



COBCEP and Board Certification in Emergency Medicine

What is COBCEP?

- COBCEP, the Coalition of Board-Certified Emergency Physicians, is a collaborative group representing all major Emergency Medicine organizations formed in 2017.
- Its mission is to advocate for American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM)- and American Osteopathic Board of Emergency Medicine (AOBEM)-certified physicians. COBCEP advocates for specialty-specific continuing certification as the standard for ongoing competency, enabling physicians to focus more on patient care and uphold the highest standards of emergency medicine
- COBCEP aims to improve public recognition for the specialized training and expertise of these physicians and to establish partnerships with stakeholders to reduce burdensome content-specific CME requirements, educational courses, or non-Emergency Medicine-based practice guidelines for institutional privileges or state medical licensure.

Why is Board Certification in Emergency Medicine (ABEM/AOBEM) so valuable?

- **Comprehensive Training:** ABEM and AOBEM define the rigorous standards for the specialty of Emergency Medicine. This includes the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)-accredited Emergency Medicine residency programs, which have strict requirements for training in the care of acutely ill or injured patients, including pediatric resuscitation and neurological emergencies.
- **Foundational Knowledge:** Training is based on The Model of the Clinical Practice of Emergency Medicine (EM Model), which outlines essential information, skills, and tasks for emergency physicians.
- **Rigorous Certification Process:** Initial certification involves secure, high-stakes written and complex scenario-based oral examinations that assess medical knowledge, decision-making, and communication skills for critical and emergent conditions.
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Continuing certification programs (MyEMCert, or Osteopathic Continuous Certification) are rigorous forms of ongoing professional development, emphasizing current advances, continuous assessment, and focused content areas like neurological emergencies and resuscitation.

Why does COBCEP consider additional short courses and topic-specific CME redundant for board-certified emergency physicians?

- **Certification Supersedes Additional Requirements:** The joint policy statements explicitly state that ABEM certification and continuing certification supersede the need for additional third-party certifications or courses like ACLS, APLS, ATLS, PALS, or topic-specific CME.
 - [Joint Policy Statement](#)
 - [Pediatric Care Statement](#)
- **Comprehensive Training:** The comprehensive training and ongoing certification processes for board-certified emergency physicians already cover the knowledge and skills taught in these shorter courses. For example, the EM Model and certification exams embed numerous areas of pediatric, cardiac, and trauma care.
- **Unnecessary Burden:** Such mandates, particularly those developed before Emergency Medicine matured as a specialty, are considered unnecessary and can be a burden. However, these periodic, short courses may be valuable for physicians not board-certified in Emergency Medicine or those not participating in continuing certification.

What resources are available for physicians from COBCEP?

Physician Letters of Support: ABEM-certified physicians can download letters from their MyABEM Portal explaining why certain short courses (e.g., ACLS, Point of Care Testing, Emergency Ultrasound) are unnecessary given their board certification and ongoing professional development. AOBEM-certified physicians can request similar letters by contacting AOBEM. (Will link to website when letters are updated in ABEM platform)

What specific advocacy efforts is COBCEP undertaking to reduce these requirements?

- [State-Mandated CME Survey](#): COBCEP distributed a cross-sectional survey to ABEM-certified physicians to assess the impact, perceived burden, and value of state-mandated, topic-specific CME requirements.
 - Key Findings: The survey showed that time (72.1%) and relevance (65.5%) were the most commonly reported barriers to completing state-mandated CME. A significant majority (83.6%) of physicians believe that continuing certification should eliminate the need for state-mandated, topic-specific CME. Most (70.0%) disagreed that such requirements should exist.
- Outreach to State Medical Boards: COBCEP uses these survey results to advocate for reducing state CME burdens, suggesting board certification as an alternative. They have engaged with state medical boards in Hawaii and North Dakota. Check your state requirements [here](#).
- Puerto Rico Requirements: COBCEP has actively opposed the Puerto Rico Department of Health's (PRDOH) requirement for ACLS, PALS, and ATLS for emergency physicians. COBCEP submitted letters, translated into Spanish, advocating for ABEM/AOBEM certification as equivalent, and are working with Puerto Rico ACEP for regulatory revisions.
- New York PALS/APLS Requirement: COBCEP has repeatedly engaged with the New York Department of Health (NYDOH) to remove the PALS/APLS requirement, arguing that ABEM/AOBEM training meets and exceeds these standards. The NYDOH has historically considered ABEM/AOBEM certification equivalent for ATLS and ACLS but not PALS, citing a need for periodic skills-based training.
- Military BLS Requirement: COBCEP is seeking the removal of the mandatory BLS certification for Military Health System personnel, proposing ABEM/AOBEM certification as an acceptable alternative.
- Hospital Credentialing Requirements:
 - Joint Commission (TJC) Maternal Safety Standards: COBCEP has engaged in dialogue with TJC and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) regarding the 2020 Maternal Safety Standards. TJC has clarified that they do not mandate additional certifications or courses for emergency physicians; such decisions are made at the individual institution's medical staff level.
 - Emergency Neurological Life Support (ENLS): COBCEP has successfully engaged with hospitals (e.g., Ascension St. Mary's) to clarify that ENLS certification is not required for ABEM/AOBEM-certified physicians.
 - Opposition to Unrecognized Certifications: COBCEP opposes resolutions that would deem certifications from organizations like the National Board of Physicians and Surgeons (NBPAS) as equivalent to ABEM/AOBEM certification.

How does COBCEP collaborate with other organizations?

- Key Partners: COBCEP works with the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) to leverage board certification in lieu of additional CME requirements.
- Industry Engagement: COBCEP engages with major emergency physician staffing companies (e.g., TeamHealth, Envision, US Acute Care Solutions, Vituity, SCP Health) and large hospital systems (e.g., HCA, CommonSpirit Health, Ascension, Trinity Health, Lifepoint Health) to advocate for reduced certification requirements.
- Medical Organizations: COBCEP collaborates with other medical organizations, such as the American College of Surgeons, to remove redundant requirements (e.g., ATLS for trauma centers). They have also engaged with the American Heart Association and the National Association of Medical Staff Services.

Contact Information

Physicians interested in learning more or speaking personally about COBCEP initiatives can visit the [COBCEP webpage](#) or email COBCEP@abem.org.

