

# Professional Credentialing and Recredentialing Requirements



## Purpose

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (Blue Cross\*) credentials all primary care providers (PCPs), specialty care physicians (SCPs), oral and maxillofacial surgeons, and licensed clinicians (together, “Practitioners”) who have applied for enrollment in our networks and who have met all contractual requirements.

Once the credentialing process is complete, we execute an Agreement and send a welcome letter that includes the **effective date** of network participation and confirms the **networks** in which the provider is participating.

## Re/Credentialing in the Universal Provider Datasource

To streamline the process and reduce work for practitioners, **Healthcare Administrative Solutions, Inc. (HCAS)** coordinates the initial and recredentialing process and primary source verification for practitioners applying to participate or become recredentialled with Blue Cross and other health plans that participate with.

- HCAS provides a single point of credentialing data shared by all HCAS-participating health plans.
- The HCAS-participating plans add the practitioner to the **Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH)** roster; the practitioner can then register with CAQH and submit credentialing information and supporting documentation to CAQH.
- The **Credentialing Verification Organization (CVO)** verifies the information, and then passes it to Blue Cross for further review and final determination.

For detailed instructions on the credentialing process, please view the HCAS Credentialing Training Manual on the [HCAS](#) website.

You must supply the following information to CAQH:

1. Completed, signed, and dated **CAQH credentialing application**, including:
  - History of loss or limitation of license and felony convictions
  - Disclosure of any criminal offense, disciplinary actions, or professional liability claims history
  - Malpractice history (most recent 10 years)
  - Disclosure of any physical/mental health issue or any chemical dependence
  - Clinical activity
  - Work history (5 years)
  - Explanation of gaps in practice (6 months or more)
  - If you have prescriptive authority, copy of Federal Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Certificate or Massachusetts Controlled Substance Registration (MCSR). Non-prescribing practitioners who have prescriptive authority may be credentialed without a DEA. In these cases the applicant must provide the name of the Blue Cross practitioner who will write prescriptions for medications.
2. Updated **Authorization and Release** form with re/credentialing application
3. A current, valid, and unrestricted **Massachusetts license** or (if applicable) New Hampshire license in the field of practice in which the practitioner will be treating Blue Cross members
4. A copy of the practitioner’s current **curriculum vitae**
5. Evidence of professional **malpractice insurance** maintained (minimum of \$1 million per occurrence/\$3 million in the aggregate)
6. No federal sanctions

Blue Cross prefers that Massachusetts-licensed physicians be credentialed by a **network hospital**. A physician who is not credentialed by a Massachusetts hospital, pursuant to MGL 243CMR 3.05, may be credentialed by Blue Cross in accordance with regulatory requirements.

## Additional Practitioner Information

Practitioners in certain specialties must meet the following additional requirements. Note that all certifications must be current and valid.

### > **Acupuncturist:**

- Graduate training from an approved acupuncture school with no less than 1,905 hours of study in acupuncture
- Effective July 1, 2021, certification in the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM)
- Coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner for absence during posted business hours

### > **Audiologist:**

- Coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner for absence during posted business hours
- Master's or Doctoral Degree in Audiology

### > **Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM):**

- Certification by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB)
- Graduation from a Nurse Midwife program
- An admitting arrangement with a Blue Cross credentialed physician who has privileges at a Blue Cross-participating acute care hospital
- 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner

### > **Certified Nurse Practitioner (CNP):**

- Certification by one of the following: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board (AANPCB), American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), Dermatology Nursing Certification Board (DNCB), National Certification Corporation for Obstetric, Gynecological and Neonatal Nursing Specialties (NCC), Pediatric Nurse Certification Board (PNCB), or Oncology Nurses Certification Corporation (ONCC)
- A graduate degree in Advanced Practice Nursing
- Collaborating physician who is Blue Cross-credentialed or is an emergency medicine physician, radiologist, pathologist, or anesthesiologist (ERAP)
- An admitting arrangement with a Blue Cross credentialed physician who has privileges at a Blue Cross-participating acute care hospital or hospitalist program, unless the physician is an emergency medicine physician, radiologist, pathologist or anesthesiologist (ERAP)
- 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner

### > **Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA):**

- Certification by National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA)
- Graduation from a Nurse Anesthetist program
- Collaborating physician who is Blue Cross-credentialed, if engaged in prescriptive practice

### > **Chiropractor (DC):**

- Coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner for absence during posted business hours
- Four-year chiropractic education accredited by the Council of Chiropractic Education

### > **Clinical Psychologist (PhD, PsyD, EDD):**

- Doctorate degree in psychology
- 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross credentialed behavioral health practitioner

