



American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics, Inc.
Serving the OP&P profession since 1948

ASSISTANT

Candidate Guide

Eligibility Requirements • Application Process



American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics, Inc.

Assistant Candidate Guide

- **Certified Orthotic Assistant**
- **Certified Prosthetic Assistant**
- **Certified Prosthetic Orthotic Assistant**

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Overview

FOUNDED IN 1948 as a not-for-profit organization, the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics Inc., commonly known as ABC, is a credentialing body established by the orthotic and prosthetic profession to identify those individuals who satisfy minimum qualifications to render essential public health services in these disciplines.

Assistant certification in orthotics and/or prosthetics is awarded as an attestation of competency for the public, those who require orthotic and/or prosthetic services and those in other health professions. The awarding of ABC certification provides the certified assistant with an appropriate and meaningful recognition of professional competence.

Assistants whose education and clinical training meet existing ABC requirements may be awarded certification on the premise that they show competency in implementing a treatment plan and managing the total care of patients in need of orthotic and/or prosthetic interventions as prescribed by the supervising certified practitioner. The awarding of these certificates recognizes that the individual has demonstrated a minimum level of competency.

ABC certification is recognized nationally by various state agencies and third-party payers for insurance reimbursements. ABC certification is considered the standard among orthotic, prosthetic, and pedorthic professionals.

ABC certification also is highly regarded by orthopaedic surgeons, physical and occupational therapists, amputee support groups, and other members of the rehabilitation community. ABC certification is nationally and internationally recognized.

Orthotic and Prosthetic Assistants

An ABC Certified Assistant is a healthcare professional who has demonstrated their qualifications and competency through a thorough and detailed attestation process by a supervising ABC certified practitioner. This individual has been specifically trained to manage comprehensive orthotic and/or prosthetic patient care under the supervision of an ABC certified practitioner. The initial evaluation and formulation of the treatment plan is the responsibility of the supervising orthotist and/or prosthetist. The Certified Assistant may fabricate, repair, and maintain orthoses and/or prostheses.

Orthotic care may include, but is not limited to, orthosis design, fabrication, fitting, and modification to treat a neuro-musculoskeletal disorder or acquired condition.

Prosthetic care may include, but is not limited to, prosthesis design, fabrication, fitting, and modification to treat limb loss for purposes of restoring physiological function and cosmesis.

The *Orthotic, Prosthetic and Pedorthic Scope of Practice* can be located on the ABC website at www.abcop.org or by calling the ABC office at 703-836-7114.

Professional Credentials

Assistants aspiring to become an ABC Certified Orthotic Assistant (COA) or an ABC Certified Prosthetic Assistant (CPA) must successfully meet the board-mandated prerequisites for credentialed individuals. These include submitting the appropriate documentation of education and clinical training.

Successful completion of the rigorous requirements is confirmation that you have the education, knowledge, experience, and skills required of an ABC Certified Assistant.

The credential of Certified Prosthetic Orthotic Assistant (CPOA) is conferred to assistants whose responsibilities conform to those of both orthotic and prosthetic assistants and who successfully fulfill all of the requirements in both disciplines.

Governance of ABC

The affairs of ABC are governed by the board of directors. Therefore, the board is responsible for the policies and procedures governing certification, and the board has the authority under its bylaws to modify the rules, regulations, and policies as it deems appropriate. The board is comprised of ABC Certified Orthotists, Prosthetists, Pedorthists, and public representatives.

Proprietary Ownership of ABC Credentials

Certification is a privilege, not a right. The ABC board of directors maintains legal authority to award its certification credentials and may withhold, suspend, or revoke any certification credential in accordance with the established policies, rules, and regulations.

Code of Professional Responsibility

Upon receipt of application, candidates are subject to the ABC *Code of Professional Responsibility*. Adherence to the Code is required throughout the application process and continues once certification is granted.

Eligibility Requirements for Certification

Orthotic and prosthetic assistants may qualify for certification upon completion of specific education and experience requirements established by ABC. The education and experience requirements are detailed below.

Certified Assistant Eligibility Criteria

Education

Pathway 1: Applicants **MUST** possess a high school diploma, GED, or college degree and complete three semester hours each of:

- + Human Anatomy
- + Medical Terminology
- + General/Fundamental Physics

Each course must be from a regionally accredited institution of higher learning. An official college transcript must be included with the application.

Pathway 2: Applicants must possess a high school diploma, GED, or college degree. If applicable, an official college transcript must be included with the application.

