

**NBCOT**<sup>®</sup> | National Board for  
Certification in  
Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapist Registered OTR<sup>®</sup>  
Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant COTA<sup>®</sup>

# Certification Renewal Handbook

NBCOT<sup>®</sup> Certification  
Programs are accredited by



# Certification Renewal Handbook

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AOTCB/NBCOT Certification Renewal - ID59 rev 20180222

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Certification Renewal	2
Credential Status	3
When to Renew Your Certification	3
Certification Renewal Requirements & Tools	4
NBCOT Navigator®	5
NBCOT Certificant Attestation	6
NBCOT Practice Standards/Code of Conduct	6
The Renewal Application	8
How to Renew Your Certification	8
Renewing Within Renewal Year	8
The Reinstatement Process	9
Fee Schedule at a Glance	10
After You Renew Your Certification	10
Certification Renewal Audit	10
Active Duty-Military Personnel	11
Special Circumstance	11
Appeals Procedure	11
Certification Information & Updates	12
Still Have Questions?	12

# INTRODUCTION

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The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. (NBCOT®) is the national certification body for occupational therapy professionals in the United States.

The mission of NBCOT is to serve the public interest by advancing client care and professional practice through evidence-based certification standards and the validation of knowledge essential for effective practice in occupational therapy. NBCOT's vision is certified occupational therapy professionals providing effective evidence-based services across all areas of practice worldwide.

Currently 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia require NBCOT initial certification for occupational therapy state regulation, (e.g., licensing).

NBCOT certification programs have received and maintained accreditation by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). NBCOT is a proud member of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE).

## ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook has been developed to provide you with the information you will need to renew your NBCOT certification. NBCOT recognizes the responsibility certificants assume when renewing their certification and our aim is to provide a smooth and positive renewal experience. If you have further questions after reading this handbook, please visit [www.nbcot.org](http://www.nbcot.org), email [recert@nbcot.org](mailto:recert@nbcot.org), or phone (301) 990-7979.

# CERTIFICATION RENEWAL

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Initial certification is just the beginning of your professional journey with NBCOT. Underpinning our mission to serve the public interest it is our belief that certification is a lifelong tool for the continuous professional development of the certified occupational therapy practitioner. We are a resource for your professional development throughout your career, offering you the tools you need to advance your competence and prepare for new professional challenges. Certification renewal recognizes that the OTR or COTA has met a national standard for professionalism and promotes continued professional development. We believe that continually supporting your practice has long-term benefits for all stakeholders.

The certification renewal requirement and tools were developed using NBCOT's certification renewal practice analysis study with input from key stakeholder groups including practitioners, employers, and regulators. The certification renewal requirement and associated professional development options are consistent with generally accepted requisites for OT licensure renewal.

## YOUR CREDENTIAL STATUS

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**Active in Good Standing:** Individuals currently certified with NBCOT and who have met the certification renewal requirements are Active in Good Standing. These individuals can identify themselves to the public as an OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST REGISTERED® OTR or CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT® COTA. These individuals can use the OTR or COTA credential after their name.

**Retired in Good Standing:** OTR and COTA certificants who are Active in Good Standing with NBCOT can request their certification status be changed to Retired in Good Standing. Certificants MUST notify NBCOT of this status change and complete the *Retired in Good Standing Application* within their renewal year. Once the application has been processed, retired certificants can identify themselves to the public as an OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST REGISTERED (OTR), Retired or CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT (COTA), Retired. These individuals can use 'OTR, Retired' or 'COTA, Retired' after their name.

**Noncompliant-Inactive:** Individuals who do not satisfy the NBCOT certification renewal requirement by their scheduled renewal date are Noncompliant-Inactive and CANNOT 1) identify themselves to the public as an OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST REGISTERED OTR or CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT COTA or 2) use the OTR or COTA credential after their name.

## WHEN TO RENEW YOUR CERTIFICATION

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NBCOT certification is granted for a three-year period. Certificants who complete all certification renewal requirements by their scheduled renewal date will be granted Active in Good Standing certification status for another three-year period. The certification renewal season occurs between January and March annually, regardless of the month indicated on the certificant's initial certification document. Certificants who do not submit their certification renewal application by the scheduled renewal date will have their certification status changed to Noncompliant-Inactive. An individual who has Noncompliant-Inactive certification cannot use the OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST REGISTERED® OTR or CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT® COTA certification marks.

