

Promoting National Standards through Advocacy: NCCAOM Working For and With You



According to Mosby's Medical Dictionary, certification is "a process in which an individual, an institution, or an educational program is evaluated and recognized as meeting certain predetermined standards." All

NCCAOM Diplomates have met a national standard when they become certified. Commonly provided by a nongovernmental agency, such as the NCCAOM, a

certification is a credential earned by an individual to ensure that the standards met are those necessary for safe and ethical practice of the profession or service. Therefore, the mission of a certification organization is frequently public safety or consumer safety; therefore, the certification organization must ensure its mission is fulfilled through its activities and services provided. NCCAOM's mission is to *"establish, assess and promote recognized standards of competence and safety in acupuncture and Oriental medicine for the protection and benefit of the public"*.

The core functions of the NCCAOM are to qualify that candidates for the certification exams have acquired certain knowledge, skills and abilities based on education and training; and to develop psychometrically sound, valid and reliable exams to assess the candidate's entry-level competency to practice as an acupuncture and Oriental medicine (AOM) professional. The NCCAOM serves as the gatekeeper for consumers by requiring that all certified NCCAOM practitioners for certification have met the educational and training requirements as determined by the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM).

In fulfilling its core functions, the NCCAOM Board of Commissioners and staff also develop strategic goals that promote its national standards for certification which also includes recertification. The NCCAOM works with state regulatory agencies to require national standards through the licensure process. This goal directly meets NCCAOM's mission of public safety. The NCCAOM also partners with states to advance NCCAOM certification and the AOM profession for the consumers of their state. This second goal is also tied to public safety when other healthcare professionals (that have not met the above educational, training and assessment requirements) try to pass regulation to allow their profession to practice acupuncture. The NCCAOM will step in to raise concerns and possibly impede the regulation from passing.

The role of the professional membership association, such as the American Acupuncture Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AAAOM), is to further a particular profession, the interests of individuals engaged in that profession, and the public interest. Although the NCCAOM and AAAOM often work collaboratively on advancing the AOM profession, especially in the arena of state relations, the AAAOM represents the profession whereas the NCCAOM represents the public or consumers. As a result, the NCCAOM **always** focuses on whether an activity meets its mission of public safety before it engages in the activity. This is why it is important to note that as a certification entity, NCCAOM must tie any type of advocacy (legislative affairs, marketing and public relations) to its mission of public safety.

While being cognizant of its mission, NCCAOM continues to work tirelessly on behalf of its Diplomates to promote certification and the AOM profession on the state and federal level. Over the past years, NCCAOM has proactively worked with state association leaders, individual practitioners, and regulatory agency officials to advance the practice of AOM through regulation changes or additions. Below are some of the activities that the NCCAOM staff has and will continue to provide to advocate on behalf of NCCAOM Diplomates. The following are state relations activities undertaken by the NCCAOM in 2011:

- Provided testimony on NCCAOM certification standards and the safe practice of AOM by NCCAOM Diplomates to over 25 state AOM regulatory boards and legislative bodies.
- Written letters of support for legislation that promotes AOM.
- Provided up-to-date information to state regulatory agencies, legislative members and committees, state association leaders and members of the media on national and international use of NCCAOM examinations and certifications.
- Provided demographic and clinical practice information on AOM practitioners to federal agencies to include the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, National Institute of Health's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, and the Department of the Navy and Army.

NCCAOM recently presented a webinar to state regulatory agency staff that highlighted activities which support states in the advancement of AOM and the protection of consumers from the unsafe practice of AOM by unqualified practitioners. To view this informative webinar,

please visit the NCCAOM website at <http://www.nccaom.org/nccaom-webinars-posted>. Some of the examples of support that the NCCAOM has given to states over the past year include:

- Providing ten states with information on education and standards of NCCAOM certified Diplomates to address the practice of dry needling by physical therapists. The NCCAOM has written letters and recently prepared a fact sheet to help states that are dealing with this issue.
- The NCCAOM staff has also assisted three states that are in the process of adding Chinese herbology to their scope of practice and/or adding the requirement of Chinese Herbology or Oriental Medicine Certification.
- As one of its most important priorities, the NCCAOM is continually committed to working with state association or regulators in states that do not have regulation for the practice of acupuncture and Oriental medicine. These states are Alabama, Kansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma and Wyoming.

If your state is facing a challenging issue or needs the support of the NCCAOM to advance the practice of acupuncture and Oriental medicine, please contact stategov@thenccaom.org.