

TENNESSEE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1: How do I renew my medical license?

A: To renew online, please visit <https://apps.tn.gov/hlrs/>.

To renew using the paper renewal application you receive in the mail, please complete the paper renewal application and return it along with the required renewal fee to the address specified on the renewal notice. If you lose the paper application you received in the mail, you can print a renewal application (that is not profession-specific) form [here](#).

Approximately forty-five (45) days in advance of your expiration date, you will receive a paper or electronic renewal notice notifying you of your upcoming expiration. Individuals who are “opted in” to receive electronic notifications from our office will receive the notification at the email address you provided on your application. Licensees who did not opt in will receive a paper renewal notice.

Q: I am trying to renew my medical license online, but I’m getting an error message. Help!

A: There are several reasons you may not be able to renew your license online:

1. You are trying to renew your license too far in advance of your expiration date.
2. You have an unpaid professional privilege tax.

Q: How do I complete the background check process and what is my OCA number?

A: Follow [this link](#) for instructions on how to complete your background check.

For applicants living out of state, please note that results are typically received more fingerprints when fingerprints are electronically scanned; therefore, if you are going to be in Tennessee anytime during the application process, it may be to your benefit to schedule a fingerprint scan rather than submitting a fingerprint card.

Q: I would prefer to receive all information from the Board electronically. Can I change my contact preferences?

A: Yes, you can “opt in” to receive all information from the Board electronically by .

Even if you opt in, you must maintain a current mailing and practice address on file with the Board at all times. You are required to notify the Board of any change to the information maintained in your licensure file within thirty (30) days of any such change.

Q: I am due to renew my medical license, where do I send proof of my continuing education?

A: Do not send proof of your continuing education with your renewal. The Board enforces its CME requirements through a random audit of licensees who have renewed their medical license. If you are randomly selected for audit, you will be notified in the month following the month you renewed your medical license. At that time, you will be required to submit proof of all continuing education earned in two calendar years preceding the year you were required to renew your medical license.

Q: How many total hours of continuing medical education am I required to complete each year?

A: All medical doctors must complete forty (40) hours in the two calendar years preceding the year of license renewal. Unless exempted by statute, two (2) of the forty (40) required hours must relate to controlled substance prescribing, which must include instruction in the Department's treatment guidelines on opioids, benzodiazepines, barbiturates and carisoprodol and may include instruction on topics such as medicine addiction, risk management tools and other topics approved by the Board.

Example: If your medical license is renewed in October of 2017, forty hours of CME must be completed between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2016.

You may complete all or none of your required hours in a single year within your two year CME cycle, so long as forty total hours are completed within the appropriate two year timeframe.

For more information on the Board's CME requirements, please review the [Board's CME FAQs](#) and [Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 0880-02-.19](#).

Q: What happens if I fail to obtain all required CME?

A: The Board of Medical Examiners has adopted a policy to address a licensee's failure to obtain the requisite number of CME hours. That policy (available here: http://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/health/attachments/ME_CE_Policy_1011.pdf) imposes the following penalties on the provider:

- i. The physician must pay a civil penalty in the amount of one hundred dollars (\$100) for each hour of Category I CME that he or she is deficient;
- ii. The physician must make up the amount of CME hours that he or she is deficient, in addition to completing the hours required for the current year; and
- iii. The physician must complete ten penalty hours which must be completed in addition to making up the physician's deficient hours as well as any hours due during the current renewal timeframe.

These penalties will be imposed through an Agreed Citation, which will be posted to the Board's monthly disciplinary action report and linked to the physician's verification

page. A physician's failure to comply with the policy may result in further disciplinary action.

Q: Can my application be expedited if I have an employment opportunity pending the approval of my application?

A: No. Applications are reviewed and considered in the order in which they are received. To emphasize this point, the application instructions recommend that you do not make arrangements to accept employment to practice in Tennessee prior to being issued a license number. Requesting documents from outside organizations or others could be done prior to submitting your application which would assist in your file being promptly complete.

Q: I am applying for hospital privileges or a license in another state and I am required to submit verification of my Tennessee medical license. How do I obtain a Tennessee license verification?

