

PURPOSE OF BOARD CERTIFICATION:

Those meeting the criteria required by ABCMO become certified in the specialty of Medical Optometry which serves as the indicator of advanced competence in this specialty to the public, credentialing bodies and medical professionals. Board certification recognizes optometrists with advanced medical training and experience beyond that required for licensure and the general practice of optometry.

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:

After receipt of the O.D. degree and licensure the applicant must complete an ACOE accredited one-year residency in which the emphasis was Medical Optometry, pass the ABCMO written examination, have practiced Medical Optometry for two years at time of application, and meet other requirements set by the Board.

NEED FOR BOARD CERTIFICATION:

Since 1975 there has been a steady increase in postgraduate residency training programs and revision of state licensing laws to include medical diagnosis and treatment of ocular disorders. The Accreditation Council on Optometric Education is the accrediting body for residency programs and the national written examination (ACMO) tests advanced competence in Medical Optometry. These allowed the remaining component of specialty training to be established, board certification in medical optometry.

CERTIFICATION REQUIRES THREE COMPONENTS:

Recognized medical, osteopathic and dental specialties utilize a three component process culminating with specialty certification. To insure creditability and integrity, these three components are *independent* of each other and limit their actions to one aspect of the process. The three components required for board certification in recognized specialties are listed below with the optometry organization regulating each component:

- Residency accreditation (ACOE)
- Written examination (ACMO-NBEO)
- Specialty Board of Certification (ABCMO)

The organization of ABCMO in 2009 created the third independent organization required to complete the process of developing the specialty of Medical Optometry that began, in 1975, with the establishment of the first optometry residency training program.



Scientia est Potentia
www.ABCMO.org

CONTACT ABCMO

Our website www.abcmo.org contains detailed information about eligibility for certification in Medical Optometry and histories on specialty certification, the evolution of optometry specialty residencies and accrediting bodies such as the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations and the role of state licensing boards. Pages 10-12 of the ABCMO Constitution list eligibility requirements.

You can may also contact ABCMO at:
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The **ABCMO** is an independent, nonprofit organization that provides board certification of optometrists who have specialized in Medical Optometry after receiving their OD degree and license to practice.

Eligibility for ABCMO board certification first requires completing an ACOE accredited, one-year, postgraduate residency training program in Medical Optometry and then passage of the written examination Advanced Competence in Medical Optometry administered by the National Board of Examiners in Optometry.

MEDICAL OPTOMETRY

The specialty of optometry involving the medical diagnosis and treatment of primary and secondary diseases and disorders of the human eye, adnexa and visual tracts.

SPECIALIZATION AND GENERAL PRACTICE:

Today, some 20% of those graduating from optometry schools who become licensed, seek residency training to gain advanced competence in a specialty rather than entering general practice. Like dentistry, the majority of optometrists continue to pursue the general practice of optometry for which the OD degree and state license are the necessary and sufficient credentials. General practice optometry will continue to be the primary practice mode.

But, the events of the past 35 years, residency training and wider range of treatments, has naturally led to specialization with some optometrists seeking to practice within a hospital, outpatient clinic, health care organization, group or academic settings having many patients requiring medical eye care.

Board certification in Medical Optometry is a valuable credential for those seeking to practice in these settings as they are accustomed to requiring that specialists be board certified.

Board certification in a specialty, however, is not needed by the general practitioner of optometry (or dentistry) since the professional degree and state license adequately document competence to engage in general practice. This is why general practice dentists have not sought specialty training and specialty board certification.

MAINTENANCE OF LICENSURE AND ABCMO CERTIFICATION

Increasing emphasis is placed on licensed practitioners maintaining their competence, whether in general or specialty practice. General practice optometrists have long been required to meet specific continuing educational requirements to maintain their competence when renewing their license but specialty boards once issued life-time certifications. Now, recognized specialty boards issue certifications with expiration dates that require demonstration of continued competence in that specialty for certification, usually every 10 years.

Consequently, ABCMO issues certificates that expire in 10 years after which documentation of continued competence in Medical Optometry will be required for re-certification.

- **CAREER PATH #1:** On May 1, 2013, completion of an ACOE accredited residency and passage of ACMO become mandatory for eligibility for ABCMO certification. However:

When medical and dental specialty boards first formed, there were practitioners who had not been able to serve a residency or take a qualifying written examination as these took time to develop. These specialty boards, recognizing some practitioners had limited their practice to a specialty and developed, by other means, advanced competence in a specialty, chose to offer time-limited eligibility for certification. For these reasons two alternate forms of eligibility for ABCMO certification are available until May 2013.

- **CAREER PATH #2:** For those completing residency before August 1, 2006, the ACMO requirement will be waived if the candidate documents full-time practice of Medical Optometry for the 4 years immediately preceding application.

- **CAREER PATH #3:** For selected optometrists, who have gained advanced competence in Medical Optometry without completing a residency and have not taken ACMO. Those who can document advanced competence will be considered for eligibility on a case-by-case basis.

DESIGNATION OF ABCMO BOARD CERTIFICATION

The Board reserves the right to specify the manner by which its certification is denoted and such designations must comply with all requirements of the state board of licensure.

CERTIFICATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION

Just as the initial licensure to practice general optometry issued by a state board of optometry must be maintained at each renewal by meeting continuing education specified by the licensing board (maintenance of licensure), so must ABCMO certification be renewed every 10 years by demonstrating continued competence in the specialty of Medical Optometry.

FEES

The first two years of Board operations were underwritten by a benefactor to subsidize operations and permit low fees. Board members do not receive compensation and expenses are minimized by holding Board interviews in conjunction with major national meetings. The following fee schedule expires in 2013. Interviews may be mandatory for Career Path #3 and required of other candidates at the discretion of the Board.

Career Path #1: Completion of residency after August 2006 with ACMO. \$175

Career Path #2: Completion of residency before August 2006 without ACMO. \$175

Career Path #3: Documented competence in Medical Optometry determined on a case-by-case basis without residency or ACMO. \$275

All Fees Subject to Revision

BOARD CERTIFICATION AND SCOPE OF PRACTICE

Independent privileges can not exceed those of the optometry license of record. The purpose of certification is to document advanced training and experience in Medical Optometry and thereby offer an advanced credential for optometrists seeking to practice within health care facilities. State optometry boards remain the legal bodies specifying independent practice privileges and requirements for maintenance of competence in general practice through re-licensure requirements. In the future, state boards may seek to offer extended privileges to those certified in Medical Optometry.

REGISTRY IN AMERICAN COLLEGE OF MEDICAL OPTOMETRISTS

Those issued certification by ABCMO become listed within a national registry maintained at www.abcmo.org that is accessible, at no charge, to the public and credentialing bodies.

Board certification by ABCMO also provides election as a Fellow of the American College of Medical Optometrists (ACMO).

