



AMERICAN BOARD OF
PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

A Guide To The
**Oral Clinical
Examination (OCE)**

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Introduction to ABPD

The American Board of Pediatric Dentistry (ABPD) was founded in 1940 by the American Society of Dentistry for Children (ASDC) to address the need for specialization in pediatric dentistry. At that time, there were dentists who focused on children's dentistry, but there was no formal training or certification process.

ABPD's founders envisioned a board that would ensure dentists seeking to specialize in treating children had the necessary qualifications and skills.

Who We Are

The American Board of Pediatric Dentistry is the credentialing body for the specialty of pediatric dentistry. Our organization is responsible for creating and administering the certification exams required for the credential.

What We Do

We create the policies and procedures for certification. Together with a dedicated group of volunteer pediatric dentists, we create the content for the Qualifying Examination, Oral Clinical Examination and the Renewal of Certification Examination and Continuous Quality Improvement Modules.

Pathway to Certification



Steps to Board Certification

Board Candidacy Application

Must provide evidence of an active license with expiration date, a faculty permit, a faculty limited license, or an international dental license to engage in the practice and/or teaching of pediatric dentistry, and a copy of the certification of completion of the training program.

- Deadline: December 30 of the year participating in the QE



Board Certified

Congratulations on completing your initial certification journey!

Qualifying Examination

The examination is designed to generate evidence toward validation of the individual's advanced training in pediatric dentistry.

- Written/Computerized
- Offered at Testing Centers
- Offered Annually in May

Oral Clinical Examination

The exam enables the candidate to demonstrate proficiency in diagnosis, treatment planning, and clinical care.

- Oral Format
- Offered at one Testing Center
- May not be taken in the same year as the QE
- Must successfully complete the QE to be eligible
- If board certification is not achieved in the 7-year period after residency, a pediatric dentist can apply for the QE as a Registrant.

For a full list of certification policies, [visit our Policies and Resources page.](#)

Examinations



Spring
Testing Center Registration Open
for Qualifying Examination (QE)

January
Oral Clinical Examination (OCE)
Application Opens

August
Qualifying Examination
Application Opens

May
Qualifying Examination
Administration

November
Maintenance of
Candidacy Deadline

Fall
Oral Clinical Examination
Administration

December
QE Application Deadline
Board Candidacy Application Deadline

Pathway to Certification



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Eligibility Requirements

1

Completion of, or in the final year of an advanced education in pediatric dentistry which is accredited by Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) or the Commission of Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC).

2

Completion of, or in the final year of an advanced placement program in pediatric dentistry which is accredited by Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) or the Commission of Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC).

Note: A pediatric dentist MUST provide evidence of an active license with expiration date, a faculty permit, a faculty limited license, or an international dental license to engage in the practice and/or teaching of pediatric dentistry and a copy of the certification of completion of the training program.

Supporting documentation (copy of program certificate and current active dental license) must be included with the board candidacy application.

The deadline to apply for board candidacy is December 30. If an applicant fails to apply for board candidacy by the deadline, the applicant's QE result will be invalidated.

Please refer here to review ABPD Examination Policies.

Oral Clinical Examination

OCE

The Oral Clinical Examination is the second of a two-part American Board of Pediatric Dentistry (ABPD) certification process and is administered at a facility specifically designed for administration of professional board oral examinations.

The OCE is designed to assess the use of specialized knowledge and skills, clinical reasoning, communication, and professionalism required of entry-level pediatric dentists for safe and effective practice.

The examination is composed of two one-hour sessions administered successively by two examiners. Each session consists of clinical vignettes that are presented to the candidate for discussion. While the examination consists of a two-hour time period, check-in and identification procedures, and pre-exam orientation will require candidates to spend approximately four hours for the entire process.

Before the Test:

Application Process

The application for the OCE is available annually in January. Those applying must complete the board candidacy application prior to applying for the OCE.