Foreign Education

Individuals who have received their high school education, baccalaureate, and/or masters degree in a foreign country must have their education evaluated by the World Education Services (WES), P.O. Box 5087, New York, NY 10274-5087, 212-966-6311, www.wes.org. WES is a professional education evaluation service that equates foreign education to programs in the United States.

Clinical Experience

Pathway 1: Applicants must have one year of clinical experience gained under the supervision of an ABC Certified Orthotist or Prosthetist to coincide with the discipline the applicant is seeking certification. For those seeking dual discipline certification, 18 months of clinical experience in both orthotics and prosthetics is required with a minimum of six months in each discipline.

Pathway 2: Applicants must have two years of clinical experience gained under the supervision of an ABC Certified Orthotist or Prosthetist to coincide with the discipline the applicant is seeking certification. For those applicants seeking dual discipline certification, three years of clinical experience in both orthotics and prosthetics is required, with a minimum of one year in each discipline.

Applicants must include the Assistant Competency Attestation Form verifying the clinical experience signed by the supervising ABC Certified Orthotist or Prosthetist. The supervising ABC Certified Orthotist or Prosthetist must be in good standing with ABC at the time of application submission and during the time frame for which he/she is attesting. This form must be completed by the supervising ABC Certified Orthotist or Prosthetist and must accompany the application in a separate, sealed envelope with the applicant's name. The Assistant Competency Attestation Form is available on the ABC website at www.abcop.org, or by calling the ABC office at 703-836-7114.

The Application Process

All requirements must be satisfied prior to the application deadline. Individuals who have met the eligibility requirements may submit an application for certification.

Applicants for assistant certification who have been evaluated and deemed to have satisfied all eligibility requirements are awarded certification.

General Application Information

1. **Application Forms:** Individuals seeking certification may obtain an application from ABC.

2. Applications are available on the ABC website, www.abcop.org, or by calling the ABC office at 703-836-7114. All applications must be submitted on current forms.

3. **Submission of Application:** Applications must be complete in all respects to be processed and approved. Incomplete applications will not be processed until all required documents and fees are submitted.

4. **Fees and Documentation Required:** (carefully read the application for instructions and requirements)

- The non-refundable application fee
- Completed application form
- Official degree transcript (if applicable)*
- Copy of the high school diploma or GED
- The Assistant Competency Attestation Form

*Sealed, official transcripts may be mailed directly to ABC from the school or you may submit them with your application. Sealed transcripts must not be opened by the applicant.

5. **Application Deadline:** September 30, 2012.

6. **Acceptance of Applications:** Applications must be postmarked by September 30, 2012. No exceptions will be made. Applications postmarked after, or received after, September 30, 2012 will not be processed.

7. **Application Decision:** Applicants will be notified in writing of their certification status approximately four weeks after receipt of the application.

8. **Applicant Ineligibility:** An applicant will be determined ineligible for the following reasons:

- Insufficient documentation to assess eligibility
- Documentation provided does not meet eligibility requirements
- Lack of required fee

If it is determined that the information provided is inadequate to assess eligibility, the applicant will be notified and given a deadline to respond with necessary documentation. If documents are not received by the given deadline, the application will be denied.

9. **Address Changes:** The home and/or email address provided on the application will be used for mailing the letter of eligibility and certification information. Individuals are responsible for informing ABC immediately in writing of any address changes.

10. **Authority:** ABC reserves the right to ask applicants to furnish such information or make such inquiries as may be deemed appropriate to identify the nature and extent of the applicant's education, experience, competency, moral character, and reputation.

11. **Falsification:** Discovery that an applicant has falsified any information on the application shall lead to any or all of the following actions:

- Rejection of the application
- Barring the applicant from future examinations
- Revocation of any existing ABC certification status of the applicant
- Reference of the incident to the Professional Discipline Committee

Any act of falsification shall be made a part of that individual's permanent record.

12. **Application Appeals:** Applicants whose applications have been denied by the Applications Review Committee on the basis that the applicant has failed to demonstrate the minimal eligibility requirements may appeal their denial. Applicants must submit appeals in writing to the ABC board of directors.

Appeals must:

- Be in writing, signed by the applicant and sent to ABC by certified mail
- State the specific reasons for appeal
- Be accompanied by evidence or other pertinent information refuting original findings
- Be postmarked no later than 30 calendar days after the date on the notification letter

Appeals Decision:

Applicants submitting an appeal to the board of directors will receive notification of the decision within 45 days of receipt of the request. The board of directors' decision is final.

Scope of Practice

An ABC Certified Assistant is an individual educated and trained to participate in comprehensive orthotic and/or prosthetic care while under the supervision of an ABC Certified Orthotist and/or Certified Prosthetist.

