, formation, implementation and governance of the American Board of Optometry (ABO) and gives the ABO the ability to officially develop the model for board certification.

"The AOA wishes to thank every delegate for their involvement in and support of the discussions surrounding board certification," said Dr. Brooks. "We are pleased with the adoption of the resolution and we will continue to monitor changes and developments in health care reform. Our association is committed to remaining at the forefront of health care and looks forward to continuing to provide high quality, accessible eye care for all Americans."

Formal adoption of this resolution is subject to final action by the AOA's Judicial Council.

Questions? Comments?

If you have questions or comments, please contact the Association office, Dr. Mike Hansen or Dr. Dirk Beyer. MOA office: 406-443-1160; sweingartner@rmsmanagement.com