

HISTORY ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON RECOGNITION OF DENTAL SPECIALTIES AND CERTIFYING BOARDS

Prior to the creation of the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards (National Commission) in 2017, the *Constitution* and *Bylaws* of the American Dental Association (ADA) delegated to the Council on Dental Education and Licensure (CDEL) the authority to study and make recommendations on the recognition of dental specialty sponsoring organizations and certifying boards to the ADA House of Delegates, based on the *Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialties and National Certifying Boards for Dental Specialists* (*Requirements for Recognition*).

Background

In late 2016, the ADA Board of Trustees charged the Task Force on Specialty and Specialty Certifying Board Recognition to evaluate the process and criteria by which specialty sponsoring organizations and their respective specialty certifying boards were recognized.

The Task Force was comprised of the following individuals:

- Dr. Charles H. Norman, chair
- Dr. Roger Kiesling, General Dentist
- Dr. Mark Zust, General Dentist
- Dr. W. Roy Thompson, General Dentist
- Dr. Billie Sue Kyger, General Dentist
- Dr. Jill Price, CDEL Member, General Dentist
- Dr. Prabu Raman, CDEL Member, General Dentist
- Dr. David Halpern, CDEL Member, General Dentist
- Dr. Susan Muller, American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
- Dr. Sanjay Mallya, American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology
- Dr. Paul Casamassimo, American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
- Dr. Steven Daniel, American Academy of Periodontology
- Dr. Robert Roda, American Association of Endodontists
- Dr. Brett Ferguson, American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
- Dr. Brent Larson, American Association of Orthodontists
- Dr. Teresa Dolan, American Association of Public Health Dentistry
- Dr. Frank Tuminelli, American College of Prosthodontists

The following principles guided the Board of Trustees and Task Force in developing the proposal to revise the specialty sponsoring organization and specialty certifying board recognition process. The new recognition process had to:

- be grounded in objective standards that protect the public, nurture the art and science of dentistry, and improve the quality of care;
- serve to reduce potential bias or conflict of interest, or the perception of bias or conflicts of interest, in the decision making process;
- include multiple steps, including provisions for appeal;
- be operationally similar to the Commission on Continuing Education Provider Recognition, Commission on Dental Accreditation and Joint Commission on Dental Examinations;
- include representation from the ADA (general dentists and academics), each of the recognized dental specialty sponsoring organizations pursuant to the criteria contained in the *Requirements for Recognition*, and the public. In addition, opportunities for input from other communities of interest should be incorporated into the process;
- build on the expertise that has been developed by the Council on Dental Education and Licensure and be grounded in the existing *Requirements for Recognition*. The *Requirements for Recognition* would continue to be developed and maintained by the Council on Dental Education and Licensure and approved by the ADA House of Delegates; and
- be financially prudent and not place undue financial burden on the ADA and the dental specialty sponsoring organizations. The National Commission's annual operating budget would be subjected to review by the Board of Trustees and approved by the ADA House of Delegates.

To accomplish these principles, the establishment of a National Commission was proposed. Establishing such a Commission would reduce potential or perceived bias or conflict of interest in the decision making process for recognizing the dental specialty sponsoring organizations and their respective specialty certifying boards and emulate the processes for the recognition of specialties and certifying boards in other health professions.

As part of the process to establish the National Commission, in May 2017, the Board of Trustees directed that draft *Bylaws* and *Rules* of the new Commission should be developed and circulated to the broad communities of interest for comment. The Task Force also hosted a forum for members of CDEL and leaders representing the recognized dental specialty organizations and recognized certifying boards to discuss the proposal, including funding for the new Commission. In general, those commenting at the forum were in favor of the concept, although there were some concerns expressed related to the composition of and financial support for the new Commission.