# CERTIFICATION RENEWAL REQUIREMENTS & TOOLS

## ACCRUING THE CERTIFICATION RENEWAL REQUIREMENTS

Certificants must accrue at least 36 units during their three-year renewal cycle. Units can be obtained through a combination of Competency Assessment Units (CAU) and Professional Development Units (PDU). Accepted activities are listed in the *Certification Renewal Activities Chart*.

Certificants who renewed their certification in 2015 are permitted to carry over up to 10 units earned during their 2012–2015 renewal cycle, provided that the 10 units were in excess of the 36 units required for their 2015 certification renewal.

If audited, certificants must provide documentation from the previous cycle to show the excess units being carried forward.

## HOW TO CONVERT CEU TO PDU

Continuing Education Units (CEU) and contact hours can be converted into PDU as described in the chart below. Certificants can convert CEU to PDU using the PDU Calculator available through their MyNBCOT account under Renewal Log.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNITS (PDU) CONVERSION CHART		
1 contact hour (not to include meals or breaks)	=	1 PDU
1 clock hour (not to include meals or breaks)	=	1 PDU
0.1 Continuing Education Unit (CEU)	=	1 PDU
One contact hour earned through successfully completed education (workshops, seminars, online courses, or conferences) with an assessment component at the end of the program (scored test, project, paper) provided by AOTA; AOTA-approved providers; IACET-authorized providers; or regionally accredited colleges or universities	=	1.25 PDU

The Navigator is a virtual platform housing a web-based assessment delivery engine and certificant dashboard. The platform is designed to interface with a series of tools to support certificants' continued competency. Through the platform, certificants can identify and access resources related to specific practice areas, receive feedback and track performance on an array of assessment tools, and organize documentation of completed continuing competency.

NBCOT enables occupational therapy professionals to earn Competency Assessment Units (CAU) toward their certification renewal requirements. These interactive tools are also designed to help employers facilitate the ongoing continuing competency and certification process of their occupational therapists and therapy assistants.

Certificants can access the Navigator through the MyNBCOT portal on [www.nbcot.org](http://www.nbcot.org). The tool suite can help prepare occupational therapists and therapy assistants for certification renewal, accrue CAU, and stay current in their practice areas year-round.

Navigator highlights 11 different primary practice areas:

- ★ Orthopedics
- ★ Rehabilitation
- ★ Skilled Nursing
- ★ Mental Health
- ★ Home Health
- ★ Pediatrics
- ★ Geriatrics
- ★ Education/Research
- ★ Work & Industry
- ★ Admin/Management
- ★ Health & Wellness

### Navigator Tools:

- ★ Self-Reflection Questionnaire
- ★ Case Simulations
- ★ Mini Practice Quizzes
- ★ OT Knowledge Library
- ★ PICO
- ★ Physical Agent Modalities
- ★ Orthotic Builder

At the end of every tool, a customized feedback report and recommended reading list is shown.

### DID YOU KNOW?

*Units earned through Navigator are also accepted by the **following states** towards their licensure renewal requirements.*

## NBCOT CERTIFICANT ATTESTATION

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Below is the complete attestation statement to which a certificant must agree and sign in order to renew their certification.

By my signature, I attest that the information I submit in this application and in any required accompanying or subsequent documentation is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Additionally, I understand that persons who apply for certification as an OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST REGISTERED OTR® or CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT COTA®, or persons who have been certified by NBCOT, are subject to NBCOT's Procedures for the Enforcement of the NBCOT's Candidate/Certificant Code of Conduct.

I understand NBCOT reserves the right to not accept or delay approval of this application. I also understand that I may be subject to audit at any time and that NBCOT reserves the right to take action for failure to comply with the audit procedures.

In order to maintain my certification, I understand that from time-to-time NBCOT may amend its requirements, policies, and procedures to include: initial certification, certification renewal, and Procedures for the Enforcement of the Candidate/Certificant Code of Conduct.

During my renewal cycle, I agree to notify NBCOT in writing immediately if I fail to comply with the Candidate/Certificant Code of Conduct.

