



MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA Licensing Program



The Licensing Process

The Medical Board's Licensing Program protects the consumer through the proper licensing of physicians and surgeons. The comprehensive review of an application provides that licensees have the requisite qualifications and educational credentials for medical practice.

California's licensing requirements remain among the more stringent in the nation; nevertheless, an ever increasing number of applicants seek licensure in California. During the 2012-13 fiscal year, almost 6,700 applications were received and over 5,400 licenses were granted. Applicants should recognize that the application review process can be lengthy and are encouraged to start the application process at least *six to nine months before they need licensure*. While the sense of urgency experienced by each applicant is understood, the licensing staff is responsible for reviewing many files and cannot complete the review of a file if required documents are missing. Oftentimes, the missing documents must be obtained from distant medical schools or programs, resulting in more delays. Furthermore, during busy times of the year, individual staff members may be working on over 500 files at any one time. It is imperative for applicants to understand that the review process is guided by the requirements set forth in State law, which does not provide for any waivers to be granted by staff or by the Board.

- * Applications are reviewed in the order of receipt.
- * Applicants should submit all required documentation as soon as possible; however, without both the application and fees, staff cannot begin the initial review process.
- * The security clearance with the Department of Justice and the FBI can be lengthy. The LiveScan fingerprinting process is used for applicants in California, and it should be started early in the process, preferably with the application and fees. Out-of-state applicants must submit fingerprint cards and should do so promptly, or they may come to California to use LiveScan.
- * Do not wait to submit an application until all documentation is complete, because that will significantly delay the fingerprint processing.

Once an application has been received, staff must complete the initial review within 60 working days, although this often occurs in less time. The applicant is then notified in writing of the application status and given an itemized list of documents needed to complete the file. These subsequent documents also will be reviewed in order of receipt.

The review of applications filed by US/Canadian medical graduates is fairly routine; when delays occur, they generally result from the required FBI fingerprint clearance, which may take a few months. While the review of applications filed by international graduates is more complex, delays usually are the result of education and training which does not meet the standard required in law and which therefore must be remediated. Other extensive delays occur as international applicants try to obtain documents from foreign institutions or when certified translations are needed.

Lastly, when all documents have been submitted and an application is complete, regulations allow an additional 100 days for processing. This time frame may include a senior management review of complex files and a request for clarification of some documented information.

With all of this in mind, we cannot predict variables that may cause delays as an application is reviewed. Therefore, it is not possible to give assurances that any applicant will be licensed by a specific date.

April 2014