

Differences between subspecialty certification and focused practice designation *Updated January 2021*

Subspecialty certification relates to a specific component of a specialty to which a practicing physician or medical specialist may devote a significant portion of time. Practice in the subspecialty follows special educational experience – an ACGME-accredited training program of at least one (1) year in duration – in addition to that required for general certification. Focused practice recognizes areas of practice within existing specialties and subspecialties that either evolve as diplomates progress throughout their professional careers or emerge as medicine changes due to advances in medical knowledge. These areas are more limited in scope than those covered by subspecialty designation or may be procedural but without the extensive scientific, clinical, and organizational underpinnings of a separate subspecialty.

	SUBSPECIALTY CERTIFICATION	FOCUSED PRACTICE DESIGNATION
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The status granted by a Member Board to a physician for successfully completing and maintaining the Member Board requirements for the subspecialty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The designation granted by a Member Board to a physician who demonstrates additional expertise and continued focus in a particular area of a specialty or subspecialty.
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes an identifiable component of a specialty to which a practicing physician or medical specialist may devote a significant portion of time Incorporates specific and identifiable body of knowledge that may include certain procedural skills or practice modes but must not be limited only to training in a technical skill. Requires additional fellowship training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes areas of practice within existing specialties and subspecialties that either evolve as diplomates progress throughout their professional careers or emerge as medicine changes due to advances in medical knowledge, are more limited in scope than those covered by subspecialty designation or may be procedural but without the extensive scientific, clinical, and organizational underpinnings of a separate subspecialty. Expertise in these areas is gained through clinical experience and may include formal training.
Eligibility	Initial certification in a subspecialty requires physicians to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current unrestricted license. Certification in a specialty of a Member Board. At least one (1) year of ACGME-accredited fellowship training. 	Focused practice designation requires physicians to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active specialty/subspecialty certificate. Meet continuing certification requirements. Expertise gained through clinical experience, which may include formal training.
Member Board Assessment	Initial certification examination and other assessment(s) as defined by the Member Board.	Member Board-based assessment.
Continuing Certification (MOC)	Board-specified; covering range of the subspecialty.	Board-specified; may be tailored to area of focused practice; includes maintaining the specialty/subspecialty certification.
Reporting	Reported as a subspecialty certificate.	Reported as a designation of focused practice.
Co-sponsorship	Scope of practice does not vary based on specialty of physician.	Scope of practice may vary based on specialty or subspecialty certification.