I also agree to notify NBCOT in writing of any address or name change(s) within thirty (30) days after the change becomes effective. If requested to do so, NBCOT may verify my certification status.

I attest that I have completed all certification renewal requirements.

## NBCOT PRACTICE STANDARDS/CODE OF CONDUCT

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NBCOT has a responsibility to promote and maintain standards of professional conduct in the practice of occupational therapy. In order to protect the public, those applying for NBCOT certification must abide by the Practice Standards/Code of Conduct.

Certificants or certification applicants who do not meet the code of conduct standards are subject to the Procedures for the Enforcement of the NBCOT Practice Standards/Code of Conduct. These procedures enable NBCOT to protect the rights of candidates and certificants while upholding NBCOT's responsibilities as a certifying agency to the public.



# NBCOT® PRACTICE STANDARDS/ CODE OF CONDUCT

## Preamble

The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. ("NBCOT," formerly known as "AOTCB") is a professional organization that supports and promotes occupational therapy practitioner certification. This Candidate/Certificant Code of Conduct enables NBCOT to define and clarify the professional responsibilities for present and future NBCOT certifiants, i.e., OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST REGISTERED OTR® (OTR) henceforth OTR, and CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT COTA® (COTA) henceforth COTA.

It is vital that NBCOT certifiants conduct their work in a professional manner to earn and maintain the confidence and respect of recipients of occupational therapy, colleagues, employers, students, and the public.

As certified professionals in the field of occupational therapy, NBCOT certifiants will at all times act with integrity and adhere to high standards for personal and professional conduct, accept responsibility for their actions, both personally and professionally, continually seek to enhance their professional capabilities, practice with competence, fairness and honesty, abide by all federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and encourage others to act in a professional manner consistent with the Practice Standards and responsibilities set forth below.

Where the term "certificant" is used, the term "applicant or candidate" is included in its scope.

## Principle 1

Certifiants shall provide accurate and truthful representations to NBCOT concerning all information related to aspects of the Certification Program, including, but not limited to:

- The submission of information on the exam application, certification renewal applications, or the renewal audit form;
- Abiding by all exam related security policies;
- The submission of information requested by NBCOT for alleged violations of NBCOT's policies, requirements and standards or
- The submission of information regarding his/her credential(s), professional license(s) and/or education.

## Principle 2

Certifiants who are the subject of a qualifications and compliance review shall cooperate with NBCOT concerning investigations and requests for relevant information.

## Principle 3

Certifiants shall be accurate, truthful, and complete in any and all communications, direct or indirect, with any client, employer, regulatory agency, or other parties as they relate to their professional work, education, professional credentials, research and contributions to the field of occupational therapy.

## Principle 4

Certifiants shall comply with state and/or federal laws, regulations, and statutes governing the practice of occupational therapy.

## Principle 5

Certifiants shall not have been convicted of a crime, the circumstances of which substantially relate to the practice of occupational therapy or indicate an inability to engage in the practice of occupational therapy safely, and/or competently.

## Principle 6

Certifiants shall not engage in behavior or conduct, lawful or otherwise that causes them to be, or reasonably perceived to be, a threat or potential threat to the health, well-being, or safety of recipients or potential recipients of occupational therapy services.

## Principle 7

Certifiants shall not engage in the practice of occupational therapy while one's ability to practice is impaired due to chemical (i.e., legal and/or illegal) drug or alcohol abuse.

## Principle 8

Certifiants shall not electronically post personal health information or anything, including photos, that may reveal a patient's/client's identity or personal or therapeutic relationship. (All statements, regardless of intent, about a patient/client can potentially contain sufficient information for a member of a community to recognize the patient/client thus, violating the state and/or federal law (i.e. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)).

## Principle 9

Certifiants shall not misuse NBCOT's intellectual property, certification marks, logos, or other copyrighted materials. This includes all NBCOT exam preparation tools, website or exam content. Disclosure of practice test questions or examination material content, including examination questions, is strictly prohibited.

