



Physicians Caring for Texans

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## **FIRST TIME APPLICANTS APPLYING FOR CME ACCREDITATION**

### **Getting Started – What You Need to Know**

For first-time, or “initial” applicants, the accreditation process takes nine to eighteen months. At least two CME activities should be implemented within the 24 months prior to submission of the self study for initial accreditation. One of these activities should be implemented prior to submission of the Preapplication.

### **Purpose of Accreditation**

Accreditation is a mark of quality continuing medical education (CME) activities that are planned, implemented and evaluated by accredited providers in accordance with Essential Areas and Elements and Accreditation Policies. Accreditation assures the medical community and the public that such activities provide physicians with information that can assist them in maintaining or improving their practice of medicine. These activities are free of commercial bias and based on valid content.

### **The ACCME and TMA**

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) is the organization that sets educational standards and policies for CME activities. The ACCME accredits organizations that serve a national target audience of physicians and recognizes state medical societies as accrediting partners within the states that choose to operate as accreditors.

Texas Medical Association (TMA) is recognized by the ACCME as an accreditor of CME providers in Texas whose target audience is composed of no more than 30% of physician learners from outside Texas and its contiguous states. TMA’s system of accreditation is equivalent to that of ACCME’s national system of accreditation; therefore, there are many references to ACCME policies, especially in the Standards of Commercial Support, which are trademarked by the ACCME. Additional information about the ACCME, headquartered in Chicago, IL, can be found at [www.accme.org](http://www.accme.org).

### **TMA’s Expectations**

TMA has several expectations of those who apply for TMA accreditation:

- Eligible organizations that decide to apply for TMA accreditation should be prepared to both describe and furnish evidence that demonstrates compliance with the Accreditation Requirements. For this reason, organizations considering applying for TMA accreditation must plan, implement and evaluate at least two CME activities within the 24-month period prior to the initial accreditation interview. These two activities can be in joint sponsorship with an accredited organization (ACCME- or TMA-accredited) or can be offered without formal CME credit. One of these activities should be completed before the Preapplication is written.
- TMA expects its accredited providers to monitor their overall CME program on a regular basis for compliance with the Accreditation Requirements.
- TMA-accredited providers are required to submit annual reporting data on ACCME’s online database. This information includes contact information, number and types of activities, number

of hours offered, number of physicians attending, and income and expense data for the CME program.

- Payment of certain fees is required to obtain and maintain TMA accreditation. TMA fees are:
  - \$150 Preapplication
  - \$1500 Self Study, Initial or Reaccreditation
  - \$1350 Annual Fee, Single organization
  - \$1950-\$5650 Annual Fee, Systems (depending on number of facilities)
  - \$200 Progress Report

### **Eligibility to Apply for TMA Accreditation**

The organization must:

- Be located in Texas;
- Be developing and/or presenting a program of CME for physicians on a regular and recurring basis;
- Serve a target audience of no more than 30% of physician learners from outside Texas and its contiguous states. Organizations with a national audience should apply for accreditation from the ACCME ([www.accme.org](http://www.accme.org));
- Demonstrate an overall organizational commitment to the CME program, including physician support, budget support, staffing, and record-keeping resources;
- Not be a commercial interest. A “commercial interest” is any entity producing, marketing, re-selling, or distributing health care goods or services consumed by, or used on, patients;
- Not be developing and/or presenting a program of CME that is, in the judgment of TMA, devoted to advocacy on unscientific modalities of diagnosis or therapy;
- Present activities that have “valid” content. Specifically, the organization must be presenting activities that promote recommendations, treatment or manners of practicing medicine that are within the definition of CME. Providers are not eligible for accreditation if they present activities that promote treatments that are known to have risks or dangers that outweigh the benefits or are known to be ineffective in the treatment of patients;
- Demonstrate the capacity to comply with the TMA accreditation requirements and policies.

**When there is a question regarding eligibility, TMA reserves the right to make decisions on the issue.**

### **The Preapplication Process**

The first step in becoming accredited is completion of the Preapplication for TMA Accreditation, after you have developed and offered one activity according to accreditation standards. The purpose of the Preapplication is to provide you with an opportunity to explain your eligibility for TMA accreditation as well as to demonstrate that your organization has mechanisms in place to fulfill TMA’s accreditation requirements and policies in the CME activities that you will produce.

Once your organization has completed and submitted to TMA the Preapplication and the non-refundable \$150 Preapplication fee, TMA will notify your organization whether it is eligible to continue with the initial accreditation process. This notification is in writing, and is usually sent within six weeks of receipt of your Preapplication.

## The Initial Self Study Process

If your organization is deemed eligible to continue with the initial accreditation process, you will complete and submit a Self Study Report for TMA accreditation. Once the Self Study Report is received your organization will be invoiced for the \$1500 accreditation fee and an on-site survey will be scheduled. Travel expenses of the survey team will be invoiced after the survey meeting.

The survey interview provides an opportunity for your organization to meet with one or two surveyors and a staff member of TMA's CME office. The surveyors will discuss with you the objectives of your CME program, clarify any questions they may have about your Self Study, and discuss your organization's ongoing plans for improvement as they relate to your practice of CME. The surveyors will also review your performance in practice as demonstrated in your activity documentation for the two or more activities you developed and presented prior to the survey.

Following the survey interview, the survey team will document their findings in a report to the TMA Subcommittee on Accreditation, which makes a recommendation to the TMA Committee on Continuing Education for a final accreditation decision. The decision will be Initial Provisional Accreditation for two years or non-accreditation.