



Joint Commission acceptance of AMA Physician Masterfile data

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 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 Joint Commission standards. The Joint Commission states that an organization or entity may designate a display agent for their 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 on the AMA Profile Service website (ama-assn.org/go/amaprofiles).

The other primary source reported information on the AMA Physician Profile (e.g. state licensure, federal DEA registration, etc.) are subject to the Joint Commission principles for evaluating an external agent for primary source credentialing information. The AMA Physician Masterfile meets these Joint Commission principles for the additional primary source information on the Profile.

As noted above, 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, we have included them 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.

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

AMA Response

A sample profile is provided to each user prior to their setting up an account with the AMA. 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 post graduate medical training program accredited by Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)
- National Board of Medical Examination certification year (NBME)
- 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)

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

AMA Response

Two documents posted on the AMA Profile Service website provide information of how the primary source data in the AMA Physician Masterfile is collected, maintained, and verified. These documents are called *Description of AMA Physician Masterfile data* and *How AMA Physician Masterfile data is collected, verified and maintained*.

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 the agency responses to requests for information, and a summary overview of quality control processes related to data integrity, security, transmission accuracy, and technical specifications.

AMA Response

The documents *Description of AMA Physician Masterfile data for AMA Profiles* and *How AMA Physician Masterfile data is collected, verified and maintained* describe the practitioner population on the AMA Masterfile to include all doctors of medicine (MDs) in the US who have completed or are completing requirements to practice medicine and on US trained physicians temporarily overseas. The file includes both members and nonmembers of the Association and graduates of international medical schools residing in the US.

These documents also indicate the inclusion of doctors of osteopathic medicine (DOs) who are members of the AMA, enrolled in or 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.

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), it will be 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 request for information is clearly indicated during the online ordering process for Profiles as follows:

- Mail order — delivered in 2 weeks or less (first class mail)
- Online order — delivered in less than one hour

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

AMA Response

The format for transmission of information is the AMA Physician Profile, based on the AMA Physician Masterfile. All information on the Masterfile has been obtained or verified through those institutional sources that confer credentials. Physicians provide the current practice data, such as office address. The AMA Physician Profile may be ordered and retrieved through an approved, password protected customer account via the AMA Profile Service website. The Profile data is delivered online within minutes.

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

AMA Response

All information on the Profile is gathered from the primary source except a few selected 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 and DEA Registration are obtained and verified directly from the primary source. A complete list of primary sources is provided in the *How AMA Physician Masterfile data is collected, verified and maintained* document.

The state licensing boards and Federal Government will have more information on sanctioned physicians than is transmitted to the AMA. However, if, and only if, the AMA is aware that additional information may be available, such as final action taken by a state medical board, a statement will appear on the Profile, directing the user to contact the licensing board or Federal Government source directly for information. Examples of such statements are listed in AMA's response to principle #7.

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.

AMA Response

The Profile provides the "last reported" date on all current and historical state licensure segments. The vast majority of states provide information on the AMA on a monthly basis.

For ABMS board certification information, in addition to the "last reported" date, the Profile provides the following:

- Primary board, effective date (if applicable) re-verification date for Maintenance of Certification, expiration date or revoked date
- Sub-certification, effective date (if applicable) re-verification date for Maintenance of Certification, expiration date or revoked date.

For Federal DEA registration information the Profile provides the "last reported" date to indicate when it was last updated to the AMA.

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.

AMA Response

The Profile labels what information is from primary sources but, in the case of state licensure, Medicare/Medicaid and other Federal disciplinary actions, 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) has additional information regarding this physician in relation to Medicare and Medicaid regulations. 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 regarding federal sanctions may be available, please contact [contact information for the source – US military, Veterans Administration].

The AMA certifies that the 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 in the *How AMA Physician Masterfile data is collected, verified and maintained* document. For example, program directors at ACGME accredited post-graduate 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 downloading the information to the AMA.