- > **Clinical Specialist in Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing:**
  - Certification by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC)
  - Master's Degree
  - Must attest that collaborating physician, who may not be credentialed by Blue Cross, is either board certified/prepared or has completed training approved by ACGME or RCPSC
  - 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed behavioral health practitioner
  
- > **Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC):**
  - 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed behavioral health practitioner
  - Bachelor's, Master's or Doctorate degree in Behavioral Science
  
- > **Licensed Applied Behavioral Analyst (LABA):**
  - Coverage by an LABA for absence during posted business hours
  - Master's or Doctorate degree related to the study of Behavior Analysis or another field of human services
  
- > **Licensed Dietitian Nutritionist (LDN):**
  - Coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner for absence during posted business hours
  - Minimum of Bachelor's degree, its equivalent or higher in dietetics and nutrition, human nutrition, nutrition education or public health nutrition from an accredited college
  
- > **Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW):**
  - 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed behavioral health practitioner
  - Master of Science in Social Work
  
- > **Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT):**
  - 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed behavioral health practitioner
  - Masters or Doctorate or its equivalent in LMF Therapy or a related field from an accredited college
  
- > **Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC):**
  - 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed behavioral health practitioner
  - Master's degree from an accredited college program in a human services related field
  
- > **Certified Nurse Practitioner Primary Care Provider (CNPPCP):**
  - Certification by one of the following: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board (AANPCB), American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), National Certification Corporation for Obstetric, Gynecological and Neonatal Nursing Specialties (NCC), or Pediatric Nursing Certification Board (PNCB)
  - Graduate degree in Advanced Practice Nursing
  - Collaborating physician who is Blue Cross-credentialed in family medicine, internal medicine, or pediatrics
  - 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner
  - Must be practicing in Massachusetts in family medicine, internal medicine, or pediatrics setting
  - Admitting privileges at a Blue Cross acute care hospital, or an admitting arrangement with a Blue Cross credentialed physician who has privileges at a Blue Cross-participating acute care hospital
  - Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) certificate (no exceptions)
  
- > **Occupational Therapist (OT):**
  - Coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner for absence during posted business hour
  - Four year OT program leading to a Bachelor's degree or two year program leading to a Master's degree in OT

**> Optometrist (OD):**

- Current, valid, and unrestricted optometry license with:
  - Topical Pharmaceutical Agent (TPA) certification (if licensed by examination after January 1, 1994) **or**
  - Diagnostic Therapeutic Agents (DPA) certification (if licensed by examination after January 1, 1984)
- Current and valid Massachusetts Controlled Substance Registration (MCSR)
- Four year optometry program after earning an undergraduate degree
- Coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner for absence during posted business hours

**> Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon (OMS):**

- Certification in Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS)
- Must meet the current training requirements for board certification in the specialty for which they are applying, or be board certified by the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (ABOMS)
- Four year graduate degree in dentistry followed by four year hospital surgical residency
- General Anesthesia Permit IA
- Anesthesia Facility Permit ID

**> Physical Therapist (PT):**

- Coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner for absence during posted business hours
- Two year Master's degree in a PT program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education

**> Physician Assistant (PA):**

- Certification by the National Commission on Certification for Physician Assistants (NCCPA)
- Bachelor's degree plus 26 months in a PA educational program
- Supervising physician who is Blue Cross-credentialed or is an emergency medicine physician, radiologist, pathologist, or anesthesiologist (ERAP)
- 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner
- Must have an admitting arrangement with a Blue Cross network physician or hospitalist program unless physician is an emergency medicine physician, radiologist, pathologist or anesthesiologist (ERAP)

**> Physician Assistant Primary Care Provider (PAPCP):**

- Certification by the National Commission on Certification for Physician Assistants (NCCPA)
- Bachelor's degree plus 26 months in a PA educational program
- Must be practicing in Massachusetts in family medicine, internal medicine, or pediatrics setting
- Supervising physician who is Blue Cross-credentialed in family medicine, internal medicine, or pediatrics
- 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner
- Must have an admitting arrangement with a Blue Cross network physician or hospitalist program
- Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) certificate (no exceptions)

