

In general, certification boards consist of respected professionals in a particular area of professional practice who develop standards for education, training, and experience that are required before one can become "certified" in a particular professional discipline. Successful completion of a written and/or practical examination is also usually required. In essence, "certification" usually means that a particular individual has completed a defined course of education, training, and experience, and has passed an examination prepared by peers which demonstrates that the individual has obtained at least the minimum level of competence required to practice the specific discipline. A number of "Certification Boards" exist for people in various scientific disciplines who may be involved in death investigation through their presence at death scenes or the processing or interpretation of evidence. When a person becomes certified, that person is usually referred to as a "Diplomat" of the respective board.

A list of the various Boards follows along with a brief description and links to their web sites where additional information may be obtained.

The American Board of Criminalistics (ABC) provides a peer-reviewed certification program using written examination and proficiency testing. Criminalistics is dedicated to the recognition, collection, identification, and individualization of physical evidence and the application of natural science to the law. Certification examinations are available for General Knowledge, Forensic Biology, Drug Identification, Fire Debris Analysis, and Trace Evidence Examination. More information on the ABC may be obtained at <http://www.criminalistics.com/abc>

The American Board of Forensic Anthropology (ABFA) offers certification in the principles of physical anthropology as they are applied to skeletal, badly decomposed, or otherwise unidentified human remains to assist in the detection of crime, identification of the remains, determination of the postmortem interval, and in the development of information about age, sex, stature, and other unique features of the remains. Certification is based on review of education, training, and experience as well as formal examinations. Further information about the ABFA is available at <http://www.csuchico.edu/anth/ABFA>

The American Board of Forensic Document Examiners (ABFDE) provides a certification program for forensic handwriting comparison and comparison of other facets of questioned document authenticity and origin. Certification is based on education, experience, achievement, and a written examination. Further information on ABFDE is available on its web site at <http://www.asqde.org/abfde.htm>

The American Board of Forensic Odontology (ABFO) offers certification to those with a DDS, DMD, or equivalent degree in dentistry and is based on education, experience, and written and oral examination. Diplomats of the ABFO specialize in bite mark analysis and dental examinations used for identifying deceased individuals and their characteristics. Further information may be obtained at <http://www.abfo.org>

The **American Board of Forensic Toxicology** (ABFT) offers certification based on education, training, experience, achievement, and written examination. Diplomats of the ABFT are usually involved in the laboratory testing of various bodily or other specimens for the presence and quantity of various drugs, poisons, and other substances, and often assess the possible biologic/physical significance of such substances, when present.

The **American Board of Pathology** (ABP) offers certification to physicians in anatomic pathology, clinical pathology, forensic pathology, and other subspecialty areas of pathology. Certification is based on education, training, experience, and a written examination. Diplomats of the ABP are often involved in death investigation as a medical examiner, coroner, or autopsy pathologist who provides services to a medical examiner or coroner.

The **American Board of Forensic Psychiatry** (ABFP) offers certification in forensic psychiatry as a specialty board within the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. Diplomats of the ABFP are often involved in issues of competency to stand trial and victim or suspect psychiatric diagnosis or behavioral profiling.

The American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators offers Registry and Certification as a medicolegal death investigator. See <http://www.slu.edu/organizations/abmdi/>