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Physician Licensing: Frequently Asked Questions

Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline

How many Continuing Medical Education (CME) Credits are required?

Every two years, every physician licensed to practice medicine in Rhode Island is required to complete 40 hours CME courses. This should include a minimum of two hours related to the following: universal precautions, infection control, modes of transmission, bioterrorism, OSHA, ethics, end-of-life education, palliative care, pain management, and other regulatory requirements.

What is the time frame for CME Credits?

Current law requires physicians to renew their licenses every two years, on or before the first day of June in each even-numbered year. Physicians must indicate 40 CME credits on their renewal applications. Note that if a physician was in training or became Board Certified or Re-Certified within the cycle, this satisfies the CME requirement.

Where can I get the CME?

When the CME period is approaching, the Board gets a lot of calls asking where to get the CME. Although the Board does not endorse one source over others, the Board is pleased to share information. Many websites offer access to CME. Examples include www.informed.cme.edu, www.emedicine.com, or www.vlh.com.

How long does it take to get a full medical license in RI?

The time frame quoted is approximately one month for applicants who are licensed and in good standing in another state. If the application is for initial licensure, a two to three months time frame is typical for physicians who take responsibility to make sure the application is complete. The Board advises that applicants check with the Board about once a week on outstanding credentials to speed up the process. (email is preferred: Lauren.Dixon-lasso@health.ri.gov)

Fast Track: If an applicant is licensed and in good standing in another state, the Board will consider licensing an applicant PENDING the receipt of the required Federation of State Medical Boards [Federation Credentials Verification Service \(FCVS\)](#) form. All other applicants must wait for receipt of the FCVS. The applicant's active participation in completing the process will drive and determine the time frame for licensure.

What part of the licensing process takes the longest?

The [Federation Credentials Verification Service \(FCVS\)](#) can be a lengthy step in the application process. This process takes about 8-10 weeks, sometimes longer. Checking with the FCVS about once a week speeds up the process. There is no alternative mechanism for primary credentials verification for licensure.

How many times are physicians allowed to take each step of the United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE)?

Up to three efforts per examination. A special exemption must be granted for the Board to sponsor a candidate for additional attempts.

If a candidate has taken one of the USMLE steps more than 3 times before ultimately passing, can he or she apply for a license?

Generally, no. However, we ask you to send a letter to the Board describing the situation, including scores. This request is presented to the Licensing Committee, which formally makes the decision to grant or deny the request.

Is there a maximum time frame/limit between USMLE Steps 1 to 3?

Yes: seven years. However, if you have surpassed this time frame, we ask you to send a letter to the Board describing the situation, including scores. This request is presented to the Licensing Committee, which formally makes the decision to grant or deny the request.

What are the requirements for medical licensure for graduates of foreign medical schools?

The requirements for licensure in the State of Rhode Island (and throughout the United States) for graduates of international medical schools are considerable, but they help assure that only qualified physicians are granted the privilege to practice medicine.

In short, a graduate of an international medical school must next achieve certification by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG). Information about the ECFMG is available through their website at www.ecfm.org. The requirements for ECFMG certification are: successful completion of (1) the first two parts of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE parts I and II), (2) the Test of English As a Foreign Language Examination (TOEFL), and (3) the Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA). Once certified by the ECFMG, the graduate would then be eligible for postgraduate training in the United States.

In order to be eligible for an independent license to practice medicine in Rhode Island, an international graduate then needs to complete (1) an accredited residency training program and (2) the third part of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE III). These requirements are described by the statute 5-37-2, which is available online at www.rilin.state.ri.us/statutes/title5/5-37/5-37-2.htm. At this point, the graduate can apply for the license through the Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline. Applications are available online or by request (401-222-3855).

This entire process generally takes from three to five years, depending upon the candidate's prior training, enthusiasm, and aptitude. In Rhode Island, we are very fortunate to have excellent postgraduate training programs sponsored by Brown's affiliated academic medical centers at Lifespan, Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island, and Butler Hospital, as well as Boston University affiliated programs at the Roger Williams General Hospital. A full listing of these programs is available through the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education (online at www.acgme.org). This listing also includes the names of program Directors and their contact information. Admission to these programs, however, is very competitive. Further, each of the required examinations for ECFMG certification is administered at the candidate's expense, which can total several thousand dollars.

Do I still need to be ECFMG certified if I am a US citizen (and a graduate of an International Medical School)? Do I still need to take the TOEFL?

Yes, insofar as ECFMG certification is a requirement for all international medical school graduates for residency training. Yes, the TOEFL is a requirement of the ECFMG, even for native English speakers.

Teleradiology now makes it possible for physicians outside of Rhode Island to interpret digital radiographs remotely. Do radiologists who do this need to be licensed in the State of RI?

If the teleradiologist provides reports to physicians who are licensed to practice medicine in Rhode Island (and not directly to patients), and has an unrestricted license to practice somewhere in the United States, then he or she does not need to be licensed in Rhode Island.

If a group of doctors want to open an outpatient surgical clinic, which Controlled Substance Number do they use on the application?

One physician will have the primary responsibility for compliance with all storage and maintenance requirements pursuant to federal and state law. That physician's DEA registration and Controlled Substance Registration number will be used for the ordering and dispensing of any medications used in the facility.