

Certificates of Laser Training - Laser Certifications - Laser Credentialing - State Licensing -

- Let's straighten out the confusion – v2606

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Top of Website – <https://LaserTraining.org>

NCLC Laser Certifications – <https://LaserCertification.org>

International Laser Certification Registry (ILCR™) – <https://LaserRegistry.org>

How do I get Laser Certified?

This is one of the most frequent questions we get, and it's usually not what the person really means at all. What individuals really want to know is how they obtain proper permission or authorization to perform cosmetic laser procedures as a non physician, and that usually means a Certificate of Training. Nurses in hospitals or clinics want proper documentation of their training or laser skills validation, and medical facilities want to know how to setup guidelines and requirements for physician credentialing. If you do want to pursue one of several Laser Certifications that are available you generally must meet some type of background or educational requirement and show evidence of documented laser training (with the hours specified on the Certificate) from any organization.

Some certifications additionally require documented clinical cases. Here's an overview that might help clear up some confusion and provide some resources to help you find the answers for your own situation.

About Laser Certifications:

- Available to anyone who meets the published requirements.

Certifications in various areas of health care laser use are available through several credible organizations. The [National Council of Laser Certification \(NCLC\)](#) provides National Certifications for Medical Laser Safety Officers and Laser Operators such as Aesthetic or Hair Removal Laser Providers. Other organizations such as the Board of Laser Safety (BLS), Society for Clinical Medical Hair Removal (SCMHR), American Board of Laser Surgery (ABLS) and a dental and veterinary group also offer some of these voluntary certifications. A Laser Certification is a professional credential that recognizes a high level of academic knowledge or achievement in that area. It is a credential to be proud of, and which reflects your professionalism in the field. However, laser certifications are required by law only in some US States which require it for higher levels of Laser Hair Removal licensing. More States continue to implement Certification as a requirement for licensing, and the ANSI Z136.3 national standards recommend the Laser Safety Officer certification. There are more countries outside of the U.S. that require laser certifications than the U.S. does, and most of those require them for even licensed physicians. Laser Certifications reflect professionalism and personal accomplishment. The training requirements that are pre-requisites for Laser Certifications however also frequently meet regulatory or state licensing requirements. These International Certifications require that you meet certain background and educational requirements to qualify, and then take a supervised proctored examination. The NCLC works with ETA International to provide secure, online monitored testing worldwide, and the NCLC and Affiliates offer them at the end of most training programs conducted by Professional Medical Education Assn and its [Laser Training Institute™](#).

Go to <http://www.LaserCertification.org> to find the following information and documents:

- Certification Handbook - explains the various certifications and requirements
- Procedures for Proctored Testing through ETA International (note - Proctored testing is also offered in conjunction with any of the Laser Training Institute seminars and workshops, and many affiliated programs).
- Download and complete an application form to apply for Certification and sit for an examination.

The International Laser Certification Registry (ILCR™) at <https://LaserRegistry.org>

This international registry was started by the NCLC who now serves as the secretariat. It serves as a central registry of Laser Certified individuals which makes their individual laser credentials available to the general public and to regulatory authorities to confirm certifications prior to licensing. All the NCLC Certified individuals are automatically posted to this site. Individuals with certifications from other credible agencies, or those certification agencies, may submit a request to have that individual listed in the ILCR. Once the authenticity of the Certification has been verified it will be listed for a nominal posting fee.

About Certificates of Laser Training:

- Provided as evidence of Training and includes associated credits for continuing education.

This is entirely separate from the question of "Laser Certifications". Training Certificates are NOT Certifications. Attendees at a formal Laser Training program receive a "Certificate of Training" or "Certificate of Attendance". Both our own Laser Training Institutes Computer Based Learning Courses and our in-person Seminars provide these Certificates of Laser Training to attendees. These Training Certificates simply document your attendance at the program. They do not attest to your level of comprehension or achievement in that area like a Certification would. Some states such as Texas, Arizona and others base their licensing requirements on documentation of such training (and sometimes alternate methods) and these Certificates provide proof of your training. They are also required by many insurance companies for aesthetic laser practices or providers. Many of the Certification agencies require the submitted Certificates of Training to be accredited by some third party organization to ensure credibility of that particular training program. Most programs are accredited by some outside organization for nursing, aestheticians, physician and other groups that provide continuing education credits. Otherwise any mom-and-pop group can invent whatever training they want, whether credible or not, and just write in whatever course title and number of credits they want to invent. There has been an example of this on internet sales of some "training" programs that call their Laser Safety Officer training a "Certification" and can say it can be done with a one or two hour online course. Most programs are accredited by some organization for nursing or physician continuing education credits. There are no prerequisite background requirements to qualify and no experience need be documented. For anyone that is aware of medical laser safety officer training it requires from 15-24 hrs of formal training, and the real Certifications require background and experience. This simply highlights the confusion over a training certificate versus a valid certification. All credible certification agencies require proof of some level of formal, accredited laser training to qualify to sit for the certification exams.

