Policy on Board Eligibility for Subspecialty Certification

BACKGROUND

Beginning January 1, 2018, the American Board of Emergency Medicine recognized the term "board eligible for subspecialty certification" under specific circumstances, described in the following policy.

POLICY

The American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) recognizes physicians as board eligible for a defined period of time if they meet ABEM subspecialty certification eligibility requirements. Physicians may participate in the ABEM subspecialty certification process only if they are subspecialty board eligible. Physicians who meet ABEM requirements for subspecialty board eligibility may describe themselves as ABEM subspecialty board eligible. All physicians who do not meet the ABEM requirements of subspecialty board eligibility may not describe themselves as ABEM subspecialty board eligible.

Board eligibility for subspecialty certification starts on the physician's completion of the training or practice required to meet the ABEM eligibility criteria for the subspecialty. For physicians who are in the ABEM subspecialty certification process on the effective date of this policy, subspecialty board eligibility started on the policy effective date, January 1, 2018. To be considered subspecialty board eligible, physicians must be primary ABMS Board certified and be designated as participating in Maintenance of Certification (MOC) for their primary ABMS certification. Physicians can be designated as subspecialty board eligible, and can maintain subspecialty board eligible status, only if their medical licensure complies with the ABEM Policy on Medical Licensure.

The period of subspecialty board eligibility ends on the date when the physician achieves subspecialty certification. If the physician does not achieve subspecialty certification, the period of subspecialty board eligibility ends on December 31, seven years after the board eligibility start date or through four administrations of the subspecialty initial certification examination, whichever is longer.

Physicians who lose ABEM subspecialty board eligible status may become ABEM subspecialty board eligible again only by successfully completing additional Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)–accredited fellowship training. The additional training must consist of at least half of the time of the subspecialty fellowship training as outlined in the ABEM eligibility criteria for the subspecialty at the time the physician loses their subspecialty board eligible status.

When physicians are not subspecialty board eligible, they must cease and desist from making any representations of subspecialty board eligibility. Any violation of this rule is considered a breach of ethical standards of medical practice.

Effective Date and Phase-in of Policy

This policy took effect January 1, 2018.

Physicians who met the eligibility criteria for the subspecialty in or after 2018 must meet this policy to maintain subspecialty board eligibility status.

Physicians who met the ABEM eligibility criteria for the subspecialty prior to 2018, or who applied for subspecialty certification via the practice pathway and have an open, approved application as of January 1, 2018, will be recognized as ABEM subspecialty board eligible for a period of seven years or through four administrations of the initial certification examination, whichever is longer, starting January 1, 2018.

PROCEDURES

Approved applications are considered **open** and remain open until the candidate for subspecialty certification achieves certification or is no longer ABEM subspecialty board eligible. A candidate must have an open application to take a subspecialty certification examination.

Approved subspecialty certification applications will be **closed** if the physician's final period of subspecialty board eligibility expires. Physicians cannot take ABEM or co-sponsoring boards' subspecialty certification examinations if their application is closed.

EXCEPTIONS

ABEM will consider individual exceptions to the Policy on Board Eligibility for Subspecialty Certification only in cases where extraordinary circumstances have prevented compliance with the policy, as determined solely by ABEM.

APPEAL PROCESS

ABEM maintains an appeal process for physicians who do not meet the requirements to maintain ABEM subspecialty board eligible status.

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