

Glaucoma Certification Frequently Asked Questions

Senate Bill 1406, Chapter 352, Statutes of 2008, significantly expanded the scope of practice for optometrists licensed in California. A provision of the bill outlines a means for establishing requirements for glaucoma certification that would 1) adequately protect glaucoma patients; 2) ensure that applicant optometrists will be certified to treat glaucoma on an appropriate and timely basis; and 3) be consistent with the Department of Consumer Affairs and the California State Board of Optometry's (hereafter "Board") examination validation for licensure and occupational analyses policies adopted pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 139.

The frequently asked questions below will answer any additional questions you may have regarding glaucoma certification in California.

Didactic Course

Q. Can the CE Department provide me with a copy of my Credit Letter from the 24 hour Certification Course?

A. Yes, please fill out the Transcript Request Form on the CE Webpage. You will not need to provide this documentation unless you are audited. See next question.

Q. Do I have to provide proof of completion of the 24-hour didactic course with my application for glaucoma certification?

A. You don't have to provide a copy of your certificate of completion, but you will have to indicate on the application if you took the course or not, where you took the course and when you completed it. You will also have to sign the application and certify by penalty of perjury that what you are claiming on the application is true and correct. Be prepared to provide a copy of your certification of completion of the 24-hour didactic course in the event the Board conducts an audit at a later date.

Q. If I graduated from the Southern California College of Optometry on May 1, 2003, do I have to take the didactic course?

A. No, you don't have to take the didactic course. According to CCR Section 1571 (d), licensees who graduated from an accredited school or college of optometry after May 1, 2000 are exempt from the didactic course.

Q. I completed a 24-hour didactic course out of state. Can I apply that to the didactic course requirement or do I need to take it again in California?

A. If you graduated from an accredited school or college of optometry any where in the United States on or after May 1, 2000, you would be exempt from the 24-hour didactic course. If you graduated from an accredited school or college of optometry any where in the United States but did not take the 24-hour didactic course, then you will have to take the course, and it can be taken in California or

Q. I began the glaucoma certification process established under SB 929 and was only able to treat 45 patients before the process became obsolete on December 31, 2009. I already filled out the old form and application and have been saving them in order to submit it to the Board when the new law came into effect. Can I turn in the old form and application, or do I have to fill out the new documentation form and application?

A. You will have to fill out the new documentation form and application.

Out of State

Q. I am currently certified to treat glaucoma in a state outside of California. If I decide to become licensed by the California State Board of Optometry, would my glaucoma certification be recognized?

A. In order to treat glaucoma in the state of California, an out-of state optometrist must first obtain the following: (1) a license to practice in California (see B&P section 3057); and (2) TPA certification (see B&P section 3041.3(d)). For glaucoma certification, there is no special "out-of-state" status or category. You will need to meet the requirements for whatever category you fit under in B&P section 3041(f), before you may treat glaucoma in the state of California.

Preceptorship Program

Q. I noticed that in the proposed regulations, a preceptor can be either an ophthalmologist or a glaucoma certified optometrist. I've just hired an optometrist who graduated after May 1, 2008. Because she is TLG certified, I want to have her be my preceptor so I can become glaucoma certified. Is that okay?

A. No. A glaucoma certified optometrist must have been glaucoma certified for 2 or more year prior to becoming a preceptor.

Q. I am an optometrist that has been glaucoma certified for three years. There are four other optometrists in my office who are not glaucoma certified and would like me to be their preceptor. Since we all work in the same practice, can we share the same patients?

A. Although the law does not indicate that this is not possible, remember that each optometrist must do all the steps required in the preceptorship program when treating the patient. A minimum of 25 individual patients must each be prospectively treated for a minimum of 12 consecutive months. The preceptorship option is not another version of the Grand Rounds Program. The intention of the preceptorship program is for an optometrist to treat 25 of their own individual patients each in order to maximize the learning experience.

Q. My preceptor is a Glaucoma Certified optometrist. Who writes the prescriptions for the patients?

A. Your preceptor must write all prescriptions throughout the preceptorship program. You may only "treat" as defined in CCR Section 1571 (A)(4):

"For purposes of this section, "treat" means properly evaluating the patient, performing all necessary tests, diagnosing the patient, recognizing the type of glaucoma within a licensee's scope of practice, creating a treatment plan with proposed medications and target pressures, ongoing monitoring and reevaluation of the patient's condition, and making timely referrals to an ophthalmologist when appropriate."