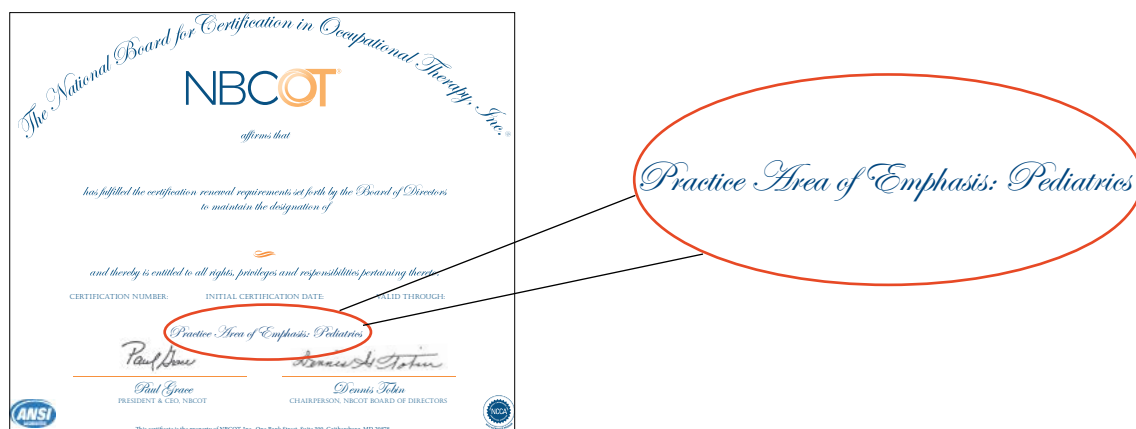
Approved June 2002 Revised February 2003	Revised June 2006 Revised October 2008	Revised January 2010	Revised November 2011	Revised October 2013	Revised February 2014	Revised March 2014	Revised October 2016
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# THE RENEWAL APPLICATION

Certificants may either renew online or by mail using the paper application. The application consists of four sections:

- **Background information**—The certificant must enter all information requested related to their background. They may also request a name change if needed.
- **Renewal information**—The certificant must verify that they have completed the renewal requirements within the last three (3) years. They will also need to choose one primary area of practice and indicate the number of units that directly relate to that area. If the certificant has a minimum of 24 units that directly relate to their Practice Area of Emphasis\* they will have the option to have it printed on their certificate.

*\*Please note, recording a Practice Area of Emphasis on the certificate does not connote a specialty certification or advanced practitioner certification.*



- **Practice information**—The certificant will answer questions pertaining to their practice.
- **Signature and Attestation**—A certificant must read, sign, and date the [attestation statement](#).

## HOW TO RENEW YOUR CERTIFICATION

### RENEWING WITHIN RENEWAL YEAR

In order for certificants to renew their certification within their renewal year, they must:

1. Fulfill the requirement of 36 units.
2. Read and agree to abide by the [NBCOT Certificant Attestation](#).
3. Complete the online renewal application or mail in a paper renewal application.
4. Pay the associated fees.

## THE REINSTATEMENT PROCESS

### Renewing Within One Missed Renewal Period

Sally renews her certification on time in 2012. At the end of 2014, Sally elects to take a career break and decides not to renew her certification when it's due in 2015. In January 2018, she wishes to renew her certification. In order to renew, she would have to do the following:

- Submit a completed *Reinstatement of Certification Renewal Application*, available online through MyNBCOT
- Submit proof of completing the 36 units within the last three years
- Provide proof of satisfactory completion of the NBCOT OTR® and COTA® General Practice Self-Assessment Tool

### Renewing Outside One or More Missed Renewal Periods

Brian does not renew his certification when it was due in 2015. In June 2018, he wishes to renew his certification. In order to renew, he would have to do the following:

- Submit a completed *Reinstatement of Certification Renewal Application*, which is available online through MyNBCOT
- Submit proof of completing 12 units from PDU ID #s 14, 15 and/or 17 as stated on the Certification Renewal Activities Chart
- Submit proof of completing 18 PDU from any activities listed on the Certification Renewal Activities Chart
- Complete 6 CAU including the Self-Reflection through the Navigator. (Access will be provided once the application is received.)

If your application is approved, you will receive an updated certificate.

If the reinstatement application is not approved, NBCOT will notify the certificant within 20 business days of receipt of the application. The certificant will be advised of the deficiencies and the measures available for rectifying them. The status of the application can also be viewed online through the MyNBCOT portal.