Certified Assistants, under the supervision of an ABC Certified Orthotist and/or Certified Prosthetist, may perform orthotic and/or prosthetic procedures and related tasks in the management of patient care. The initial evaluation and formulation of the treatment plan is the responsibility of the supervising orthotist and/or prosthetist. The Certified Assistant may also fabricate, repair, and maintain orthoses and/or prostheses. Orthotic care may include, but is not limited to, orthosis design, fabrication, fitting, and modification to treat a neuromusculoskeletal disorder or acquired condition. Prosthetic care may include, but is not limited to,

prosthesis design, fabrication, fitting, and modification to treat limb loss for purposes of restoring physiological function and cosmesis. ABC Certified Assistants may not use their credentials as independent practitioners engaged in patient care.

The Certified Assistant is bound by the ABC *Code of Professional Responsibility*, which is enforced by a Professional Discipline program. The Certified Assistant is obligated to support and conform to professional responsibilities that promote and assure the overall welfare of the patient and the integrity of the profession. The time limited certification expires without compliance with the Mandatory Continuing Education program.

The *Orthotic, Prosthetic and Pedorthic Scope of Practice* can be located on the ABC website at www.abcop.org or by calling the ABC office at 703-836-7114.

Initial Certification

Assistants successfully meeting the eligibility requirements will receive a congratulatory letter, a certificate, a certification number, a sleeve patch, the ABC *Guide to Maintaining Your Certification*, the ABC *Code of Professional*

Responsibility, and information regarding the proper use of the ABC credential and logo. Newly certified assistants will receive an invoice for that year's certification fee at a prorated amount.

Maintaining Certification

All certificatees are required to maintain certification by remitting annual fees, participating in the Mandatory Continuing Education (MCE) program, and adhering to the *Code of Professional Responsibility*.

Professional Conduct

Assistants are required to abide by the *Code of Professional Responsibility* to maintain good standing. The Code was adopted to promote acceptable standards of moral and professional conduct. Certified assistants must abide by the rules and policies of the board and must otherwise conduct themselves in a fashion that brings credit to the profession, including, if necessary, the exposure of illegal, improper, and/or unethical conduct of others that can assist the board in maintaining the standards of the profession. Complaints alleging violations of the Code are referred to the Professional Discipline Committee for review.

Mandatory Continuing Education (MCE)

The following requirements have been established for maintaining continuing education. Please consult the *ABC Guide to Maintaining Your Certification* for additional information on this program. ABC requires that you maintain your certification through appropriate learning activities relevant to your ABC credential. Although ABC will acknowledge content outside of your scope of practice, **you are required to earn the majority of your continuing education credits on content specifically related to your ABC certification.**

Single Discipline Assistants— COA or CPA

- A total of 50 credits must be earned during the 5-year cycle.
- A minimum of 30 credits must be Category I Scientific.
- A maximum of 20 credits may be Business and/or Category II Scientific.
- Business credits can be earned in either Category I or II, but **do not** count toward satisfying the 30 Category I Scientific credits.

Dual Discipline Assistants— CPOA

- A total of 65 credits must be earned during the 5-year cycle.
- A minimum of 45 credits must be Category I Scientific.
- A maximum of 20 credits may be Business and/or Category II Scientific.
- Business credits can be earned in either Category I or II, but **do not** count toward satisfying the 45 Category I Scientific credits.
- When extending your credential from COA or CPA to CPOA, the certification date of your most recent credential will determine your 5-year continuing education cycle. For example, if your orthotic certification was awarded in 2007 and your prosthetic certification was awarded in 2010, the effective date for your 5-year cycle will be 2010.

MCE statements are mailed twice per year. These statements should be filed in a secure place since this information serves as the assistant's official record of recertification. MCE statements are also available online at www.abcop.org.

Failure to Satisfy the Mandatory Continuing Education Requirements

Certified Assistants who fail to satisfy the continuing education requirement within the 5-year cycle are required to complete 30 penalty credits in addition to the number of credits they are deficient. These credits must be earned within the following calendar year. Of the 30 penalty credits, a minimum of 20 must be Category I Scientific.

Failure to comply with the mandatory continuing education requirements by the end of your 5-year MCE cycle will result in suspension for up to one year. During suspension, you are not permitted to use your certification title and number, you will not receive any complimentary publications, nor will you be included in the ABC online directory.

Failure to maintain your certification may also have a serious effect on your facility's accreditation. Only individuals with an active certification can provide direct patient care and/or supervise others in the provision of care. While on suspension, another appropriately certified individual in good standing must sign off on your patient records.