Eligibility Requirements

Only candidates that have completed the board candidacy application, successfully completed the QE and have an active dental license can apply for the OCE. A candidate will not be scheduled for any of the ABPD examinations if their license to practice dentistry has been suspended or revoked.

Examination Blueprint

The examination topic areas reflect the subject matter within the specialty of pediatric dentistry and provides the framework for the assessment of knowledge. The topic areas listed are a resource in the preparation for the examination. ABPD performs a job task/practice analysis to ensure that the OCE reflects the practice of pediatric dentistry. The data from the job task analysis is used to support any future test plan modifications and also strengthen examination validity. ABPD will notify applicants of any changes to the blueprint prior to the examination application open date.

Examination Blueprint



Domain

Skill

Task

Remember

Understand
/Apply

Analyze/
Evaluate

Behavior Guidance

Weight - 14%

		X	Assess a patient's physical, psychological, and social development
		X	Assess a patient's temperament and cooperation potential
	X		Recommend a behavior guidance approach based on patient assessment
	X		Communicate with the patient and their guardian about development assessment and behavior guidance recommendations
		X	Evaluate pharmacologic options based on indications and contraindications
	X		Communicate risks and benefits of pharmacologic behavior guidance to patient and guardian, including pre and post instructions
	X		Provide non-pharmacologic behavior guidance
	X		Administer nitrous oxide analgesia, monitor, and manage adverse events
	X		Provide care for patients under moderate or deep sedation (general anesthesia), monitor, and manage/follow protocol for adverse events
		X	Prevent, assess, and manage patient pain

Examination Blueprint



Domain	Skill			Task
	Remember	Understand /Apply	Analyze/ Evaluate	
Growth & Development Weight - 8%		X		Identify dentofacial growth patterns
		X		Determine the presence of a dental, skeletal, or functional abnormality
			X	Recognize abnormal child development and make referrals as needed to medical specialists (speech therapy, ENT)
		X		Determine the need for, and interpret the findings from a panoramic radiograph to assess growth and development
		X		Diagnose and manage developing dentition (including dental, skeletal, and functional abnormalities)
		X		Determine the need for and provide appliance for space maintenance
		X		Identify the indications and mechanisms of interceptive appliances
		X		Provide early or interceptive orthodontic treatment (Phase 1)
		X		Perform a facial analysis
		X		Perform an occlusal analysis
			X	Determine the need for, and interpret the findings from a cephalometric analysis
			X	Evaluate orthodontic records, including occlusal analysis and model analysis

Examination Blueprint



Domain	Skill			Task
	Remember	Understand /Apply	Analyze/ Evaluate	
Oral Facial Injury, Emergency Care & Oral Surgery Weight - 16%			X	Assess and evaluate oral facial injuries, dental pain, and infections
			X	Evaluate, diagnose, and manage/treat dentoalveolar trauma including maxillary and mandible jaw fractures
			X	Evaluate, diagnose, and manage/treat the pulpal, periodontal and associated soft and hard tissues following traumatic injury
		X		Evaluate and manage non-accidental trauma due to child abuse or neglect
		X		Explain prognosis and potential sequelae, importance of continued care
		X		Recognize and manage a soft tissue lesion
		X		Extract teeth
		X		Suture soft tissue following extraction or intraoral laceration
		X		Manage a supernumerary tooth
		X		Manage missing teeth in mixed and immature permanent dentition
		X		Recognize indications for and discuss autotransplantation
		X		Recognize indications for and manage decoronation of tooth