A reinstatement application is valid for four (4) months from its initial submission date. **Applicants who do not address deficiencies within that time will need to submit a new reinstatement application and fee in order to complete the renewal process. The original application fee is nonrefundable.**

## FEE SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Online Certification Renewal Fee	\$65
Paper Certification Renewal Fee	\$75
Late Fee (applications submitted AFTER March 31st of the scheduled renewal year)*	\$25
Reinstatement of Certification Renewal Application Fee (within 1 missed renewal cycle)	\$115
Reinstatement of Certification Renewal Application Fee (outside 1 missed renewal cycle)	\$150
Returned Check Fee	\$35
Credit Card Challenge Fee	\$35
Application Withdrawal Processing Fee	\$40

*\*All fees are non refundable. Certificants submitting their renewal application AFTER the scheduled renewal date will automatically be charged a late fee. It is the certificant's responsibility to know their certification renewal date.*

## AFTER YOU RENEW YOUR CERTIFICATION

Certificants should allow up to three to four (3-4) weeks from the date their application is processed to receive their certificate and wallet card in the mail. Certificants may check their renewal status online by logging into their MyNBCOT account. Certificants who do not receive their certificate within six (6) weeks should email NBCOT at [recert@nbcot.org](mailto:recert@nbcot.org). The email should include the certificant's full name, certification number, the type of application submitted (online or paper), and the payment method used to renew. **Certificants must contact NBCOT within two (2) months of renewing their certification in order to be reissued a certificate at no cost. Certificants who do not contact NBCOT within this time will need to request a duplicate certificate by logging into their MyNBCOT account.**

## CERTIFICATION RENEWAL AUDIT

All OTR and COTA certificants who renew their NBCOT certification are subject to a random audit of their compliance with the professional development requirements. The number of certificants audited will be sufficient to provide a 95% confidence level regarding the renewal rate of OTR and COTA certificants. To complete the audit successfully, the certificant must submit evidence of attaining 36 units. Certificants should maintain all of their documentation for one (1) full year after renewing their certification in the event that they are audited.

Any certificant who is selected and does not successfully complete the audit will have their certification status changed to Noncompliant-Inactive. Noncompliant-Inactive certification means an individual cannot use the OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST REGISTERED® OTR or CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT® COTA certification marks. In order to regain certification, a reinstatement application would need to be submitted. (See [pages 8 and 9](#).)

## ACTIVE-DUTY MILITARY PERSONNEL

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Active-duty military personnel who experience difficulties fulfilling the NBCOT certification renewal requirement while serving on long-term deployments overseas are urged to contact the NBCOT Certification Renewal Department for assistance at [recert@nbcot.org](mailto:recert@nbcot.org).

## SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE

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Certification renewal candidates who have experienced exceptional personal or medical circumstances impacting the ability to accrue units during the renewal cycle should contact NBCOT before March 31<sup>st</sup> of their renewal year. NBCOT will review requests for renewal with Special Circumstance on a case-by-case basis. Please send an email to [recert@nbcot.org](mailto:recert@nbcot.org) with a brief explanation outlining the reason for your request.

## APPEALS PROCEDURE

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If, upon submitting a renewal application, NBCOT determines that an applicant has not met the certification renewal requirements—including the submission of incomplete or non-recognized PDU—the applicant has the right to appeal. Within 30 days from receipt of the non-renewal notification, the applicant may submit a letter of appeal. The letter must outline the grounds for the appeal, including the reason(s) why the application should be recognized and accepted by NBCOT.

Appeals should be sent via traceable mail (i.e., certified, UPS, FedEx) to:

**NBCOT, Inc.**  
**Attn: Certification Renewal Appeal**  
**One Bank Street, Suite 300**  
**Gaithersburg, MD 20878**

# CERTIFICATION INFORMATION AND UPDATES


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In order to stay informed about the latest certification renewal information, it is the certificant's responsibility to keep their mailing and email addresses updated with NBCOT. Any changes to contact information can be updated through the certificant's MyNBCOT account.

## STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

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Additional information and resources on the certification renewal process can be found at [www.nbcot.org](http://www.nbcot.org) under the Certificants tab. Any additional questions can be directed to [recert@nbcot.org](mailto:recert@nbcot.org).



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