



FEDERATION OF STATE MEDICAL BOARDS
OF THE UNITED STATES, INC.

MEMORANDUM

September 25, 2002

To : FSMB Member Board
Executive Directors, Presidents and Chairs

From: Tim Knetler,
Assistant Vice President – Member Support Services

Re: State Approaches for Utilizing Federation Credentials Verification Service
(FCVS)

Several member boards have asked for information about the process used by medical boards that require or otherwise encourage applicants for licensure (physicians and physician assistants) to utilize the Federation Credentials Verification Service (FCVS) for primary source verification of core credentials¹. In response, the Federation has identified three approaches used by boards currently “requiring” or “accepting” FCVS credentials verification: 1) board policy, 2) regulation, and 3) statute. At this time, six (6) medical boards “require” FCVS verification and an additional forty-seven (47) “accept” FCVS physician information profiles as meeting requirements for primary source verification of core credentials. In addition, beginning in December 2002, the New York State Board for Medicine will require most international graduates to use FCVS. Of the states that “require” FCVS verification, one (1) did so by statute, four (4) promulgated regulations, and one (1) initiated the change through board policy (also NY). In general, medical boards that “accept” FCVS have done so through board policy.

Advantages of FCVS

FCVS provides primary source verification of core credentials based on best practices of state medical boards. Because FCVS was designed by a workgroup comprised of state medical board representatives who were keenly sensitive to the needs of state medical boards, the service places a high emphasis on quality and thoroughness. State medical boards that use FCVS for verification of core credentials can focus their staff resources on more thorough evaluation of credentials that are dynamic and may be more indicative of a physician’s fitness to practice.

¹ Core credentials include identity; medical education; postgraduate training, examination; board action history, and ECFMG certification, if applicable.

As the physician workforce becomes more mobile, FCVS offers the opportunity to improve license portability. Physicians seeking licensure in additional jurisdictions can have their requests for subsequent physician profiles fulfilled within one week. In addition, FCVS will soon have a credentialing application available online which will further decrease processing time and increase convenience for physician applicants. We encourage you to contact requiring states directly if you have questions about FCVS services (ME-M, OH, RI, NH, UT-M and NV Osteo).

Requiring vs. Accepting

Boards that “accept” FCVS agree to accept core credentials verified by FCVS to establish identity, medical education, postgraduate training, examinations and board action history, and ECFMG certification, if applicable, in lieu of the board having to verify that information from the original source or requiring the physician to submit similar documentation. Boards that “require” FCVS require all new license applicants to have their core credentials verified by FCVS and forwarded to the board as a part of the licensure application process. The Federation strongly encourages member boards to require FCVS.

Policy Options

Of the three options for accepting or requiring FCVS, initiating the change through board policy is typically the easiest approach, however, each individual board must determine the appropriate method based on the political/regulatory environment within their state. The following are examples of how states have used each option.

Board Policy

The Maine Board of Licensure in Medicine elected to implement its FCVS requirement through board policy, specifically by proposing and adopting a board resolution that all licensure applicants be required to submit their core credentials to FCVS for verification. While board policy may be the simplest way to require FCVS, it does not have the full legal effect of statute or regulation.

Regulation

The State Medical Board of Ohio, the Rhode Island Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline, the Nevada State Board of Osteopathic Medicine and the Utah Physicians Licensing Board chose to require FCVS verification by promulgating regulations that amended the states’ administrative code. The process of promulgating regulations requires the medical board to publish the proposed regulation in the state register with provisions for public comment and possibly a hearing. The Ohio Board was able to complete this process within five months. Language contained in regulation is typically similar to language used for legislative enactment (see model language below).

Statute

In 1997, the New Hampshire Board of Medicine supported a statutory change in its medical licensure process to require all new license applicants to submit their core credentials to FCVS for verification. Subsequently, legislation was introduced to amend the Medical Practice Act to include a definition of FCVS and an explanation of the verification process. Parameters for use were also included in the legislation. The legislation clearly specified what information was to be submitted to FCVS for verification. Enactment of the change was approved by the legislature and signed by the Governor.

Initiating such a change through the legislative process can be tedious and unpredictable. For example, in 2002, the Florida Board of Medicine requested introduction of legislation to require FCVS. The requiring language was included in a multi-purpose bill, which contained several unrelated statutory changes. The original bill became bogged down by legislative deadlines and opposition to other provisions in the bill. In an attempt to salvage the issue, the FCVS language was attached to a different bill, which was also unsuccessful. The Board intends to pursue legislation enactment again in 2003.

Other Options

Other state medical boards have opted to “strongly encourage” applicants for licensure to utilize FCVS. For example, the New York State Board of Medicine and the Illinois Medical Licensing Board have added language to their license applications strongly encouraging applicants to utilize FCVS. In New York, this action alone has significantly increased the number of license applicants using FCVS.

Model Language

State medical boards intending to require FCVS verification by means of statute or regulation should address the following issues (specific language may vary by state):

- Definition of Federation Credentials Verification Service:

Federation Credentials Verification Service (FCVS) is a permanent, central repository of core credential documents that have been verified through primary sources.

- Requiring language

All applications for initial physician (physician assistant) licensure must include a completed profile from the Federation of State Medical Boards Credentials Verification Service showing verification of core credentials, including, at a minimum:

- Identity
- Medical Education
- Postgraduate training
- Examination history
- Board action history
- ECFMG Certification, if applicable

Effective <date>, the board will only consider applications for initial licensure which are supported by FCVS verification.²

- The FCVS application contains a release provision, which requires the applicant to authorize release of their profile to specific entities. If your state requires a separate authorization from the applicant, you might include:

Applicants must complete a form authorizing the release of an FCVS profile to the medical board.

States requiring FCVS should state clearly in the initial license application information that the board requires core credentials to be verified by FCVS. Applicants should be apprised of the various options to access the FCVS application, i.e., the FSMB Web site at www.fsmb.org, e-mail at fcvs@fsmb.org, or telephone 1-888-ASK-FCVS (275-3287).

If you have questions about the FCVS credentials verification process, please contact Kevin Caldwell at 817-868-5001 or kcaldwell@fsmb.org. If you have questions about the legislative or administrative process of requiring FCVS verification, contact Robin Ayers at 817-868-4013 or rayers@fsmb.org.

² The Federation's *Report on the Special Committee on License Portability* recommends that states adopt a policy in which "physicians desiring an expedited process for licensure by endorsement must utilize FCVS, or credentials verification meeting equivalent standards for verification of core credentials."