**> Physician (MD, DO):**

- Meet current training requirements for board certification in the specialty for which they are applying, or be certified by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) or the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) in the appropriate specialty
- Admitting privileges, or an admitting arrangement at a Blue Cross-participating acute care hospital.  
*Exceptions:* The specialties listed below are not required to have hospital admitting privileges:
  - Anesthesiology
  - Clinical Genetics
  - Dermatology
  - Emergency Medicine
  - Medical Genetics
  - Pathology
  - Physiatry
  - Psychiatry
  - Radiation Oncology
  - Radiology
  - Nuclear Medicine
- 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed physician  
*Exceptions:* The specialties below are not required to have 24 hour coverage:
  - Emergency Room Physicians (Physicians working in a hospital emergency room (Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Surgery))
  - Medical Geneticists who do not admit patients
  - Hospital Based Anesthesiologists
  - Clinical Geneticists
  - Diagnostic Radiologists
  - Nuclear Medicine Physicians
  - Pathologists

**> Podiatrist (DPM):**

<p><b>All Podiatrists</b> (both surgical and non-surgical)</p>	<p>May be board certified or board eligible by one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Board of Podiatric Medicine (ABPM) or</li> <li>• American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery (ABFAS)</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p>Non-surgical Podiatrists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner for absence during posted business hours</li> </ul>
<p>Surgical Podiatrist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24 hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed podiatrist</li> </ul>
<p>Surgical Podiatrists only</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privileges at a freestanding ambulatory surgery center, or admitting privileges or an admitting arrangement at a Blue Cross network hospital</li> </ul>

**> Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner (PNP):**

- Certification by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Bachelor’s degree in nursing and a nurse practitioner master’s degree with focus on psychiatric nursing
- Must attest that collaborating physician, who may not be credentialed by Blue Cross, is either board certified/prepared or has completed training approved by ACGME OR RCPSC
- 24-hour coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed behavioral health practitioner

### > **Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP):**

- Coverage by a Blue Cross-credentialed practitioner for absence during posted business hours
- Master of Science in Speech Language Pathology

## **Ongoing Monitoring**

Blue Cross queries the National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB), reviews reports from Medicare, licensing boards, and other entities for evidence of malpractice settlements, state sanctions, and license limitations as part of the re/credentialing process.

Blue Cross may conduct office site visits for reasons such as (but not limited to):

- Physical accessibility and appearance
- Adequacy of waiting and examining room space
- Availability of appointments
- Adequacy of treatment record keeping

In determining the need for a site visit, Blue Cross takes into account the severity of the issue.

## **Credentialing Committee Review**

Blue Cross's corporate credentialing staff reviews all re/credentialing applications for completeness. Please make sure that your application is complete and that all supporting documentation is included. Completed applications will be forwarded to the credentialing committee for approval or denial. At anytime, the credentialing committee reserves the right to decredential a practitioner who does not meet Blue Cross's standards and/or criteria for re/credentialing.

- You will be notified of the committee's initial credentialing decision within four business days of the decision. This notification is not a contract approval.
- If your recredentialing application is denied, you will be notified of the termination 90 days prior to the effective date of the termination.
- If the committee denies your application, you will have the opportunity to request reconsideration. The details of the process will be included in the denial letter.

## **Providers' Rights**

Blue Cross maintains all information submitted as part of the re/credentialing process in accordance with our commitment to confidentiality, subject to, and in accordance with, legal restrictions. You have the right to review information we obtain for the purposes of re/credentialing, including outside sources such as malpractice carriers, insurance carriers, state licensing boards, an AMA profile, and NPDB reports. Information we obtain for purposes other than re/credentialing or which is prohibited from disclosure by law is not included. You may address any inconsistencies between information they provided and information we obtain. You have the right to request, in writing or via telephone, the status of your application. Blue Cross does not make credentialing decisions based on a practitioner's race, ethnic/national identity, gender, age, or sexual orientation, and we reserve the right to review and update re/credentialing policies periodically.

## **Document History**

June 2020 - Updated collaborating physician requirements for Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner and Clinical Specialist in Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing.
February 2019 – Updates to certification options for Certified Nurse Practitioners and Certified Nurse Practitioner – Primary Care Providers.
December 2018
• Updated Podiatrist requirements
• Added Acupuncturist requirements
November 2018 – Updated Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner requirements
May 2018 – Updated Podiatrist requirements
April 2017 – Added education requirements for each provider type in Additional Practitioner Information.

January 2017 – Updated Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) certificate language. We no longer require a Blue Cross waiver in place of the DEA certificate. Instead of the waiver, the applicant must provide the name of the Blue Cross practitioner who will write prescriptions for medications.

May 2016 – Adding Licensed Applied Behavioral Analysts

February 2016 – Updated accrediting body names, and providers that don't need to have 24- hour coverage

June 2015 – Updated documentations

April 2014 – Added additional details on each provider specialty

September 2013 – Updated documentation of guideline

April 2011 – Original documentation of guideline

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