

## **AMA response to The Joint Commission principles for users of external credentialing agents and sources regarding the primary source reported data contained in the AMA Physician Masterfile**

As outlined in The Joint Commission (TJC) Accreditation Standards, the AMA Physician Masterfile is deemed an “equivalent source” for physician **medical school** and **postgraduate medical training**.

The AMA Physician Masterfile has been designated by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS®) as an official display agent of ABMS board certification information. Therefore, the AMA Physician Profile is considered a designated “equivalent source” for ABMS board certification in accordance with TJC standards. TJC states that an organization or entity may designate a display agent for its information (as ABMS has done for the AMA Physician Profile). A copy of the official letter from ABMS designating the AMA Physician Profile as an official display agent is available at the end of this document.

The other primary-source-reported information on the AMA Physician Profile (e.g., state licensure, federal DEA registration, etc.) is subject to TJC principles for evaluating an external agent for primary source credentialing information (“external agent principles”). The AMA Physician Masterfile meets and/or exceeds these TJC principles for the additional primary source information on the Profile.

As previously noted, the medical school, postgraduate medical training, and ABMS board certification information on the AMA Physician Profile are not subject to these external agent principles. However, they have been included in the responses to these principles to provide additional information to the user.

Following are the AMA’s responses to these principles regarding use of the AMA Physician Masterfile.

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### *1. The agency makes known to the user the data and information it can provide.*

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#### **AMA Response**

A [sample profile](#) is available publicly on the AMA Credentialing Services website. All physician information on the Profile is from a primary source except current practice data provided by the physician (e.g., self-designated practice specialty, current address, etc.). The sources of these primary data are labeled as follows:

- Current and/or historical medical school
- Current and/or historical postgraduate medical training program accredited by Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)
- Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) applicant number
- Current and historical state license(s), initial year granted, expiration date status, type, indication of sanction(s), and last reported date (date when AMA last received information from the board)
- Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

- National Provider Identifier (NPI) number
- ABMS board certification(s)
- Indication of Medicare/Medicaid sanction(s)
- AMA Physician’s Recognition Award (evidence of CME credits earned at AMA continuing education programs and kept on file at AMA)

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*2. The agency provides documentation to the user describing how its data collection, information development, and verification process(es) are performed.*

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### **AMA Response**

The [AMA Credentialing Services](#) website provides information on how the primary source data in the AMA Physician Masterfile is collected, maintained, and verified. The document is titled [Description of AMA Physician Masterfile Data for AMA Profiles](#) and the webpage is titled [AMA Masterfile Data](#).

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*3. The user is given sufficient, clear information on database functions, including any limitations of the information available from the agency (such as practitioners not included in the database), the timeframe for agency responses to requests for information, and a summary overview of quality control processes related to data integrity, security, transmission accuracy, and technical specifications.*

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### **AMA Response**

The document [Description of AMA Physician Masterfile Data for AMA Profiles](#) and webpage [AMA Masterfile Data](#) describe the practitioner population within the AMA Masterfile to include all doctors of medicine (MDs) in the United States who have completed or are completing requirements to practice medicine and US-trained physicians temporarily overseas. The Masterfile includes AMA members and nonmembers and graduates of international medical schools residing in the United States.

These documents also indicate the inclusion of doctors of osteopathic medicine (DOs) who are members of the AMA, are enrolled in or have completed residency training programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), have been licensed or have had disciplinary actions taken by state licensing agencies, or have specifically requested that they be listed.

While AMA Masterfile data are comprehensive, a limitation does exist regarding state licensure and Medicare/Medicaid sanctions.

AMA Physician Profiles do not display the details of final disciplinary actions relating to physicians, listing only the authority that issued the action. If the AMA has received a final disciplinary action taken by the state licensing board, Medicare/Medicaid, or other Federal Government sources (US military, Veterans Administration, US public health source), users are directed to the site of the organization that

maintains such data, as annotated on the Profile under the Action Notifications header. For example, a licensure action will read, “Please contact...state board. More information may be available.” A similar statement appears if an action has been taken by Medicare/Medicaid or another Federal Government source and directs the user to the appropriate government entity for details.

The AMA’s timeframe for response to a request for information is clearly indicated during the online ordering process. All profile orders are available for download via the online platform [AMA Profiles Hub](#). Delivery begins immediately upon order submission and completes in a matter of minutes.

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*4. The user and agency agree upon the format for transmitting credentials information about an individual from the CVO.*

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#### **AMA Response**

The format for transmission of information is the AMA Physician Profile, based on the AMA Physician Masterfile. The AMA Physician Profile may be ordered and retrieved in PDF format through an approved, password-protected customer account via [AMA Profiles Hub](#) and in XML format via secure and encrypted API transmission. User agrees to such format when ordering and accessing the data in the AMA Profiles Hub. The Profile data is delivered online within minutes.

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*5. The user can easily discern which information transmitted by the CVO is from a primary source and which is not.*

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#### **AMA Response**

All information on the Profile is gathered from the primary source except a few select data elements that a physician provides: name, address, and self-designated practice specialty. All other information on the Profile—such as medical school, graduate medical education, board certification, state licensure, NPI, DEA registration, and alert notifications—are obtained and verified directly from the primary source. On the Profile itself, there is a clear separation of non–primary-sourced data and primary-sourced data that is worded as follows: “All information from this point forward is provided by the primary source.”