ABC will send you notification of the deficient credits and the impending suspension via certified letter. ABC imposes discipline specific penalty credits if you fail to meet the minimum credit requirements during your 5-year MCE cycle. These

penalty credits are added to the number of credits you are delinquent and the total must be satisfied before suspension will be lifted. You must inform ABC via certified letter within 30 days of your delinquency notification that you intend to earn the deficient and penalty credits within one calendar year. Failure to do so may result in immediate revocation of your certification.

The subsequent 5-year MCE cycle will commence as scheduled, shortening the subsequent cycle by the amount of time it takes you to satisfy the credits. The deficient and penalty credits you earn while on suspension will not be applied to your next 5-year cycle.

Annual Renewal Fees

Certified Assistants must remit annual renewal fees to maintain good standing with ABC. Annual renewal notices are mailed in mid-September and must be paid by December 1. Upon certification, newly certified practitioners will receive an invoice for that year's certification fees at a prorated amount. Subsequent renewal notices will be sent automatically.

Reinstatement of Credential

Once you've satisfied both the penalty and deficient credits, you must remit all delinquent and current year's annual renewal fees in order to regain all rights and benefits to your ABC certification title and number. Subscriptions to the complimentary publications will be renewed as well. You will receive a letter acknowledging your reinstatement along with a new time-limited certificate.

Revocation of Credential

In accordance with ABC's general policies regarding reinstatement, failure to be reinstated during the one-year suspension period will result in revocation of the delinquent certification. Notice of your revocation may be published in the *O&P Almanac* and provided to third party payers.

Reapplication

If your credential is revoked, you may reapply and become recertified upon successful completion of the appropriate re-entry examination. The educational and experiential requirements at the time of reapplication will be waived. Once recertified, you will be provided with a new certification number, certification date, and MCE expiration date.

Leave of Absence Policy

A request for a leave of absence from the profession for not more than two years can be approved by the Continuing Education Committee according to the following criteria:

- A leave of absence will not be granted for more than two years. If you wish to recertify after a leave of absence of more than two years, you must fulfill the ABC reinstatement requirements in effect at the time you return to direct patient care activities.
- During the leave of absence, you may not use your credential for the purpose of direct patient care or facility management. If you are found to be using your credential for either of these purposes, you will be subject to disciplinary action as set forth by the *ABC Code of Professional Responsibility*.
- You must continue to pay annual renewal fees. Your name will appear in the online directory with the modifier (L) designating that you are on a leave of absence.

→ Your 5-year MCE cycle will be extended by the equivalent length of time that you are on leave of absence. It is your responsibility to notify ABC that you wish to reactivate your credential before the two years has expired.

Retired Status

Retired status is granted to those individuals who have retired from practice. The use of the retired credential is prohibited for purposes of professional remuneration or which would be used for the financial and business benefit of an orthotic, prosthetic, or pedorthic facility. You may continue to use your credential designated with an (RET) in circumstances in which you are providing patient care for a humanitarian purpose or on a charitable basis. Retired individuals are not listed in the online directory, do not receive the complimentary publications, and do not pay an annual renewal fee.

Reinstatement Policies

Past-due Individuals

If you do not renew your certification in any given year you will no longer possess the credential and are not permitted to use the ABC credential or logo. Only credential holders in good standing will receive the *O&P Almanac*, *Mark of Merit* newsletter, and be listed in the ABC online directory.

Past-due individuals are subject to the following policy on reinstatement:

- If you have not renewed your credential for a period of one to two years, you may reinstate your original certification by submitting the current year and all past year renewal fees. Please note all fees submitted will be applied to the oldest balance due.
- If you have not renewed your credential for a period of more than two years, you may reinstate your certification only by taking and passing the

appropriate re-entry examinations in addition to paying the current renewal fees. However, you will not need to meet the current educational and experiential requirements. The prevailing fees and available schedule date for the examination will apply.

Upon passing the exam, you will receive a new certification number, certification date, and MCE expiration date.

Retired Individuals

If you have been granted Retired status and wish to reinstate your credential, you are subject to the following policies for reinstatement:

→ To return to active practice before two years, you can send a letter of request to ABC. All previous and current renewal fees must be paid at the time of reinstatement.

→ To return to active practice after two or more years, you must take and pass the appropriate re-entry examination and pay current renewal fees. However, you will not need to meet the current educational and experiential requirements. The prevailing fees and available schedule date for the examination will apply.

Upon passing the exam, you will receive a new certification number, certification date, and MCE expiration date.



American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics, Inc.

330 John Carlyle St., Suite 210

Alexandria, VA 22314

Tel: 703-836-7114

Fax: 703-836-0838

abcop.org