A: You may obtain a verification of your Tennessee medical license through our online verification. Simply visit <https://apps.health.tn.gov/Licensure/default.aspx> and enter your information. Your practitioner profile and licensure information will appear on the next screen. In the bottom right hand corner of the box containing your information you will see a link that says "Certification letter". That letter is a licensure verification and should be considered primary source verified.

Q: How do I file a complaint against a physician?

A: If you believe a practitioner's performance or behavior is unprofessional, unlawful or unacceptable, you may file a complaint through the Health Related Boards' Office of Investigations. You can call that office directly at 1-800-852-2187 or you can access the Allegation Report form through the Office of Investigation webpage:

For more information on the complaint process, including whether anonymous complaints may be filed, please visit:

Q: I have read that Tennessee is a "Compact" state. How do I obtain a Tennessee medical license through the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact?

A: On May 11, 2017, Governor Haslam signed Public Chapter 365 making Tennessee the 19th state to join the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact. Although enacted, this legislation will not become effective until January 1, 2019, which means that you cannot, at this time, obtain a Tennessee medical license through the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact.

For general information regarding the Compact and how it works, please visit: <http://www.imlcc.org/>

Q: Do I have to pay the professional privilege tax?

A: Yes, pursuant to TCA § 67-4-1702(a)(4)(G), there is a \$400 tax levied on the privilege of engaging in the practice of medicine in Tennessee. The tax is levied by the Tennessee Department of Revenue; the Tennessee Department of Health and your licensing board do not collect or assess the tax nor do we benefit from the revenue. You can pay your Professional Privilege Tax through the Department of Revenue's [website](#).

Q: What happens if I don't pay the professional privilege tax?

A: If you do not pay the professional privilege tax, you will not be allowed to renew your medical license. Even if you submit a license renewal, it will not be processed until your professional privilege tax is paid and a tax clearance letter is received in the Board's administrative office. Tax clearance letters can be obtained from the Department of Revenue once a past due professional privilege tax is paid. **Please note, if non-payment of your professional privilege tax prevents you from timely renewing your medical license, you will be assessed a \$200 late renewal fee.**

There may be other financial consequences which result from nonpayment of your professional privilege tax. For more information, please contact the Tennessee Department of Revenue.

Q: If I inactivate or retire my license, do I have to continue paying the professional privilege tax and completing continuing medical education?

A: No, you do not. However, should you seek to reinstate your license at a later date, the Board may request evidence of your continued clinical competency. Depending on the length of time that you have been out of practice,

Q: I am struggling with an illness or impairment (such as substance use disorder, anxiety, depression, etc.) that I fear may be or may soon be impeding my practice of medicine. Can I get help from a trusted, confidential source?

A: Yes, if you are struggling and need assistance, please contact the Tennessee Medical Foundation (TMF) today. The TMF conducts Tennessee's Peer Assistance Program and exists to assist practitioners with chemical dependency, psychological and physiological conditions that may impair their ability to safely practice medicine. Your contact with the TMF is not reported to the Board and does not become a part of your licensure file. The TMF will consult with you regarding your specific concerns and/or condition(s) and will likely recommend that you submit to an evaluation. That evaluation is intended to determine a diagnosis and if indicated, a treatment plan. This entire process can be carried out confidentially.

Tennessee Medical Foundation
(615) 467-6411
5141 Virginia Way, Suite 110
Brentwood, TN 37027

Q: I suspect that a physician in my life (spouse, friend, colleague, co-worker) may be struggling with an illness or impairment (such as substance use disorder, anxiety, depression, etc.) that may be or may soon be impeding his or her practice of medicine. How can I help?

A: Yes, if you are the spouse, friend, colleague or otherwise significant other of a physician that is struggling with an illness please contact the Tennessee Medical Foundation (TMF) to get assistance in how best to handle this problem. It is imperative that this occur as soon as it is realized the physician is struggling so the safety and effectiveness of the medical care that he or she is providing is not compromised. Treating illness early in the process provides the best chance for a good result. Whereas any delay in treatment allows overt impairment to manifest in the physician's work, putting all at risk. Referral of the physician to the TMF is not reported to the Board unless patient harm has occurred. The TMF will do an initial assessment of the physician and will likely recommend a full evaluation which is intended to determine a diagnosis and if indicated a treatment plan. This entire process can be confidential.