Examination Blueprint



Domain	Skill			Task
	Remember	Understand /Apply	Analyze/ Evaluate	
Oral Facial Injury, Emergency Care & Oral Surgery		X		Recognize indications for and discuss implant therapy
		X		Management of third molars
			X	Manage adverse events and medical emergencies
Diagnosis, Oral Pathology, Oral Radiology, and Oral Medicine Weight - 10%			X	Recognize the normal appearance of the oral cavity (predentate, primary dentition, mixed dentition and permanent dentition)
			X	Diagnose, manage, and explain the common pediatric oral/facial anomalies
			X	Diagnose, manage, and explain the common pediatric oral/facial pathological conditions
		X		Evaluate, diagnose, and manage dental attrition
		X		Develop a radiographic survey plan based upon patient assessment
		X		Interpret radiographic images and correct errors
		X		Identify the need for antibiotic therapy and prescribe antibiotics
		X		Identify indications and evaluate options for referrals to medical and dental specialists and communicate reasons/risk to patient, parent, or guardian
		X		Identify risk factors for, diagnose, and classify gingival and periodontal disease
		X		Manage gingival and periodontal disease non-surgically

Examination Blueprint



Domain	Skill			Task
	Remember	Understand /Apply	Analyze/ Evaluate	
Diagnosis, Oral Pathology, Oral Radiology, and Oral Medicine		X		Identify the need for surgical treatment of gingival and periodontal disease and refer
		X		Evaluate and diagnose disorders of the TMJ, treat, and refer cases that are beyond scope
Prevention & Health Promotion Weight - 10%		X		Evaluate patient medical history
		X		Conduct a comprehensive oral examination
			X	Evaluate risk for caries, periodontal disease, and trauma
			X	Formulate an individual prevention plan based on medical and dental history, radiographs, and assesments
			X	Explain exam findings, risks, and recommendations to patients and guardians
		X		Use behavior change and communication strategies to motivate change in patients and/or parents or guardians
		X		Provide oral hygiene instructions and recommendations
		X		Provide diet counseling
		X		Complete oral prophylaxis/scaling/removal of plaque/calculus deposits
			X	Recommend fluoride type and treatment modality
		X		Establish recall/recare visits based on patient needs
		X		Identify and classify enamel erosion and determine the etiology

Examination Blueprint



Domain	Skill			Task
	Remember	Understand /Apply	Analyze/ Evaluate	
Dental Caries Diagnosis, Non-Restorative Caries Management and Restorative Treatment Weight - 17%			X	Detect caries lesions and determine diagnose techniques
			X	Diagnose caries through visual, tactile, and radiographic techniques
			X	Develop and implement a systematic approach to assess caries progression, arrest, or remineralization for primary or permanent teeth
		X		Perform non-operative caries management/treatment in primary and permanent dentition
		X		Recognize indications for and apply sealants for primary and permanent tethh
		X		Manage minimally invasive restorative treatment for primary and permanent teeth and prescribe follow-up reassessment plan
		X		Excavate deep caries (partial or complete removal) in primary and permanent teeth (indirect pulp treatment)
		X		Manage enamel erosion with preventative and restorative techniques for primary and permanent teeth
		X		Manage esthetic concerns in the primary and permanent dentition
		X		Manage hypoplastic and hypomineralized teeth in primary and permanent dentition
		X		Restore primary and permanent teeth with amalgam

Examination Blueprint



Domain	Skill			Task
	Remember	Understand /Apply	Analyze/ Evaluate	
Dental Caries Diagnosis, Non-Restorative Caries Management and Restorative Treatment		X		Restore primary and permanent teeth with composite
		X		Restore primary and permanent teeth with glass ionomer
		X		Restore primary and permanent teeth with stainless steel crown
		X		Restore primary and permanent incisors with composite crown
		X		Restore primary incisors, canines, and molars with zirconia crown
			X	Identify the indications for prosthetic therapy in the primary and permanent dentition
Pulp Therapy Weight - 8%			X	Recognize, assess, and diagnose and explain pulpal pathology of primary and permanent teeth
		X		Recognize indications for and perform vital pulp therapy in primary anterior teeth and molars
		X		Recognize indications for and perform non-vital pulp therapy in primary anterior teeth and molars
		X		Recognize indications for and perform vital pulp therapy in permanent anterior and posterior teeth
		X		Recognize indications for and perform non-vital pulp therapies in permanent anterior teeth
		X		Recognize indications for and understand the techniques for non-vital pulp therapies in permanent posterior teeth

