



National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards

Special points of interest:

- Policy updates to strengthen recognition processes and governance
- Determination on subspecialty designation
- Annual Report of the Recognized Dental Specialty Certifying Boards
- Engagement with state dental boards
- Strategic outreach to non-dental healthcare organizations

Inside this issue:

Policy Updates & Certification Definitions	1
Subspecialty Designation	2
Annual Report of the Recognized Certifying	2
Collaboration with State Dental Boards	2
Engagement with Non-Dental Healthcare Organizations	3
Future Meeting Dates	3

Message from the National Commission Chair

The National Commission held its 9th Annual Meeting electronically on April 20, 2026

The role of the National Commission is to recognize the dental specialty sponsoring organizations and their respective certifying boards based on compliance with the Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialties and National Certifying Boards for Dental Specialists. No new applications for recognition were considered.

The work of the National Commission has continued to evolve, with a focus on refining policies and procedures and implementing the goals of the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan. A key priority remains ensuring that examinations administered by certifying boards provide all candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their

knowledge through standardized procedures and valid, reliable assessments with consistent administration.

Efforts to improve communication about the role of the National Commission continue, including outreach to dentists, the public, and state dental boards, as well as enhancing the National Commission website to include information about recognized specialty organizations and certifying boards, including their mission statements and roles in the profession.

It has been an honor to serve as Chair of the National Commission and to work with such dedicated and accomplished colleagues. Their commitment to serving the public, the profession, and the ADA is unwavering.



*Dr. Cynthia Sherwood
Chair, National Commission*

I would like to thank all Commissioners, Appeal Board members, and staff for their willingness to participate in numerous meetings, contribute thoughtful ideas, and engage in meaningful discussions. The National Commission continues to serve both the public and the profession effectively.

Policy Updates & Certification Definitions

At its April 2026 meeting, the Board of Commissioners adopted revisions to the National Commission's policies and procedures, including the addition of a Recognition Status Definition for certifying boards applying for recogni-

tion when recognition has been withdrawn from a previously recognized certifying board.

Further, the National Commission has developed definitions of professional certification designations related

to individuals being Board Eligible, Educationally Qualified, and attaining Diplomate status on its [website](#). These definitions support consistent understanding across stakeholders and reinforce transparency for the profession and the public.

Subspecialty Designation

As part of its through investigation on the concept of subspecialty designation, the National Commission considered extensive feedback from the recognized specialty sponsoring organizations, recognized certifying boards, the ADA Council on Ethics Bylaws and Judicial Affairs, and ADA Council on Dental Education and Licensure.

Following careful consideration, the Board of

Commissioners determined that there is insufficient support across communities of interest to proceed with subspecialty recognition at this time.

Concerns cited included potential confusion for the public, limited demonstrated benefit, and risks related to fragmentation within the profession.

While the Commission deter-

mined that it will not move forward with subspecialty designation, it will monitor future trends in the subspecialty area and provide educational awareness to the profession and public regarding the Commission on Dental Accreditation accredited fellowship training programs in Maxillofacial Prosthetics, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics.

Annual Report of the Recognized Dental Specialty Certifying Boards

The Annual Report remains a critical component of the National Commission's oversight responsibilities, compiling data on:

- Certification and examination processes
- Examination validity and reliability
- Certification pathways and requirements
- Recertification and maintenance policies

The annual review of the recognized certifying boards ensures ongoing compliance with the Requirements for Recognition of National Certifying Boards for Dental Specialists and supports transparency and accountability across all recognized boards.

On April 20, 2026, the Board of Commissioners adopted the 2026 Annual Report of the Recognized Certifying Boards,

reaffirming the recognition statuses for the eleven (11) recognized certifying boards.

To review the 2026 report, visit the National Commission website: <https://ncrdscb.ada.org/recognized-certifying-boards>

A close working relationship must be maintained between the sponsoring organization and the certifying board

Collaboration with State Dental Boards

In November 2025, the National Commission sent communications to the state dental boards to provide updated information on the specialties that are recognized by the Commission, update/correct the definitions of specialties and correct outdated language related to the dental specialties.

The National Commission's efforts are intended to protect the public/patients by reducing confusion and enhancing the public/patients and professions understanding of the recognized dental specialties and the services provided.

The Commission will continue its efforts in 2026 to ensure the public/patients and pro-

feSSION have the most up to date information on the recognized dental specialties by sending communications to state dental societies/associations to provide transparency. Additionally, in cases where legislative action is required the societies/associations can assist state dental boards.

Engagement with Non-Dental Healthcare Organizations

In 2024 the National Commission adopted its 2025–2030 Strategic and Communication Plans. One of the goals in both plans is to enhance communication and collaboration with healthcare organizations outside of dentistry.

The purpose of this outreach is to establish external relationships to boost the knowledge and role of the recognized dental specialties, the recognized certifying boards

and the National Commission.

Further, these efforts are designed to:

- Increase awareness of dental specialties and their role in the profession within the broader external healthcare community
- Strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration

- Enhance understanding of the value of board certification and the commitment to life-long learning.

Future Meeting Dates

The National Commission Board of Commissioners meets on an annual basis.

All meetings of the National Commission are conducted in closed session.

Future meeting dates for the National Commission are as follows:

- May 3, 2027
- May 3, 2028

Mission Statement

The National Commission protects the public and the profession through objective and transparent review of the recognized and prospective dental specialty sponsoring organizations and certifying boards based on the *Requirements for Recognition of Dental Specialties and National Certifying Boards for Dental Specialists*.

Vision Statement

The National Commission is held to be the standard for excellence, transparency and professionalism in the recognition and continued oversight of the recognized dental specialty sponsoring organizations and certifying boards.

Core Values

Objectivity
Integrity
Transparency
Consistency
Professionalism
Collaboration
Innovation
Leadership

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Please visit our website at <https://ncrdscb.ada.org/>

We hope this site will become an important resource for you. If there are improvements you would like to see or have suggestions you think would be helpful, please let us know at nationalcommission@ada.org.