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Q: Do I have to register in the CSMD?

A: If you provide patient care to patients in Tennessee by prescribing or dispensing controlled substances on more than fifteen (15) days in a calendar year, you must register in the CSMD. To register in the CSMD, go to www.tncsmd.com and click on "Register" to begin the registration process. Completion of the registration process will require specific identifying elements. Once registration is complete and approved, you will receive an email with your username and temporary password.

Q: May I work while waiting for my license/certificate to be ratified by the board?

A: Yes, if you have been issued a license/certificate number, you are allowed to commence practice in Tennessee. If your license/certificate is not ratified by the Board you will be promptly notified to suspend your practice in Tennessee and provided with an explanation as to why your license/certificate was not ratified.

Q: Does the Board accept FCVS?

A: Yes, if you choose to have your FCVS packet sent to our office, the following items should be included and will be marked as received:

1. Medical school transcript
2. Any post-graduate training verified
3. Examination scores
4. Proof of citizenship (so long as the document is not expired).

Q: I allowed my Tennessee medical license to lapse. How do I reactivate my license?

A: If have an expired Tennessee medical license and you wish to return to practice in Tennessee, you must submit an application for reinstatement. That application is available here:

If your application reveals that you have been out of clinical practice for more than two years you will be subjected to the Board's reentry process. A diagram illustrating the reentry process is available here.

http://tn.gov/assets/entities/health/attachments/Reentry_Diagram_FINAL_2.pdf The Board has also published a "Reentry Report" which seeks to educate physicians who are considering a departure from clinical practice on the pathway to reinstatement of medical licensure. That Report is available here:

http://tn.gov/assets/entities/health/attachments/FINAL_Reentry_report.pdf

Q: I practice administrative, rather than clinical, medicine. Does the Board issue administrative licenses?

A: Yes, recent legislation authorizes the Board to issue limited licenses to physicians who have been out of clinical practice for an extended period of time or who have been, or are at the time of their application, engaged exclusively in administrative medicine. See Tenn. Code Ann. 63-6-207(h). Administrative medicine licenses are issue to candidates who meet all qualifications for medical licensure, but who have been out of clinical practice for more than two years and who 1) acknowledge, in writing, that they wish to practice administrative medicine only; and 2) agree to the issuance of such limited license. For more information on the Board's administrative medicine license type, visit the Board's "Policy Regarding Administrative Practice Licenses". http://tn.gov/assets/entities/health/attachments/Admin_License_Policy.pdf

Q: I supervise APRNs and/or PAs. What administrative responsibilities do I have?

A: First, you must jointly develop protocols with your supervisee. The protocols must satisfy the following requirements:

- 1) It must be reviewed and updated biennially;
- 2) It must cover the applicable standard of care;
- 3) It must be maintained at the practice site;
- 4) It must be made available to the Department of Health upon request;
- 5) It must specify the classes of drugs that may be prescribed by the PA/APRN; and
- 6) It must be specific to the population seen.

You must also complete and sign the Attachment 4 and 5 if you are supervising a PA, or a Notice and Formulary if you are supervising an APRN. These documents identify you as the supervising physician and specify the area in which the PA or APRN will be practicing, as well as the bounds of the supervisee's prescribing authority. If your supervisee will be prescribing controlled substances and is registered in the Controlled Substance

Monitoring Database (CSMD), you must also confirm your supervisory relationship in the CSMD. Supervisees identify their supervisors in the CSMD by entering the supervisors' driver's license number. The physician to whom the driver's license number belongs will be notified at the time of their next log-in to the CSMD that there are supervisees waiting approval. From the "My Account" screen, the physician can view and approve all pending relationships. If the supervisory relationship is terminated, the physician or PA/APRN should update the CSMD by revoking the relationship from the "My Account" page. For more information on how to update the CSMD, please visit the CSMD FAQ's or the CSMD Supervisory Relationship Instructions.