A complete list of primary sources is provided in response to Principle 10 as well as on the webpage titled [AMA Masterfile Data](#).

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*6. For information transmitted by the agency that can go out of date (for example, licensure or board certification), the CVO provides the date the information was last updated from the primary source.*

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### **AMA Response**

The Profile provides a last reported date on current and historical medical licensure records, ABMS board certification, NPI records, and DEA registration records. This date indicates when the data was last updated to the AMA.

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*7 & 8. The CVO certifies that the information transmitted to the user accurately represents the information obtained by it, and the user can discern whether the information transmitted by the CVO from a primary source is all the primary source information in the CVO's possession pertinent to a given item or, if not, where additional information can be obtained.*

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### **AMA Response**

The Profile labels what information is from primary sources; however, in the case of disciplinary actions from medical licensing boards, Medicare/Medicaid and other Federal agencies, it also states that additional information, not provided on the Profile, is available from the primary source. These statements will only appear if the AMA has received information of a sanction taken by a licensing board, Medicare/Medicaid, or other Federal Government agencies. The information is communicated on the Profile in statements like the following:

**State Licensure:** “\*\*Please contact the state board regarding the [state name] state medical license. More information may be available.”

**Medicare/Medicaid Sanctions:** “\*\*The US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), in relation to Medicare and Medicaid regulations, has additional information regarding this physician. For details or contact information, please refer to the DHHS website at (<https://oig.hhs.gov>). If you cannot locate the physician on the website lookup, please contact DHHS directly.”

**Other Federal Sanctions:** “\*\*More information about Federal Sanctions may be available. Please contact the AMA Manager of Disciplinary Action Data at (312) 464-5317.”

The AMA certifies that Profile information is accurate as of a certain date (e.g., “last reported” data on state licensure and Federal DEA registration segments). Additional certifications of accuracy are described on the [AMA Masterfile Data](#) webpage. For example, program directors at ACGME-accredited postgraduate medical education programs are asked to verify or update the data on each record as appropriate and add any physicians in their programs whose records are not included. The director

certifies the accuracy of the data and that they are the primary source before uploading the information to the AMA.

Other certifications of accuracy are included on the [AMA Masterfile Data](#) webpage.

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*9. The user can engage the CVO's quality control processes when necessary to resolve concerns about transmission errors, inconsistencies, or other data issues that may be identified from time to time.*

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### **AMA Response**

On the [AMA Masterfile Data](#) webpage, the AMA describes the process of obtaining and maintaining data from medical schools, postgraduate medical training programs, medical licensing agencies, licensure and Federal Government sanctions information, board certification data from ABMS, NPI, NBME, and Federal DEA registration data.

The AMA's commitment to AMA Physician Masterfile data quality is ongoing. The AMA Data Management and Operations Department maintains a comprehensive quality control strategy that utilizes analytical techniques and operations management methodology. Quality control techniques, built into the Department's business processes, are used to identify and correct quality problems of incoming data submitted by data providers and suppliers. Additional quality controls are utilized to monitor, review, verify, and analyze data moving through Departmental business processes. Some of these checks and controls are described throughout the AMA Responses to these 10 principles.

In addition to quality checks and controls, the AMA employs a formal discrepancy tracking system to acknowledge the receipt of any potential discrepancies or omissions uncovered by Profiles customers during the credentials verification process. All reported discrepancies are verified with the primary source(s), the profile is updated, if appropriate, and a new profile is provided back to the user. This process is fully automated through the online platform [AMA Profiles Hub](#), making it easy and efficient for Profile customers to submit any perceived discrepancies on the Profile to the AMA.

Lastly, in an ongoing effort to check physician data quality, the AMA contacts more than 350,000 physicians annually. Physicians are asked to review a copy of their credentials and report all discrepancies to the AMA. All reported discrepancies are re-verified with the primary source, and if appropriate, the physician's record is then updated.

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*10. The user has a formal arrangement with the CVO for communication of any changes in credentialing information.*

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### **AMA Response**

The update schedule for all data in the AMA Physician Masterfile is detailed in the [Description of AMA Physician Masterfile Data for AMA Profiles](#) document. This document is accessible to all current and prospective AMA Profiles users via the [AMA Credentialing Services website](#). A quick view into the

AMA Physician Masterfile operating procedures for data used to support the physician credentialing process is provided in the following table:

