



Preparation guide for the physician credentialing process

Whether you're wrapping up your residency or have been practicing medicine for many years, whenever you start working at a new institution, you must go through a process called credentialing.

Credentialing is the verification of a physician's education, training and experience. It allows patients to trust that they're in good hands and physicians to have trust in their peers. To earn that trust (and make the credentialing process as smooth as possible), a little preparation, precision and patience goes a long way!

Ready, set...go get organized

After you accept a new position, the institution will ask you to complete an extensive application with details about your background and clinical skills, which will be used throughout the credentialing process.

Before you get started, you will want to have all this information organized and at your side, so you can reference it as you fill out the application.

Also, make sure everything in your AMA Physician Profile (commerce.ama-assn.org/amaprofiles) is accurate since the institution may ask the American Medical Association for a copy to verify much of the information you provide.

PRO TIPS

- Store a digital and print copy of all the documents you need for credentialing purposes in a safe place the moment you receive them, so they're always at the ready.
- Keep track of the procedures you've performed throughout your medical career, including any issues that you've had.
- After every career milestone, review your AMA Physician Profile to ensure it is accurate and able to be shared anytime. You don't need to be an AMA member to request a free copy.

Information for your application

- Recent CME credits
- Work history
- Medical staff history
- Clinical privilege history
- Peer references
- Clinical report cards
- Performance reviews
- Case logs (e.g. 1-, 2-, 5-year)
- Liability insurance coverage and claims
- Malpractice claims history



Verified by AMA Physician Profile

- Education
- Graduate medical training
- Licensure (current and historical)
- State and federal sanctions
- Drug Enforcement Administration certificate
- Board certification (e.g. American Board of Medical Specialties member boards)

Ace your application

Organized? Check. AMA Physician Profile reviewed? Check. Now it's time to start filling out your application. However, just like with taking a patient's history, you'll want to get the details just right.

Most importantly, you'll want to be as comprehensive as possible when providing information about your background, education, training, etc. Also, you should complete the entire application and attach all the supporting documents before you submit it.

Be aware that you'll likely have to pay an application fee. While many institutions will reimburse you if you ask them afterwards, we recommend proactively discussing reimbursement in your contract negotiations—to potentially save you time, and money.

PRO TIPS

- If you're unsure whether to disclose something or provide additional documentation—just do it. Incomplete applications are one of the biggest speed bumps in the credentialing process.
- Applications you fill out for HR are rarely used for credentialing, privileging and enrollment.
- If possible, save and print a copy of your completed application for your records before you submit it to the institution.

Be proactive, then very patient

The “credentialing process” is actually made up of three separate processes that only start once you submit your application. These processes can take an institution as long as 90–120 days, so be sure to get started as early as possible.

CREDENTIALING PROCESS



CREDENTIALING

Verifying and accessing a physician's qualifications



PRIVILEGING

Evaluating a physician's credentials and performance to determine the specific services they can perform at the institution



ENROLLMENT

Applying to health insurance plans and networks so a physician can bill and receive payment for the services they perform

The more proactive you are, the sooner institutions can start credentialing, privileging and enrollment. Delays at any point in the process also delay when you can start seeing patients and billing for services.

With all the necessary information at your fingertips, though, you'll be more detailed and more efficient (not to mention cool, calm and collected) in completing your application!

PRO TIPS

- Periodically check in on the status of your application after you submit it.
- If your application shows any gaps of six months or more in your education or professional history, be ready to give reasons for those gaps.

Planning to practice in a different state?

Long before the credentialing process, you must apply for your medical license if you aren't already licensed to practice in that state. We recommend starting the licensing process six months before you start applying for jobs to be safe.

Check out the video “Physician credentialing demystified” at FREIDA.ama-assn.org/video-series to go behind the scenes of the process to discover what happens every step of the way and why credentialing is so important for patients, physicians and health care institutions.

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