Q: Can I supervise an APRN and/or PA's prescribing of controlled substances if I myself do not have a DEA registration.

A: No, you may not delegate authority that you yourself do not have.

Q: How do I check the status of my license application?

A: You may confirm that your application is in progress through our license verification page:

The Board's administrative staff makes every effort to keep applicants apprised of their application status. This includes an effort to send deficiency letters to applicants every couple of weeks. Frequent calls and emails to our office for license status updates interrupt our administrators' work processes and reduce the amount of time available to review applications and correspond with applicants regarding application deficiencies.

Q: How long will it take for my application to be approved and my Tennessee medical license to be issued?

A: The application process varies from applicant to applicant. Once a file is deemed complete by the Board administrator, the Board's medical director will review the application to determine 1) whether the application is complete and can be approved, 2) whether additional information is needed in order for a licensure decision to be made, or 3) whether the applicant needs to appear before the Board for an interview. An application is not complete unless and until every question in the application has been answered and every supporting document has been provided.

Because some documents must be received directly from the primary source (i.e., medical school transcripts, USMLE scores, verification of postgraduate training, etc.), you may think your application is complete because you have provided all the information you are responsible for providing, but another party may not have submitted a supporting document. Before calling our office to check the status of a document, please call the primary source to confirm when the document was sent, where the document was sent, and by what method.

Following these tips may result in a slightly quicker processing time for your application:

1. **Apply online.** Applying online reduces the application processing time in several important ways: 1) the online application, unlike our paper application, does not have to be keyed into our system once it arrives in our office; 2) because all required questions must be completed before your online application can be submitted, online applications tend to arrive more complete and in better form than paper applications; 3) the online application is submitted in a single image, which is printed as a single document. That means there are fewer individual documents making up your application, which means a diminished likelihood that your documents supporting your application will be separated from your application during the application process.
2. **Do not call our office to check the status of your application.** Calls to our office for license status updates interrupt our administrator's work processes and reduce the amount of time available to review applications and correspond with applicants regarding application deficiencies. We strive to send deficiency notices every few weeks. Please rely on that notice for your status update.
3. **Complete the application in its entirety; answering every question and providing every document requested.** You must answer every single question on the application. If you do not answer a question on the application, you will be required to resubmit that page of the application. If you answer yes to any of the competency questions, you must provide an explanation and any supporting court or other legal documents.
4. **Complete your criminal background check before or at the time of your application.** Follow [this link](#) for instructions on how to complete your background check.
5. **Request all documents supporting your application from the primary source at the same time or before you submit your application.** Not infrequently, an applicant has submitted all documents they can personally submit long before letters of recommendation, medical school transcripts, examination scores or verification of postgraduate training arrive in our office and join the file. This can be frustrating to applicants. If you receive a deficiency letter or email that specifies that your application is missing a document that must be provided by another party, please contact that party directly to determine when the document was sent, where it was sent and by what method.

Q: I received a letter from the Board's administrative office stating that my application has been initially approved. What does that mean?

A: Once the Board administrator determines that an application is complete it will be reviewed by the Board's medical consultant. This final review process may take up to 2-3 weeks. You will be notified if further documentation is needed for a final determination to be. If you are granted licensure approval a formal letter will be mailed notifying you and you can confirm your status through [licensure verification](#).

Q: I no longer wish to practice medicine in Tennessee. Can I inactivate my license?

A: Yes, if you will continue to practice medicine outside the state of Tennessee, you may inactivate your license. The cost to inactivate your license is \$50.

Q: I am retiring from the practice of medicine. What should I do?

A: You may retire your medical license with the submission of an affidavit of retirement. You may access the affidavit here: <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/PH-3460.pdf>. There is no fee to retire your license; however, should you seek to reinstate your license at a later date, the Board may require that you submit evidence that you have maintained your clinical competency. If you are retired from clinical practice for more than two years, you will be subjected to the Board's reentry policy.

A diagram illustrating the reentry process is available here.

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