Governance

To establish the new Commission, amendments to the ADA *Bylaws* were necessary and needed to address the following:

- The composition of the new Commission would include one (1) representative from each of the recognized dental specialty sponsoring organizations, an equal number of general dentists, and a consumer representing the public. Because the primary duty of the new Commission would be to grant or deny recognition to dental specialty sponsoring organizations, an equal number of general dentists and dental specialists was important to ensure objectivity and avoid perceived conflict of interest and bias. Each of the recognized dental specialty organizations would appoint its representative and the ADA Board of Trustees would appoint the general dentists. The new Commission would appoint the consumer/public member. The terms of the inaugural Commissioners would be staggered.
- The National Commission would have the power and authority to adopt its own *Rules* and amendments based on a two-thirds affirmative vote of the Commissioners present and voting.
- The duties of the new Commission would be specific to the recognition of dental specialty sponsoring organizations and their respective certifying boards in accordance with the *Requirements for Recognition*. Provisions for appealing an adverse action and submission of an annual report to the ADA House of Delegates and annual budget to the ADA Board of Trustees was also required.
- The *Requirements for Recognition* would remain the property of the ADA House of Delegates. CDEL would continue to have the responsibility of reviewing and proposing revisions to the *Requirements for Recognition* to the House of Delegates. The new Commission would apply the *Requirements for Recognition* when considering a request to grant recognition to a new specialty sponsoring organization and certifying board. The Commission would have full and final authority to grant or deny a request for recognition based on the *Requirements for Recognition*. The House of Delegates would no longer have this responsibility.

Budget and Finances

The financial model for the new Commission called for 50% of the Commission's direct and indirect costs to be covered by an annual fee paid by the recognized specialty sponsoring organizations with the other 50% covered by the ADA as an in-kind grant. This principle was similar to financial models of other Commissions housed with the ADA. All Commissions have revenue sources, e.g., the Commission on Dental Accreditation assesses fees to dental education programs, the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations assesses testing fees to exam candidates, and the Commission for Recognition of Continuing Education Providers assesses fees to continuing education providers. The total operating budget for 2018 was projected to be \$171,000.

Because the number of specialists in each of the dental specialties varied considerably, the Task Force and Board of Trustees supported a model calling for a minimum (base) fee to be established for all specialty sponsoring organizations with the remainder allocated among the sponsoring organizations based on the number of specialists within the specialty.

Conclusion

The Board of Trustees agreed with the Specialty Recognition Task Force that the establishment of the National

Commission would enhance the recognition program and set requirements designed to help dentists excel throughout their careers and the public ascertain the importance of educated and board certified dental specialists.

Further, maintaining the status quo, i.e., relying on the ADA House of Delegates to determine the recognition of dental specialty sponsoring organizations and certifying boards would place the ADA at financial and reputational risk for perceived bias and conflict of interest in state regulatory arenas. While the process would be grounded in the existing *Requirements for the Recognition*, the decision to grant or deny recognition to a dental specialty sponsoring organization or specialty certifying board would be the sole responsibility of the new Commission.

In August 2017, based on the conclusions of the Board of Trustees and the Task Force, Resolution 30, Report 7 of the ADA Board of Trustees to the House of Delegates to establish the National Commission was unanimously approved by the Board of Trustees. In October 2017, the ADA House of Delegates voted to establish the National Commission.

The National Commission held its inaugural meeting on May 9-10, 2018.

Inaugural National Commission Board of Commissioners was comprised of the following individuals:

Dr. Wayne Aldredge, American Academy of Periodontology
Dr. Don Altman, American Association of Public Health Dentistry
Dr. Joseph Battaglia, American Dental Association
Dr. James Benz, American Dental Association
Dr. James Boyle III, American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
Dr. Renee Broughten, Public Member
Dr. Ralph Cooley, American Dental Association
Dr. Robert Delarosa, American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
Dr. Alan Friedel, American Dental Association
Dr. Anita Gohel, American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology
Dr. Kevin Henner, American Dental Association
Dr. Denise Hering, American Dental Association
Dr. William Johnson, American Association of Endodontists
Dr. Roger Kiesling, American Dental Association
Dr. Andrew Kwasny, American Association of Orthodontists
Dr. Charles Norman, III, American Dental Association
Dr. Frank Tuminelli, American College of Prosthodontists
Dr. John Wright, American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
Dr. Mark Zust, American Dental Association

Directors of the National Commission:

Inaugural Director-Cathy Baumann-2018-2025
Nick Salerno-2025-present

National Commission Chairs from 2017 to the present:

Dr. Charles Norman 2017-2019 (Served 2 terms)
Dr. James Boyle 2019-2020
Dr. Alan Friedel 2020-2021
Dr. Frank Tuminelli 2021-2022
Dr. Brian McAllister 2022-2023
Dr. Gayle Glenn 2023-2024
Dr. Ben Warner 2024-2025
Dr. Cynthia Sherwood 2025-2026