Examination Blueprint



Domain	Skill			Task
	Remember	Understand /Apply	Analyze/ Evaluate	
Pulp Therapy		X		Recognize indications for and understand the technique for apexogenesis
		X		Recognize indications for and understand the techniques for apexification
		X		Recognize indications for and understand the techniques for regenerative endodontics
Special Health Care Needs Weight - 8%			X	Recognize special health care needs (congenital or acquired) in patients and the challenges of providing dental care for individuals with these needs
		X		Identify and manage common oral manifestations often associated with special healthcare needs
		X		Explain the relationship between oral health and general health to patients, guardians, or other medical providers
			X	Modify treatment modality based on special health care needs
		X		Discuss the impact of special health care needs on oral health and growth and development with patients and guardians, including alternative treatment goals
		X		Provide guidance to patients and guardians on ways to prevent oral disease and minimize the impact of syndromes, diseases, conditions, or disorders on oral health
			X	Identify patients who have special healthcare needs that require the care of an interdisciplinary team and coordinate care with the interdisciplinary team(s)

Examination Blueprint



Domain	Skill			Task
	Remember	Understand /Apply	Analyze/ Evaluate	
Advocacy and Education Weight - 4%		X		Maintain social and cultural awareness during patient care
		X		Explain the importance of the dental home and early pediatric care
		X		Advocate for patients to receive needed care and refer patients and guardians to social support resources, including community-based oral health programs and care opportunities
		X		Participate at the local, state and/or national levels in organized dentistry in its advocacy for public health policy, legislation, and regulations to protect and promote the oral health needs of children.
Elements of Pediatric Dental Practice Weight - 5%		X		Practice in a professional and ethical manner
		X		Employ principles and mechanisms of infection control and safety practices to ensure a safe patient care environment (by following professional organization guidelines and complying with local, state and national standards/regulations)
		X		Develop and follow protocols for clinical practice including safety, technology, privacy, licensing, malpractice, billing, and security
		X		Develop and follow protocols for teledentistry including safety, technology, privacy, licensing, malpractice, billing, and security
		X		Maintain privacy of protected health information according to HIPAA
			X	Continually evaluate the practice for adherence to professional standards (e.g., evidence-based dentistry, practice, policies)
			X	Evaluate research articles for application to clinical practice

Who is involved in content development?



ABPD utilizes subject matter experts (SME) to develop examination content.



How is the content initially developed?

All items are supported by scientific resources or accepted protocols and go through multiple reviews by SMEs and psychometricians to ensure correctness.

How is ABPD improving exam content?



ABPD reviews vignette performance to identify items that require refinement and editing by an SME.

Examination Timeline



6 Months Before

ABPD will assign a candidate's date approximately six months before the administration of the examination. Candidates will receive detailed information via email regarding registration, examination location, and schedule.

All travel-related expenses are the responsibility of the candidate. .



Day of the Examination

On the day of the examination, candidates are required to report to registration before the exam. Candidates are required to bring a government-issued photo ID and will be required to sign ABPD's Examination Agreement. Before the start of the exam, candidates will go through a short orientation at the testing center. After orientation, they will have a short break to use restroom facilities.

Test Preparation Strategies



Textbooks



Journals



Role Playing



**Continuing
Education**

The Oral Clinical Examination is designed to assess the candidate's clinical knowledge and judgement.

While there is no standard method to prepare for the OCE, candidates should consider attending continuing education courses, reviewing pediatric dentistry textbooks, keeping current by reading contemporary journals and/or examination role playing with colleagues.

Additional preparation information can be found on the ABPD website.

Examinations



OCE

Need to Know Info

Format

The examination is administered at a facility specifically designed for administration of professional specialty board oral examinations.

