



The COBCEP Mission

The Coalition of Board-Certified Emergency Physicians (COBCEP) exists to elevate public recognition of the rigorous training and expertise of ABEM- and AOBEM-certified emergency physicians, while working collaboratively with stakeholders to reduce unnecessary administrative burden.

COBCEP advocates for the primacy of 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.

ABEM and AOBEM Certification Supersedes Content-Specific CME Requirements for Emergency Physicians

The American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) and American Osteopathic Board of Emergency Medicine (AOBEM) certifications are the gold standard for demonstrating clinical competency and expertise in emergency medicine. Board certification in EM is built on a foundation of rigorous, comprehensive training and ongoing assessment, unequivocally superseding the need for additional third-party certifications or courses such as ACLS, APLS, ATLS, PALS, or content-specific CME courses.

1. Board Certification and Continuing Certification are Sufficient and Rigorous



Comprehensive Training

ABEM and AOBEM certifications are based on the Model of the Clinical Practice of Emergency Medicine (EM Model), which serves as the blueprint for residency training and certification exams. This model encompasses the full scope of knowledge and skills required for emergency care, including airway management, trauma resuscitation, pediatric and adult emergencies, and advanced cardiovascular care.

[View the EM Model >>](#)





Robust Assessment and Maintenance

Emergency Medicine residencies, accredited by the ACGME, have stringent program requirements. Initial and continuing board certification involves passing comprehensive written and oral examinations that far exceed the scope of any single-topic course. Programs such as ABEM's [MyEMCert](#) and AOBEM's [Osteopathic Continuous Certification](#) continuously update and assess competencies, including topics typically covered by short courses (e.g., ACLS, PALS, ATLS), eliminating the need for redundancy.

Key details regarding the comprehensive nature and ongoing rigor of Board Certification in Emergency Medicine, which requires:

- ACGME-accredited residency completion, ensuring in-depth, relevant clinical preparation.
- Demonstration of success in passing both the initial written and oral exams based on the EM Model, which covers all critical areas of knowledge and skill expected in practice.
- Ongoing continuous certification (MyEMCert for ABEM or Osteopathic Continuous Certification for AOBEM), with repeated evaluation and up-to-date demonstration of skills.
- Since 2019, ABEM no longer requires separate CME attestation, signaling that continuous board certification itself surpasses the educational standards of most content-specific CME courses.

2. Physician Perspectives & CME Considerations



Physician Concensus

- Over 80% of emergency physicians agree that board certification with ongoing continuing certification should eliminate the need for mandated, course-specific CME requirements.
- Key details: According to a 2024 survey by the Coalition of Board-Certified Emergency Physicians (COBCEP) published in JACEP Open, 83.6% of emergency physicians believe continued board certification (ABEM/AOBEM) should replace state-mandated, topic-specific CME requirements.
- Most respondents felt state-mandated CME was unlikely to improve patient care (70.8%) or should not exist (70.0%).
- Main barriers cited were time and relevance; over half (58.8%) reported state CME detracted from other, more relevant professional learning.
- This suggests that physicians view board certification as a robust and relevant indicator of ongoing competence, superior to additional, non-specific CME mandates.
 - Citation: "[Emergency Physicians' Perspectives of State Continuing Medical Education Requirements for Medical Licensure](#)," JACEP Open, Oct 2024.

3. Board Certification Improves Patient Outcomes

- A [2014 study](#) published in Academic Emergency Medicine directly linked American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) certification with better patient outcomes, specifically regarding missed diagnoses of acute myocardial infarction (AMI) in patients aged 65 and older.
 - Key finding: EDs with more ABEM-certified physicians had significantly lower odds (OR 0.60, 99% CI: 0.50–0.73) of missing an AMI diagnosis.
 - This was interpreted as higher quality of care for hospitals with a greater proportion of board-certified emergency physicians.
- The study also found, while costs were higher in hospitals with more board-certified physicians, the reduction in missed diagnoses supports a clear link between board certification and safer care.
- The data set was based on Medicare records from 2004–2005, with acknowledged limitations in clinical granularity, but it is considered strong, hypothesis-generating evidence that board certification correlates with key outcome improvements.
- Citation: "[Hospital and Emergency Department Factors Associated with Variations in Missed Diagnosis and Costs for Patients Age 65 Years and Older with Acute Myocardial Infarction Who Present to Emergency Departments](#)," Acad Emerg Med, Oct 2014.

Successful Policy Changes and Recognition

- The Coalition of Board-Certified Emergency Physicians (COBCEP) and other leading organizations are working to ensure that regulatory bodies and hospital systems recognize board certification as the comprehensive standard. This advocacy has led to real change:
- Trauma-related CME: The American College of Surgeons now waives certain trauma CME for ABEM-certified physicians engaged in continuous certification.
- Pediatric Readiness Project: Accepts ABEM certification as an alternative to separate Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) credentials, with ongoing advocacy for wider recognition.
- Military Health System (BLS) and individual hospitals (ENLS): Some systems now recognize ABEM certification in place of additional mandatory life support courses.
- State-level CME waivers: States accept ABMS board certification as a substitute for some or all state-mandated CME requirements.

Check State Requirements at FSMB >>



Ready-to-Use Tools

Templates for Correspondence

ABEM-certified physicians can download COBCEP letters explaining why certain short courses are unnecessary from their MyABEM account. AOBEM-certified physicians can request letters by contacting AOBEM.

Available Letters

- Short Course Waiver Letter
- Emergency Ultrasound Waiver Letter
- Point of Care Testing (POCT) Letter

[Download Letters From MyABEM >>](#)

Educational & Communication Materials



[Download the PowerPoint Slide Deck >>](#)

This presentation is editable and contains information on COBCEP, its function, and issues it addresses.



[Download the Executive Summary >>](#)

This document is an overview of COBCEP and the work of the Coalition.



[Visit the Value Webpage >>](#)

ABEM's website has a *Value of ABEM-Certified Physicians* page with information, a link to check the certification status of physicians, digital downloads to promote certification, and a link to the ABEM storefront where you can order branded swag.



[Visit the EM Model Webpage >>](#)

ABEM's website has a page with the current EM Model, historical ones, and citations. The model serves as the blueprint for residency training and certification exams. It encompasses the full scope of knowledge and skills required for emergency care, including airway management, trauma resuscitation, pediatric and adult emergencies, and advanced cardiovascular care.



[Listen the the ABEM General Podcast >>](#)

The *ABEM General Podcast* has several segments, including:

- *ABEM Key Advances in EM*: Information that keeps you up-to-date in the specialty
- *ABEM Voices*: Real stories from ABEM-certified physicians
- *ABEM Pathways*: Information for programs and residents





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.

