

My doctor is a licensed specialist. What does that mean?

State or territorial boards of medical examiners are the legal authority that license physicians to practice medicine. It is a mandatory legal requirement for a doctor to have a medical license from each state or territory in which he/she practices medicine. The license does not signify certification in a specialty.

Specialty certification is valid throughout the United States and its territories. It is a voluntary process. Member Boards of the ABMS issue specialty and subspecialty certificates to physicians who meet their requirements for specialization. These requirements include holding an unrestricted license in at least one state or territory, completion of specialty training and demonstration of the necessary knowledge and skills expected of a specialist. Certification is not required to practice medicine, but almost 90% of all licensed physicians in the United States are certified by an ABMS Member Board. Many hospitals and managed care organizations require that a certain percentage of their staff must be certified by an ABMS Member Board. For more information on ABMS policies please see:

On Medical Licensure...

[ABMS Statement on "Relationship Between Specialty Board Certification and Medical Licensure"](#)

On ABMS Board Certification...

[The Purpose of Certification](#)