

# **Advertising Policies** *for Diplomates*



**American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery®**

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## Introduction

Congratulations on attaining your ABFAS Board Certified status! This is a major professional achievement and a career milestone, and the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery (ABFAS) salutes foot and ankle surgeons who display the dedication and surgical knowledge necessary to achieve Board Certification.

ABFAS is proud of its Diplomates. Communicating your Board Certification to patients, employers, colleagues, and the general public will enhance your reputation and standing. ABFAS offers resources for Diplomates to promote their status. One of these is this document.

The Board of Directors has adopted these policies to assist Diplomates in communicating and advertising their Board Certification status appropriately and professionally and may implement changes when and as it sees fit. All advertising should convey professional values, attitudes, and demeanor. These policies can help protect and enhance the public image of foot and ankle surgery.

Much of this is common sense, but in the event questions arise about a surgeon's advertising practices or content, the Board of Directors has established a process (see page 5) whereby it evaluates Diplomates' advertisements. The Board of Directors maintains records of policy violations, and, when necessary, reprimands Diplomates.

These policies apply to ABFAS Diplomates, including Diplomates of both ABFAS and the American Board of Ambulatory Foot Surgery (ABAFTS).

## Individual Responsibility

Diplomates are responsible for their own advertising statements, as well as those others make on their behalf. Diplomates should share this document with administrative staff, marketing and communications professionals, graphic designers, webmasters, advertising agencies, or anyone who may communicate on their behalf.

## What does ABFAS mean by “Advertising”?

Advertising includes, but is not limited to:

1. Any written statement used for promotional purposes, such as letters, letterheads, business cards, signs, billboards, newspapers, magazines, flyers, directories, or any documents that may be circulated to the general public.
2. Any electronic or other means of advertising, such as websites, social media, email, television, or radio capable of conveying either the content or actual reproduction of the Diplomate's words, image, or written statements used for promotional purposes.

Ads may include a Diplomate's service on the Board of Directors, e.g., Past President, President, Vice President, or Secretary/Treasurer. However, roles such as committee chair, examination subcommittee member, item writer, case reviewer, or other official ABFAS committee assignment

should be omitted.

ABFAS does encourage Board Certified surgeons to list committee service on curricula vitae, job applications, and other documentation for review within the profession.

## Using the Registered Trademark Symbol

The organization name “American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery” is the intellectual property of ABFAS and is a registered trademark. When spelling out the full name on official communications such as print advertisements, signage, and letterhead, follow it with the registered trademark symbol (®). This is not necessary in less formal uses such as on curricula vitae, in biographical information that may be reviewed by the public, in correspondence, or when using acronyms such as ABFAS.

## Status as an ABFAS Diplomate

Surgeons who have completed ABFAS Board Certification requirements can refer to themselves as a “Diplomate” or as “Board Certified.” Diplomates certified only in Foot Surgery should not claim certification in Reconstructive Rearfoot and Ankle Surgery. You cannot state you are an ABFAS Diplomate if you are non-compliant with the LEAD program or have a revoked status.

Please do not use the term “Board Certified” without identifying ABFAS. Please identify ABFAS before listing the specific certification. Here are some examples of appropriate uses:

For Diplomates who became ABFAS Board Certified prior to 1991, you may use the following designation:

Jane G. Doe, DPM  
Diplomate, ABFAS®

Jane G. Doe, DPM  
Diplomate of the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery®

Jane G. Doe, DPM  
Diplomate, American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery®

Jane G. Doe, DPM  
Diplomate, American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery®  
Certified in Foot and Ankle Surgery

For Diplomates who became ABFAS Board Certified in 1991 and after, you may use the following designation:

John A. Doe, DPM  
Diplomate, ABFAS®  
Certified in Foot Surgery

John A. Doe, DPM  
Diplomate, American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery®  
Certified in Foot Surgery

John A. Doe, DPM  
Diplomate, ABFAS®  
Certified in Foot Surgery and Reconstructive Rearfoot and Ankle Surgery

John A. Doe, DPM  
Diplomate, American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery®  
Certified in Foot Surgery and Reconstructive Rearfoot and Ankle Surgery

John A. Doe, DPM  
ABFAS Board Certified in Foot Surgery and Reconstructive Rearfoot and Ankle Surgery

## Group Advertising

Please apply both the letter and spirit of these policies to group advertisements: communications promoting a particular physician partnership or the physicians in a particular geographic area. An ad should only use a blanket statement about Board Certification if all physicians in the practice are ABFAS Board Certified. Another option: clearly designate Board Certifications individually.

## ABFAS Certification Mark

ABFAS welcomes Diplomates using the ABFAS logo to help communicate their status, and requests that Diplomates who choose to do so follow some simple guidelines. This is the ABFAS logo:



The logo is the intellectual property of ABFAS. If an ad includes the logo, all service providers listed should be Board Certified. Surgeons should stop using the logo if they lapse in payment of the ABFAS annual fee or cease being an ABFAS Diplomate in good standing.

Contact ABFAS to execute a trademark agreement that will allow you to use the logo.

## Advertising Review and Correction

If ABFAS becomes aware that a physician misrepresents their Board Certification status or incorrectly claims they are an ABFAS Diplomate, ABFAS will contact the physician to discuss misleading or deceptive advertising. The purpose of this review is to protect the brand and integrity of ABFAS and its Diplomates, not to engage in punitive or heavy-handed monitoring. That stated, sometimes correction becomes necessary.

ABFAS reserves the right to review use of any branded elements as outlined in this document, and to request samples for review. ABFAS may reprimand physicians it finds to be in violation, or to be engaging in misleading or deceptive advertising, and maintains records of policy violations. Corrective actions appear here.

- A. **ABFAS Diplomates.** If a Diplomate advertises in a deceptive or misleading manner, the Board of Directors will notify them by letter that their advertisement is undergoing review. The Board may take one or more of the following actions at its discretion:
1. Issue a letter of warning that the Board will take further action if the Diplomates does not immediately halt the violation.
  2. Impose a fine of up to \$5,000.
  3. Revoke Diplomate status. The Board of Directors will notify the Diplomate that their Diplomate status will be revoked and shall conduct a fair hearing as specified in the ABFAS Bylaws.
  4. Notify the physician's state licensing board of any false or misleading advertisements pertaining to ABFAS status.
- B. **Non-ABFAS Affiliated.** If a physician (or any person) without ABFAS status falsely represents affiliation with ABFAS, the Board of Directors will notify them by letter that they must cease and desist from advertising in a false and misleading manner and that their advertisement is undergoing review. The Board may take one or more of the following actions:
1. Issue a letter of warning that the Board may take further action if the physician does not immediately correct the advertisement.
  2. Prohibit the physician from applying for ABFAS status for a period to be determined by the Board.
  3. Notify the physician's state licensing board of any false or misleading advertisements pertaining to ABFAS status.

## Further Information

To seek additional guidance, consult ABFAS by calling 415.553.7800. For more information on ABFAS, visit [abfas.org](http://abfas.org).