



## Guidelines for Stating Certification Status

The American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS) is very proud of its diplomates who have achieved Board Certification, Hand Surgery subspecialty certification, or recertification and those who are participating in the Continuous Certification in Plastic Surgery Program.

Many diplomates include information about their certification status on letterhead, business cards and other materials. Board certification is an important marker of your competence and skill, and the ABPS encourages you to showcase this accomplishment with your patients, your colleagues, and the public. Diplomates must also report certification status accurately to credentialers, licensing boards, and employers.

ABPS does not mandate the specifics of how diplomates state their certification, except to assert that diplomates should not state or imply that they are certified if their certification has expired or been affected by imposed disciplinary action by the Board. If diplomates have multiple certifications by ABMS member boards and allow one of them to lapse, revisions to public materials (letterhead, business cards, advertisements, websites, etc.) must reflect those certifications accurately.

Follow these guidelines throughout your career to accurately state your ABPS certification.

- Diplomates of ABPS must accurately state their certification status at all times. This includes descriptions in Curriculum Vitae, advertisements, publications, directories, letterhead, credentialing and licensing applications and requests, and websites.
- Diplomates with expired time-limited certification or those whose certification is revoked may not claim Board certification by ABPS and must revise all descriptions of their qualifications accordingly.

When a physician misrepresents certification status, ABPS may notify local credentialing bodies, licensing bodies, law enforcement agencies and others.

**Note: The Board does not allow the use of its trademarked logo on diplomate or candidate websites or for any other commercial purposes. A diplomate logo representing ABPS certification is available to those diplomates who are current in their certification requirements without any disciplinary actions. The diplomate logo usage guidelines are available within each physician's profile. The logo must be removed from all advertising if certification is expired, revoked, or suspended.**

### Examples of accurate statements of certification:

Once you have successfully passed your initial certification examination or renewed your certification through the Continuous Certification program, you may represent that you are "ABPS Board Certified in Plastic Surgery (with a sub-specialty certification in Hand Surgery – if applicable)" or a "Diplomate of the American Board of Plastic Surgery":

- **John Doe, M.D., ABPS Board Certified in Plastic Surgery**  
or
- **John Doe, M.D., a Diplomate of the American Board of Plastic Surgery**

**Important:** Please be sure to correctly state your certification status in your Medical Licensing Board Profile. In addition, pay close attention to your group practice listings. A blanket statement that everyone in a group is Board certified may be misleading if multiple specialties are listed and some group members are certified in certain specialties and others are not currently certified. ABPS expects that certifications will be listed individually or stated in a way that is not misleading. Aside from accuracy and ABPS requirements, inaccurate statements of certification may create embarrassment or legal issues. ABPS understands that maintaining currency in stating the certification status of groups of physicians may not be easy. We encourage you to work with your colleagues to be sure the certifications you present to the public are current and accurate.

**Reporting ABPS Disciplinary Action:** Certification status is reported publicly on the ABPS website, [www.abplasticsurgery.org](http://www.abplasticsurgery.org) and through the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), [www.certificationmatters.org](http://www.certificationmatters.org), which establishes standards for physician specialty certification for its 24 member boards, including the ABPS.

In keeping with the Board's mission to promote safe and ethical plastic surgery, the designation of "See FSMB" will be reported with an individual's certification status on the Board's website, should an individual have any confirmed, public, state medical board action(s). Consumers seeking additional information will be directed to the state medical board for details via the Federation of State Medical Board (FSMB) service, [www.docinfo.org](http://www.docinfo.org).

Additionally, the ABPS also reports disciplinary action in the form of Revocation, Suspension, and Probation. This action, taken due to state medical board action, should also be taken into consideration when stating certification status for advertising purposes. An individual with a **revoked certificate** is not permitted to advertise as being ABPS Board Certified. If a diplomate has a **suspended certificate**, that individual is considered to not be ABPS Board Certified until the suspension is lifted. An individual with a certificate that is listed as "**certified – on probation**" is considered certified. However, any advertising materials with certification status should also include the ABPS disciplinary action, example: Board Certified (On Probation).