

# Specialty Certifying Boards in Podiatric Medicine: Frequently Asked Questions

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Specialty certifying boards in podiatric medicine are recognized by the Joint Committee on the Recognition of Specialty Boards (JCRSB) of the Council on Podiatric Medical Education (CPME) under the authority of the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA).

Recognition is an indication of satisfactory compliance with the recognition criteria as well as public approbation, attesting to the competency and proficiency of the specialty board to assure that only qualified podiatrists have obtained certified status. JCRSB currently recognizes the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery (ABFAS) and the American Board of Podiatric Medicine (ABPM).

The podiatric medical profession initiated discussions about areas of specialization and board certification during the early 1960s. This discussion culminated in the development of regulations for the recognition of specialty boards and the eventual evaluation and recognition of the first active specialty board in 1975.

JCRSB has developed this web page to answer the following frequently asked questions about the podiatric board certification recognition process. Specific questions about the certification activities in which these boards are engaged should be posed directly to the boards. Addresses and contact information for each board appear at the end of the FAQs.

## **Why oversee and recognize specialty boards in podiatric medicine?**

APMA is concerned with maintaining the orderly development of specialties within the profession. In its review of specialty boards, JCRSB seeks to (1) determine whether a public and professional need exists for the conduct of a certification process in a special area of podiatric practice, (2) monitor the conduct of recognized boards by ensuring compliance with CPME standards, (3) evaluate any modification of existing types of certification, and (4) prevent unnecessary duplication by boards.

## **What is the value of JCRSB recognition of specialty boards?**

The recognition of a specialty board by JCRSB serves to provide important information to the profession, health care institutions and organizations, and the public about the sound operations and fair conduct of the board's certification process.

## **Can any special interest group gain recognition as a specialty certifying board?**

No. Proposals submitted by "special interest groups" seeking recognition of a specific type of clinical procedure, therapeutic modality, or technique are not regarded as appropriate for designation as a specialty board in podiatric practice.

## **Are specific regulations published for recognition of specialty boards?**

Yes. CPME has established *Criteria and Guidelines for Recognition of a Specialty Board for Podiatric Medical Practice* (CPME publication 220) and *Procedures for Recognition of a Specialty Board for Podiatric Medicine* (CPME publication 230). These publications are available on the [CPME website](#).

## **What are the requirements for individual podiatric physicians seeking certification from the boards recognized by JCRSB?**

While the requirements for certification vary somewhat for each area of certification, JCRSB-recognized boards require graduation from a CPME-accredited college of podiatric medical education, completion of a CPME-approved, three-year residency, and completion of a rigorous examination process. For more specific information, one should contact the individual boards directly.

## **Is there a direct relationship between residency training and specialization?**

Yes. Residencies approved by CPME are developed in accordance with guidelines established by the specialty certifying board. These boards also provide expertise in collaborating with CPME in the development of standards and requirements for the evaluation and enhancement of Podiatric Medicine and Surgery Residency (PMSR) programs and in the on-site evaluation of PMSR programs. As a result, a continuum exists, linking the educational process with the certification process.

## **Do non-JCRSB recognized boards exist in the podiatric medical profession?**

Yes. Other boards have been established that have not been reviewed by the American Podiatric Medical Association, the Council on Podiatric Medical Education, or the Joint Committee on the Recognition of Specialty Boards. Because these boards have not been reviewed, it is impossible for APMA, CPME, or JCRSB to provide information to health care institutions and organizations, the profession, or the general public about the validity, conduct, reliability, or appropriateness of these boards.

## **What is the relationship of the American Podiatric Medical Association to the Council on Podiatric Medical Education and the Joint Committee on the Recognition of Specialty Boards?**

APMA assigns the responsibility of specialty board recognition to the Council on Podiatric Medical Education. CPME, on behalf of the podiatric medical profession, has established the Joint Committee on the Recognition of Specialty Boards, which is a committee comprised of representatives of the profession, specialty boards, health care community, and public. CPME and JCRSB are committed to assuring the public that those podiatric physicians who are certified have successfully completed the requirements for certification in an area of specialization. The recognition of a specialty board by JCRSB serves to provide important information to the

profession, health care institutions, and the public about the sound operations and fair conduct of the board's certification process. CPME's authority for the recognition of specialty boards through JCRSB is derived solely from the APMA House of Delegates.

### **How does one determine if an individual podiatric physician is certified by one of the JCRSB-recognized boards?**

To learn the current certification status of an individual practitioner, please contact the board(s) directly.

### **What is the process by which specialty boards gain recognition?**

A specialty organization may pursue recognition from the APMA House of Delegates as a clinical education affiliate. Recognition of a clinical education affiliate establishes a specialty area in podiatric medicine that requires possession of special knowledge and skills achieved through completion of intensive study and/or extended clinical experiences beyond the professional degree. After five years, members of the affiliated organization may establish the specialty board at the expressed wish of the organization. The specialty board is considered to be the lineal descendent of the organization but is independent of the affiliated organization. The board is considered to be autonomous and is not affiliated with APMA. Once established, the specialty board may apply to JCRSB for recognition. Accordingly, JCRSB reviews the board's application in the light of the criteria for recognition.

### **Other than its responsibilities in the recognition of specialty boards, what other responsibilities are assigned to the Council on Podiatric Medical Education?**

The Council functions as the nationally recognized accrediting body for the first professional degree program leading to the Doctor of Podiatric Medicine. The Council is recognized for its accreditation process by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the United States Department of Education (USDE). The Council also holds membership in the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA). The Council is authorized by APMA to evaluate and approve residency and fellowship programs, and continuing podiatric medical education providers.

### **Do CHEA and USDE also recognize the CPME's recognition process for specialty boards?**

No. CHEA and USDE have no authority to recognize evaluation and regulatory activities outside the field of higher education accreditation. The Council's function in the oversight of specialty certifying boards is not a matter of accreditation. As in other professions, the Council reviews and monitors activities of certifying boards on behalf of the podiatric medical profession and is assigned this responsibility by the House of Delegates of the American Podiatric Medical Association. The American Board of Medical Specialties holds a similar responsibility in its recognition of 24 specialty boards in medicine.

## **How does one learn more about specialty boards in the field of podiatric medicine?**

For additional information about the requirements for certification, contact:

### [American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery](#)

445 Fillmore Street  
San Francisco, California 94117-3404  
415-553-7800

### [American Board of Podiatric Medicine](#)

1060 Aviation Boulevards #100  
Hermosa Beach, CA 90254  
310-375-0700

For additional information about the recognition of specialty boards by the Council on Podiatric Medical Education and the Joint Committee on the Recognition of Specialty Boards, contact:

### [Council on Podiatric Medical Education](#)

9312 Old Georgetown Road  
Bethesda, Maryland 20814  
301-581-9200