

About NCCAOM

The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) is a non-profit 501(c)6 organization established in 1982. The NCCAOM is the only national organization recognized by a majority of state governments to validate entry-level competency in the practice of acupuncture and oriental medicine through professional certification. NCCAOM certification or a passing score on the NCCAOM certification examinations are considered documentation of competency for licensure as an acupuncturist by 47 states and the District of Columbia, which represents 98% of the states that regulate acupuncture. All NCCAOM certification programs are currently accredited by the National Commission for Certification Agencies (NCCA) and carry the NCCA seal.

The NCCAOM was established to assure the safety and well-being of the public and to advance the professional practice of acupuncture and Oriental medicine by establishing and promoting the national evidence-based standards of competence and credentialing. Since the organization's inception, the NCCAOM has issued more than 21,000 certificates in acupuncture, Oriental medicine, Chinese herbology and Asian Bodywork Therapy (ABT). The NCCAOM works in concert with sister organizations the American Association for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AAAOM), the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM), and the Council of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (CAOM). Additionally, the NCCAOM has worked in recent years directly with federal agencies to establish recognition of its certification programs and its Diplomates in the federal arena, including creating a distinct classification code with the Bureau of Labor and Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook.

Certified Acupuncturists

The NCCAOM certifies 1,200-1,500 acupuncturists a year and represents almost 18,000 nationally certified practitioners. Earning NCCAOM certification indicates to employers, patients, and other practitioners that one has met national standards for the safe and competent practice of acupuncture. National board certification in acupuncture has been the mark of excellence in the profession since the inception of NCCAOM in 1982. **NCCAOM® National Board-Certified Acupuncturists™**, known as Diplomates of Acupuncture or Diplomates of Oriental Medicine, represent the gold standard of the profession, having completed a rigorous and comprehensive educational, training, and examination process.

CERTIFICATION FACTS

22 states that require NCCAOM certification in order to issue a license to practice acupuncture

26 more (and the District of Columbia) use the NCCAOM examinations as part of their licensing requirements

NCCAOM Certification Process

The certification process to become an **NCCAOM® National Board-Certified Acupuncturist™**, is comprehensive and in-depth, in order to ensure the highest levels of professional competency. Diplomates of Acupuncture or Diplomates of Oriental Medicine are required to complete three to four academic years of education at the master's or doctoral level, in a program accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM), the only body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the authority for quality education and training in the profession. Additionally, graduates of such programs must demonstrate professional competency by passing NCCAOM certification examinations, and documentation of successful completion of an in-person Clean Needle Technique course. NCCAOM Diplomates must be recertified every 4 years, in order to maintain their knowledge and performance at the highest levels of competency for acupuncture practice.

Acupuncture Education

The most important factor in achieving NCCAOM certification is completing an extensive, full-length, accredited education in acupuncture and Oriental medicine. The majority of NCCAOM Diplomates gained certification through formal education in the United States. A master's degree in acupuncture takes a minimum of three years and 1,905 hours of training, covering acupuncture theory, clinical practice, biomedicine, ethics, counseling, patient communication, and practice management. A broader degree in Oriental medicine requires four years and 2,625 hours, covering the above disciplines as well as didactic Chinese herbal studies.

After graduation, or after completing the majority of the program and with approval from school administrators, students may apply to sit for the NCCAOM certification exams, including Foundations of Oriental Medicine, Biomedicine, and Acupuncture with Point Location, administered by NCCAOM. The content of these exams is developed by NCCAOM through regular Job Analysis surveys of the profession, in concert with a dedicated Task Force of Subject Matter Experts. International applicants who have completed accredited, full-term education programs in another country can be determined eligible for the NCCAOM examinations after getting their transcript and coursework approved by a professional credential evaluation organization.

NCCAOM Recertification and Profession Monitoring

Certification for acupuncturists is an ongoing process to ensure that Diplomates continue to provide the safest, highest quality of acupuncture care. Every four years, certified Diplomates must undergo the recertification process in order to maintain their status with NCCAOM. The process includes 60 hours of Professional Development Activity, which covers various methods of continuing education. This must include at least 30 hours of re-training in the core competencies of acupuncture, at least 4 hours of safety and ethics training, including education on bloodborne pathogens, clean needle techniques, and more, as well as a continually updated CPR certification.

Additionally, the recertification process aids NCCAOM in monitoring the profession. As the only national

certification organization in the United States for the practice of acupuncture, NCCAOM acts as a safety net to confirm that providers are knowledgeable and are safe practitioners. NCCAOM continuously monitors developments in the acupuncture ecosystem, especially with regards to any adverse actions taken against Diplomates. While actions within a state may only get reported within that state, NCCAOM works to confirm that all of its Diplomates are in good standing wherever they practice – a function that states are simply not equipped to perform this surveillance for the over 30,000 licensed acupuncturists across the country.

Certification is Necessary for Patient Safety

Like any medical discipline, the safe and effective practice of acupuncture requires carefully trained professionals.

NCCAOM® National Board-Certified Acupuncturists™ undergo a training and competency verification program in sharp contrast to the less rigorous acupuncture training of non-specialized health care professionals such as chiropractors, registered nurses, or even medical doctors. These other professions typically receive at most 100-300 hours of abbreviated training and treat a limited number of pain points.

NCCAOM® National Board-Certified Acupuncturists™ are also trained in standard medical history gathering, safety, and ethics, as well as the proper methods and procedures for referring patients to outside professionals and consulting with non-acupuncturist practitioners.

The majority of states in America have recognized the importance of NCCAOM certification for safe and competent practice. There are 22 states that require NCCAOM certification in order to issue a license to practice acupuncture, and 26 more (and the District of Columbia) use the NCCAOM examinations as part of their licensing requirements. Three states (South Dakota, Oklahoma and Alabama) lack an Acupuncture Practice Act, and, therefore have no licensure for acupuncturists, resulting in a lack of standards and the ability for anyone to practice without meeting safety and competency qualifications. Many of the states that have a practice act do not require license renewal for acupuncturists, making the recertification element for NCCAOM Diplomates even more essential.