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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 Pre-application.

### **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 NMMS**

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.

The New Mexico Medical Society (NMMS) is recognized by the ACCME as an accreditor of CME providers in New Mexico whose target audience is composed of no more than 30% of physician learners from outside New Mexico and its contiguous states. NMMS’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).

### **NMMS’s Expectations**

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

- Eligible organizations that decide to apply for NMMS accreditation should be prepared to both describe and furnish evidence that demonstrates compliance with the Accreditation Requirements. For this reason, organizations considering applying for NMMS 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 NMMS-accredited) or can be offered without formal CME credit. One of these activities should be completed before the Pre-application is written.
- NMMS expects its accredited providers to monitor their overall CME program on a regular basis for compliance with the Accreditation Requirements.
- NMMS-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 NMMS accreditation. NMMS fees are:
  - \$250 Pre-application
  - \$500 Self Study, Initial or Reaccreditation
  - Annual Fee, Single organization
    - \$550 for 2020 (minimum) – please see Policies and Procedures for full fee schedule

### **Eligibility to Apply for NMMS Accreditation**

The organization must:

- Be located in New Mexico;
- 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 New Mexico 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 NMMS, 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 NMMS Essential Areas, Their Elements and Criteria and Policies.

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

### **The Pre-application Process**

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

Once your organization has completed and submitted to NMMS the Pre-application and the non-refundable \$150 Pre-application fee, NMMS 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 Pre-application.

## 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 NMMS accreditation. Once the Self Study Report is received your organization will be invoiced for the \$250 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 NMMS'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 make their recommendations to the NMMS Continuing Medical Education Accreditation Committee for a final accreditation decision. The decision will be Initial Provisional Accreditation for two years or non-accreditation.