The examination is composed of two one-hour sessions administered successively by two examiners. Each session consists of clinical vignettes that are presented to the candidate for discussion.

Examiners utilize 'open-ended' questions to assess the candidate's knowledge and skills.

Timing

While the examination consists of a two-hour time period, check-in and identification procedures, and pre-exam orientation will require the candidate to spend approximately four hours for the entire process.

Language

The examination is conducted using only the English language.

Monitoring

To assist with training, candidate examinations will be monitored. Examinations are not recorded, and monitoring will be used in connection with ABPD's training and calibration of OCE examiners.

Integrity

No personal items (including but not limited to pagers, cellular phones, computers, recording devices, smartwatches, reference materials including personal notes, purses, backpacks or briefcases) will be permitted in the examination room. Lockers will be provided to store any personal items.

The presence of any of the above devices will be cause for immediate dismissal from the examination and an automatic failure. No communication between examinees will be allowed during the examination. Failure to comply may invalidate the results and prompt referral to the ABPD's Ethics Committee.

After the Test

Scoring

ABPD contracts with a professional testing organization to develop a format designed to ensure the reliability, validity, and objectivity of the exam in order to identify those individuals who possess the necessary knowledge, skill and judgement to achieve Diplomate status. The scoring of the OCE relies on ratings provided by the examiners that allow for the calibration of all examination facts, including candidate scaled scores and candidate outcomes. Therefore, the quality of the examiners' ratings and usefulness to the scoring model is closely monitored.

ABPD utilizes the following criteria for scoring:

Score 3

The candidate showed a full understanding/application or analysis/evaluation of the knowledge and skills, clinical reasoning, communication, and professionalism required for safe and effective practice for the task being assessed.

Score 2

The candidate showed less than a full understanding/application or analysis/evaluation of the knowledge and skills, clinical reasoning, communication, and professionalism required for safe and effective practice for the task being assessed.

Score 1

The candidate did not show accurate understanding/application or analysis/evaluation of the knowledge and skills, clinical reasoning, communication, and professionalism required for safe and effective practice for the task being assessed.

The examiners independently score each skillset based on the candidate's response. Examiners do not discuss scores or come to a consensus. To assure valid and reliable examinations, the examiners are not allowed to give candidates any feedback on their responses.

Candidates are encouraged to apply knowledge to a clinical situation, defend a point of view in a convincing manner and not use stalling tactics by being excessively slow in response, leading to insufficient information in the time allotted. It is most important that the candidate proceeds through all skillsets in the vignette.

Examination Results

Examination results are available within 8 weeks of the exam administration. Examination performance is reported on a Pass/Fail basis. In addition, unsuccessful candidates will receive additional information. Candidate scores are intended to compare performance against a criterion standard, and using the scores for other intentions would be a misuse of the test score.

ABPD provides outcome reports to CODA and CDAC advanced education in pediatric dentistry programs. The report includes a mean scaled score for those for those completing their training programs. The outcome report should only be used to evaluate the program's performance.

Assessment Score Verification Policy

Score verification is available to candidates who would like to verify the accuracy of their reported scores. In verifying a candidate's OCE score, we will verify that the examiners' ratings for the candidate were accurately recorded, recalculate the scaled score, and verify that the scaled score and Pass/Fail decision were accurately reported to the candidate.

Examiners will not reevaluate the examinee performance. We employ extensive and rigorous quality control procedures to ensure the accuracy of the assessment results reported to our candidates and have no record of a discrepancy ever being detected, therefore, candidates are strongly discouraged from requesting this service.

Candidate who wish to request a score verification must contact staff to gain access to the score verification form within six weeks of the official release date of examination results.

Re-Examination Policy

A candidate who fails the OCE may retake the examination annually. If a candidate fails to successfully complete the OCE during their eligibility period, the QE score is forfeited and they must start the process over as a registrant.