Other certifications of accuracy are included in the *How AMA Physician Masterfile data is collected, verified and maintained* document.

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.

AMA Response

In the *How AMA Physician Masterfile data is collected, verified and maintained* document, the AMA describes the process of obtaining and maintaining data from medical schools, post graduate medical training programs, state licensing agencies, licensure and Federal Government sanctions information, board certification data from ABMS, NBME and Federal DEA registration data.

More specific quality control documentation on methods of data acquisition and maintenance are available upon request. The AMA maintains a formal discrepancy tracking system to better serve profile users. Profile users are encouraged to formally report any discrepancies noted on the profile during their credentialing process(es). All reported discrepancies are verified with the primary source(s) and the profile is updated, if appropriate, and a new profile is provided back to the user. This process is fully automated through the AMA Profile Service web site and makes it easy and efficient for Profile customers to submit any perceived discrepancies on the Profile to the AMA.

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

AMA Response

Through the *Description of AMA Physician Masterfile data for AMA Profiles* document, the update schedule for all data on the AMA Physician Masterfile is detailed. This document is provided to all users of the AMA Physician Profile.

The AMA also offers a “sanction email notification” free of charge to AMA Physician Profile customers. A “sanction email notification” is generated when the AMA is informed of a new sanction taken by one of the state licensing boards or federal government (Medicare/Medicaid, DEA).

On a monthly basis the AMA will take the new physician sanctions it has received and check all Profile orders placed in the preceding two years. Profile customers who have ordered Profiles on one of these newly sanctioned physicians will be notified by email that an action has been received for this physician and given the opportunity to order a new updated Profile.

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.

AMA Physician Masterfile operating procedures for data used to support the physician credentialing process

Element	Primary source(s)	Added to file	Quality checks
Birthdate	Medical schools, residency programs	Ongoing	Age>100 in practice Grad yr < DOB
Birthdate	Medical schools, residency programs	Ongoing	Periodic—research missing birthdate values
Current and historical medical school and date of graduation	Medical school graduation and matriculation reports	Annually	Info received from primary source; invariant elements which require no QA
Current and historical ACGME approved graduate medical education programs	ACGME – specialty board-approved combined post graduate medical training programs (completed, incomplete, and in progress)	Annually	Intense scrutiny during update cycle. Weekly audit generated year-round.
ABMS® board certification (primary board and sub-board)	American Board of Medical Specialties	Monthly	Monthly audit
Current licensure	67 licensing boards	40 boards (monthly) 2 boards (bi-monthly) 16 boards (quarterly) 9 boards (2x monthly)	Ongoing audits based on reporting period per state

Licensure disciplinary actions	Licensing boards	Monthly	Semi-annual audit
Federal DEA registration (expiration date, schedule, last reported date)	DEA through NTIS	Monthly	Audited as processed
National Board of Medical Examiners certification year	NBME	Annually	Audits at time of update (invariant element)
ECFMG applicant number	ECFMG	Annually	The Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) applicant identification number does imply current ECFMG certification status. Contact the ECFMG certification verification service in writing at P.O Box 13679, Philadelphia, PA to verify ECFMG status.
Name/former name	Various	Ongoing	Ongoing checks for changes/variations
Physician's Recognition Award (PRA)	AMA	Ongoing	Ongoing audits

The American Medical Association's commitment to Physician Masterfile data quality is ongoing. The AMA Division of Survey and Data Resources maintains a comprehensive quality control strategy that utilizes analytical techniques and operations management methodology. Quality control techniques, built into the Division'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 Divisional business processes. Some of these checks/controls are shown above.

In addition to quality checks and control, the AMA implemented a formal discrepancy tracking system to acknowledge the receipt of any discrepancies or omissions uncovered during the credentials verification process.

Lastly, in an ongoing effort to check physician data quality, a Census of Physicians is mailed to as many as 225,000-250,000 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.



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.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adrian Hochstadt".

Adrian Hochstadt
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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:

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