About Laser Credentialing:

- You decide what the criteria are, provided the State does not have a requirement that would supersede this

American National Standards Institute (ANSI) publication 136.3 "Safe Use of Lasers in Health Care" is not law, but it has become the defacto standard enforced by various states, licensing and regulatory agencies. ANSI specifically says that it is the individual health care facility (hospital, clinic, private office or medical spa) that determines what the credentialing requirements will be for both physicians and non physicians either assisting in laser procedures (running the control panel) or providing the actual patient treatments. The facility therefore has flexibility in determining exactly what these requirements are, but they must establish these criteria for their laser operators and users. General guidelines are provided for recommended requirements for credentialing by both ANSI and organizations such as the [American Society for Laser Medicine & Surgery](#). As a rule this requires training in core laser concepts including laser & energy concepts, general tissue effects and laser safety. (See our Course Catalog for Online Learning programs that will meet these requirements, besides our Seminars) Physicians and operators then should additionally have training in the specific lasers and applications including possible preceptorships and hands-on experience. These general requirements apply to all areas of health care laser use whether it's surgical laser training, or laser hair removal by a trained cosmetologist or aesthetician. Our Seminars and Online Learning courses provide this initial foundation training, which then may be built upon afterwards with additional clinical training in one's area of specialization. For instance, a nurse attending one of our Aesthetic Laser Procedures Seminars would go back to their clinic or office and start performing cases under the direction of their medical director or a more senior laser operator. In any event the facility sets the credentialing standard which is generally a training requirement of some type. Some facilities simplify the process by accepting the National Laser Certifications, with the understanding that the training was required prior to even qualifying to sit for the certification exams. If the State has imposed it's own regulatory requirements for licensing then one would also need to meet those.

Physician Credentialing:

In their own office or practice settings in the U.S., physicians who are licensed to practice medicine within any given state may utilize whatever tool they wish - including laser - for whatever medical procedure they choose to perform. Licensed physicians in many other countries must additionally obtain a laser certification in order to add laser procedures to their practice.

Practicing medicine outside one's area of expertise is not a particularly good idea (author's opinion), but as a rule there are no laws to restrict the practice of medicine in the U.S. by properly licensed physicians. Cosmetic laser procedures are easily learned and practiced by physicians in any specialty. Hospital privileges, or malpractice insurance coverage though are a different matter. Physicians gain practice privileges within a hospital facility by administrative permission of the executive committee or equivalent credentialing body of the institution. The physician may practice medicine by virtue of their state medical license, but the hospital decides what specific privileges they have within that facility - including laser privileges for any given procedure. There currently are no Medical Board Certifications for physicians (The ABLS is not a recognized medical board of the American Board of Medical Specialties – ABMS), although many physicians do obtain one of the National Laser Certifications (such as Certified Aesthetic Laser Operator) as documentation of academic knowledge in these areas. This is particularly true for non-dermatology physicians such as Family Practitioners or Emergency Medicine Physicians performing aesthetic procedures in their office. In hospitals, physicians generally just show evidence of laser training, along with one or more preceptored cases, and are granted laser privileges. Our Laser Courses provide the foundation laser training that is required by physicians before moving on to the specialty application.

Use of Lasers by Non-Physicians: Ablative Vs. Non-Ablative Laser & IPL Procedures:

Many States define what a physician versus a non-physician may perform based on whether it is an “invasive” versus a “noninvasive” procedure. For instance drawing blood from a superficial vein might be considered noninvasive, but deeper penetrating instruments such as liposuction might be considered invasive. This isn’t universal but it’s a general approach by State’s. With lasers this corresponds to “ablative” versus “nonablative” procedures being performed by physicians versus nonphysicians. Doing general skin rejuvenation, or even laser hair removal is considered nonablative because it does not vaporize tissue – it selectively heats or photocoagulates. Ablative procedures such as skin resurfacing may vaporize tissue so it is ablative and generally performed only by physicians. Fractional laser treatments are a gray area in between and not well defined in State regulations.

