



DATE: March 23, 2020

TO: Members of the California Assembly Business & Professions Committee

FROM: Mina Larson, Chief Executive Officer
National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM®)

RE: **Follow Up Information for Members of the California Senate and Assembly Business & Professions Committee and Other Interested Stakeholders**

The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM®) has provided this document as a follow up to several meetings we have participated in discussing the implementation of the NCCAOM examinations in California as requested by the California Acupuncture Board (CAB). Included is background information and several questions and answers that have been broached throughout this process.

The NCCAOM is a non-profit 501(c)(6) organization established in 1982 and is the only national organization that validates entry-level competency in the practice of Acupuncture and Oriental medicine (AOM) through professional certification. NCCAOM certification or a passing score on the NCCAOM certification examinations are documentation of competency for licensure as an acupuncturist by 46 states plus the District of Columbia which represents 98% of the states that regulate acupuncture.

NCCAOM works with states and acupuncturists throughout the country to qualify to provide board-certified services in their practices and part of the Veterans Administration programs. NCCAOM also works to increase employment and practice opportunities through license portability and reciprocity while maintaining and supporting state licensure requirements and regulators.

The NCCAOM examinations and certification programs are based on best practices in the certification industry and meet the testing and certification program standards of the National Commission on Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the independent accrediting body created by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence.

Over the past 25 years, AOM has become increasingly popular in the United States. Often referred to as eastern medicine, they encompass a variety of modalities. An estimated 36 percent of U.S. adults use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), according to a survey by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, a component of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Not surprisingly, acupuncture has become one of the most common forms of CAM.

The NCCAOM is driven to produce valid and reliable measurements of competence in AOM practitioners who seek certification. Choosing an NCCAOM National Board-Certified Acupuncturist™ means receiving excellent care from a professional and qualified practitioner.

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Below are frequently asked questions and answers:

Q. When will the NCCAOM exams be administered in California?

A. The CAB voted to recommend to the legislature requiring the NCCAOM exams in 2016. (see July 8, 2016 letter from CAB to the Assembly Business and Professions Committees below) As this process is statutory, a bill must be introduced and passed by the CA State Legislature and signed by the Governor for it to become effective and the exams required by the state licensure.

Q. Once passage of the NCCAOM exams becomes a requirement for state licensure, will current California Licensed Acupuncturists be required to take the NCCAOM exams?

A. No. Adding the requirement of passing all four NCCAOM exams will allow **new CA candidates** who are *applying* for licensure in California the opportunity to take the NCCAOM exams as a route for California licensure. It will have **no** impact on currently licensed California acupuncturists.

Q. How many states that regulate acupuncture use the NCCAOM exams?

A. There are 46 states plus the District of Columbia ([NCCAOM State Map](#)) that recognize NCCAOM examinations or full certification as a prerequisite for licensure. The AOM regulatory boards of these states typically require passing of two to four NCCAOM exams or require full NCCAOM Certification in Acupuncture or Oriental Medicine.

California is the only state that administers its own licensure examination. This means that AOM practitioners who pass the required NCCAOM examination and/or become NCCAOM certified in Acupuncture or Oriental Medicine (and who have met state- specific requirements) can enjoy greater portability to all states that regulate acupuncture, except for California.

Q. Will requiring the NCCAOM exams lower California licensure standards?

A. The requirement of NCCAOM exams has no bearing on other existing licensure standards in California. The NCCAOM partners with 46 state regulatory boards which have various additional standards, to include different educational requirements, or additional state-specific competency examinations so that each state ensures that each of their licensees have met entry-level competency standards to practice acupuncture and Oriental medicine safely.

The California Acupuncture Board would continue to set their unique standards (including educational and additional competency requirements) for licensure of California acupuncturists.

Q. What are the benefits of NCCAOM Certification?

A. NCCAOM certification or passing of the NCCAOM exams enables practitioners to apply for licensure in 46 states plus D.C. that require this as a prerequisite for licensure. The Department of Veterans Affairs announced in 2018 that NCCAOM National Board-Certified Acupuncturists™, who are also state licensed, now have an established qualification standard for employment positions within the VA Health Administration, according to the newly published Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) Handbook ([please see NCCAOM announcement](#)). Many hospitals, employers and insurance companies also require NCCAOM certification as a condition for employment. Federal recognition of acupuncturists is also an important initiative of the AOM profession and the NCCAOM. Through our work with the Dept. of Labor's Bureau Labor and Statistics (BLS), in which Acupuncturists received their own [Standard of Classification in the 2018 BLS Occupational Handbook](#), and other federal agencies, it was learned that a national exam is an integral part of receiving federal recognition with agencies as the Dept. of Veterans' Affairs and the Dept. of Defense.



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July 8, 2016

Dr. LeOndra Clark-Harvey, Chief Consultant
Assembly Business and Professions Committee
1020 N Street, Room 383
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Acupuncture Board adoption of NCCAOM licensing exam with a California-specific supplemental exam

Dear Dr. Clark-Harvey,

This letter is to inform you of recent action taken by the California Acupuncture Board (Board) at our most recent public meeting, held on June 10, 2016 in Los Angeles. The motion put forward by Vice-President Jamie Zamora and seconded by Dr. Michael Corradino, and passed by the Board with a vote of 6-0-0 in favor, is as follows:

"I motion that the Acupuncture Board direct our EO to draft a letter informing the Assembly Business and Professions Committee, that the Board recommends the introduction of legislation mandating for Acupuncture licensure in California, that applicants now be required to take the NCCAOM exam with a California supplemental exam, to be implemented not before January 1, 2019."

This motion is consistent with the California Office of Professional Examination Service's (OPES) recommendation of option four (page 53 of the conclusion) of the "Review of the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Examinations (January 2016)", as presented to the Board at the February 26, 2016 public meeting. A copy of the review is enclosed.

After presentations from OPES and NCCAOM, receiving input from the stakeholders present at both Board meetings, and careful deliberation, the Board decided option four to be the best fit, as the addition of a California supplemental examination to the NCCAOM examination(s) would ensure that the laws, regulations, and ethics unique to California practitioners were examined.

The Board stands ready to work collaboratively with the Legislature, OPES and NCCAOM to implement the necessary changes to ensure public protection and maintain California's high standards for Acupuncture licensure and practice.

Sincerely,


Hildegard Aguinardo, President
California Acupuncture Board

CC: Bill Gage, Chief Consultant, Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee
California Office of Professional Examination Services (OPES)
California Bureau of Private Post-Secondary Education (BPPE)
National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM)

Enclosure