



Department of Health

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline

#### Where can I “check out” the credentials of my physician?

You can use DocFinder to search physician credentials at [www.docboard.org/ri/df/search.htm](http://www.docboard.org/ri/df/search.htm) or License Lookup from the

By state law, community members are entitled to know a physician’s:

- Medical school and dates of graduation
- Graduate medical education (internship, residency, or fellowship)
- Specialty board certification
- Number of years in practice
- Names of the hospitals where the physician has privileges
- Appointments to medical school faculties and whether the physician has a responsibility for graduate medical education within the most recent ten years
- Primary practice setting location

Community members are also entitled to a description of:

- Any final board disciplinary actions within the most recent ten years
- Any final disciplinary actions by licensing boards in other states within the most recent ten years
- Any criminal convictions for felonies within the most recent ten years.
- Revocation or restriction of hospital privileges for reasons related to competence taken by the hospital’s governing body or any other official of the hospital after procedural due process has been afforded, or the resignation from or nonrenewal of medical staff membership or the restriction of privileges at a hospital;

Much of this information is available through DocFinder. Much of the remainder is available upon request (preferably written) to the Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline.

#### What does Board Certification mean?

Medical education is a multi-step process. First, when an individual completes medical school, they earn their medical degree (MD or DO) and the title Doctor. They then go on to complete graduate medical education (internship, residency, and/or fellowship) in a step called specialization or subspecialty. At the completion of this second step (residency or fellowship), a physician is eligible to take the Board certification examination. Successful completion of this examination certifies that the physician candidate has mastered the required knowledge, attitudes and skills for that discipline of medicine. The Board certification examination is not a licensing examination; the physician candidate must pass a separate test before applying for an independent license to practice medicine.

**What are the requirements for retaining medical records?**

Please see the state regulations at [www2.sec.state.ri.us/dar/regdocs/released/pdf/DOH/5733.pdf](http://www2.sec.state.ri.us/dar/regdocs/released/pdf/DOH/5733.pdf) (section 11) for current requirements for maintaining medical records. The BMLD also recommends that you review the matter with your malpractice carrier, as some require additional years of record retention.

**Does a physician have the right to charge for copies of medical records?**

Yes, a physician has the right to charge a fee to offset the expense of copying a patient's medical record. Please see the state regulations at [www2.sec.state.ri.us/dar/regdocs/released/pdf/DOH/5733.pdf](http://www2.sec.state.ri.us/dar/regdocs/released/pdf/DOH/5733.pdf) (section 11) for current fee limits.

**Can a doctor hold back medical records if I have an outstanding bill to pay?**

No, Rhode Island law and medical ethics dictate that a patient's healthcare comes first. It would be unprofessional conduct for a physician to withhold the transfer of medical records in this circumstance.

**Are electronic medical records acceptable in the State of Rhode Island?**

Electronic medical records are acceptable provided they are secure, HIPPA compliant, full medical records that are readily retrievable, transferable upon request, and supported by a system of regular back-up to assure record integrity in the event of a system crash. Hard copy back-up of files is not a requirement.