State Licensing:

Ultimately it is the State Medical Board that regulates use of health care lasers for any procedure, including cosmetic procedures. As mentioned, the requirements vary widely from State to State. Those that do primarily have requirements for documented training. If establishing a new aesthetic laser business, your attorney can provide the most definitive answers to State licensing requirements. Laser Certifications are a requirement for licensure in only some U.S. States, but many other States have Certification requirements under consideration. Recommendations to State Agencies for incorporating Certifications into their licensure process, and working cooperatively with the NCLC to facilitate communication, is contained in the [Certification Handbook](#) of the National Council on Laser Certification.

Our Training Organization CANNOT answer your specific State Licensing questions.
For a Definitive Answer to Laser Use Regulations by State, please contact:

Boston Medtech
Advisors Zvi Ladin, PhD
- Principal Dedham, MA
www.bmtadvisors.com - Tel: 781.407.0900

For a very reasonable fee this group provides definitive answers on licensing and regulations state by state, to either individuals or practices. The information we have provided below on our website is useful, but it is incomplete, not kept current and its original accuracy must be verified.

You may also go to your State Medical Board’s website and use the search engine on that site to search for requirements – such as laser hair removal.

Laser Registrations, and Medical Laser Safety Officers (MLSO):

Some states, such as Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, AZ, TX and others require that any health care laser system be properly registered with that State. This too varies widely from State to State and you must research this for each one. When the State does require registration, they all generally require that the name of the Laser Safety Officer for that facility be listed on the registration form. Laser Safety Officers are required in every health care facility that utilize lasers, including small offices or medical spas. The only requirement by ANSI is that the facility administration appoint such a safety officer who manages the laser safety program. Some States require not only the registration of the lasers, but that the appointed laser safety officer provide documentation of formalized training (Certificate from an 8 hour or more Course). Our own [Medical Laser Safety Officer Seminars](#) or [Online Learning programs](#) meet this requirement. Further evidence of accomplishment in this area may be achieved through the Certified Medical Laser Safety Officer designation of the NCLC or the BLS which is recommended by the ANSI standards. There are no current requirements (as of 2026) by any State for Certification of Laser Safety Officers, but we foresee that happening.

So - The requirements for Laser Safety Officer in a nutshell are:

- 1. Every facility is required by ANSI standards to have an "Appointed" Laser Safety Officer** (if you have several offices in one geographical area, one LSO may serve them all) Note - Laser "Operators" are the nurses & techs who run the control panels for physicians performing surgical laser procedures, and they work under the authority of the LSO. Non-Physician Laser "Operators" do patient treatments. They also operate under the authority of the LSO for laser safety, but clinically under the Medical Director for patient safety & effectiveness.
- 2. Formally Documented LSO Training is required by several States, but not by others.** Aesthetic Practice managers or business owners should really obtain the same LSO training

because they are responsible for ensuring that their program is setup properly. LSO's may receive their training anywhere. Our MLSO course provides a certificate for 16+ contact hours of training. A Certificate of Laser Training is the common denominator for an LSO appointment. Many insurance companies will wish to see this as a minimum, and groups such as OSHA or JCAH (hospitals) may ask for it during inspections.

- 3. MLSO Certification** - This is not a requirement in any State but is a professional credential that reflects a high level of academic knowledge in this area. The MLSO Certification is being adopted by many Hospital groups for similar reasons. The acronym for the original MLSO Certification developed by the NCLC is CLSO/M.

Still Confused?

I don't blame you - and I've been doing this for more than 45 years!!

If I can help you with any general questions, please feel free to ask me - email to Absten@LaserTraining.org .

HOWEVER - I can't really help much with specific questions in your State. We are a post graduate medical education organization and don't deal directly with these regulatory issues. If you do need more in depth help I can direct you to the Boston MedTech Advisors, listed in this article, who for a fee can help you through the process. Or you can start searching your State Medical Board's website.

I am the lead member on two of the ANSI Z136.3 committee working groups on the laser training and certification, and the regulatory and legislative committees. I can tell you that we are trying to address these issues through this national committee but will need to wait until the next version of these ANSI standards are approved by the overall committee prior to discussing them.

Regards,

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<https://LaserRegistry.org>

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