<b>Element</b>	<b>Primary Source(s)</b>	<b>Added to File</b>
Birthdate	Medical schools, residency programs	Ongoing
Current and historical medical school and date of graduation	Medical school graduation and matriculation reports	Annually
Current and historical ACGME-approved graduate medical training programs	ACGME — specialty board-approved combined post graduate medical training programs (completed, incomplete, and in progress)	Annually
ABMS® board certification (primary board and sub-board)	American Board of Specialties	Weekly
Current licensure	68 licensing boards	47 boards (monthly) 6 boards (bi-monthly) 10 boards (quarterly) 4 boards (semi-annually) 1 board (3x per year)
Licensure disciplinary actions	Licensing boards	16 boards (monthly) 3 boards (bi-monthly) 14 boards (quarterly) 6 boards (ongoing) 4 boards (semi-annually) 2 boards (semi-monthly)
Federal DEA registration (expiration date, business activity, drug schedule, payment indicator, last reported date)	DEA	Bi-monthly
ECFMG applicant number	ECFMG	Monthly
Name/former name	Various	Ongoing
Physician's Recognition Award (PRA)	AMA	Ongoing
NPI	NPPES	Monthly

Additionally, the AMA offers its Continuous Monitoring Service, in which a Profile user is notified of any changes to the data contained in a physician's Profile for a two-year period. Should a change occur, the user is sent an updated Profile. The following data elements are monitored under the Continuous Monitoring service:

- Medical licensure
- NPI
- State and federal action notifications
- DEA registration
- ABMS board certification
- Medical school
- ACGME-approved medical training

*Updated: Sept. 1, 2021*



# AMERICAN BOARD OF MEDICAL SPECIALTIES®

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**ABMS®**

April 01, 2004

To whom it may concern:

The ABMS® considers the provision of physician specialty board certification data as an important part of its ongoing mission and views the credentialing process and the credentials verification sub-process as a foundational component of patient safety.

Thus, the ABMS® takes the validity, credibility, reliability and integrity of its primary equivalent source data very seriously. The ABMS® carefully reviews what products and organizations will be allowed to distribute ABMS® Board Certification Data based upon concerns for patient safety, and compliance with JCAHO, NCQA and URAC accreditation requirements.

Effective 01 April, 2004, The **American Medical Association**, an Official Licensee of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) is hereby designated as an **Official ABMS Display Agent** to serve as one of the providers of primary source equivalent ABMS® Specialty Board Certification Data when such Data is delivered through the following AMA authorized products and services and no others:

### **AMA E-Physician Profile**

**AMA Masterfile** (for uses approved in the  
ABMS/AMA License Agreement)

Designation as an ABMS® Display Agent is conferred on a product or application specific (not organizational) basis.

ABMS® Official Display Agents agree to abide by guidelines contained in their respective licensing agreements with ABMS, which are intended to protect the security and quality of data. ABMS® Board Certification Data may be considered as primary source verified only if sourced from specific products and services approved for Official Display Agent status by ABMS. These products vary in format; features, functionality, intended application and data update frequency. Users of these products should determine the most appropriate sources for their unique needs.



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While the ABMS® Data might still be sourced from other sources that do not bear Official Display Agent designation, the ABMS® is not currently able to validate or control (according to the minimum mechanisms deemed necessary) the processes and data security and integrity as they pertain to the ABMS®'s Data reliability standards.

Thus, the ABMS® recommends that persons or entities using ABMS® Data for any purpose, including particularly for physician credentialing and privileging purposes, rely on products and services from the ABMS® or Official ABMS® Licensees bearing the designation of "Official ABMS® Display Agent."

The ABMS® shall promulgate an updated list of Official Display Agents to accrediting bodies as changes are made to that list.

Thank you for supporting the promotion of quality healthcare in the United States.

Stephen H. Miller, MD, MPH  
Executive Vice President

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Cc: JCAHO, URAC, NCQA

Inquiries regarding Official ABMS® Display Agent Status and other business related questions may be directed to:

Robert G. Nelson, MBA  
Director of Business Development  
The American Board of Medical Specialties

[rmelson@abms.org](mailto:rmelson@abms.org)  
847 491 9091 (x3005)

<http://www.abms.org>



July 26, 2016

Tammy Weaver  
Director Database Products and Services  
American Medical Association  
330 North Wabash Avenue, Suite 39300  
Chicago, IL 60611-5885

Dear Tammy,

NCQA acknowledges that the American Medical Association uses NCQA-approved sources to verify credentialing information and it maintains this information in the Physician Masterfile. The AMA Physician Masterfile is an NCQA-approved source for verification of:

- Graduation from Medical School
- Completion of Residency
- Board Certification
- DEA Status
- Medicare and Medicaid Sanctions (effective 7/1/16)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Patrick Dahill'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrick Dahill  
Assistant Vice President, Accreditation & Measures Policy



Accreditation Association  
for Ambulatory Health Care, Inc.

November 18, 2004

To AAAHC-accredited organizations:

Effective March 1, 2005, Appendix J of the *Accreditation Handbook for Ambulatory Health Care*, published by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC) is revised to list the AMA Physician Master Profile as a primary source for verification of a physician's credentials. The Master Profile is accepted for verification of medical school, residency training, board certification, DEA status and Medicare/Medicaid sanctions.

AAAHC is a leading accrediting body for ambulatory health care, conducting surveys of ambulatory surgery centers, physician office practices, endoscopy centers, student health centers, managed care entities and other health care organizations. For more information on AAAHC, please visit our web at [www.aaahc.org](http://www.aaahc.org).

Best regards,

Adrian Hochstadt  
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