

Results from 2008 Survey of Alaska Pharmacists Association

- 100 respondents (approximately 45% of total membership)
- 59% of respondents were pharmacists, 41% were technicians
- Among the technician respondents, 58% are already PTCB certified
- 57% of respondents support a requirement for tech certification in Alaska, 43% do not
- 52% would support a formal training or education program as an alternative to certification; 48 % would not
- 35 % of members supported “grandfathering in” technicians with prior experience, 54% felt they should be given a deadline for certification, and 11 % gave “other” as a response
- When asked “What do you think would be a reasonable time period to give technicians to become certified ?” 45% answered 1 year, 34% answered 2 years, 9% answered 6 months, and the rest gave time periods “prior to hire”, 1 month, 3 months, 3 years, 4 years or 5 years. However, answers indicate that some respondents were talking about the time allowed for experienced techs to pass the test while other respondents were talking about time allowed for a new hire to pass the test --- two different issues.
- Members were asked to reasons for their support or lack of support for certification and what they felt the likely consequences would be:

Pros for certification requirement

Increased tech professionalism
Increased tech responsibilities
Consistency
Increased tech wages
Better qualified techs
Will assure techs have needed skills
Improved patient safety
Standardized competencies
Minimum knowledge base assured
Increased respect for techs
Measures proficiency of those with much responsibility
Demonstrates tech commitment
Raises standards for techs
Frees pharmacist for clinical/counseling duties

Cons for certification requirement

Some techs have duties not pertinent
e. g. billing, cashier
Certification doesn't assure professionalism
Certification doesn't assure competency
Will increase hiring problems, initially or permanently, especially in rural areas
Not worth expense and time --- employers do not recognize certification adequately
Will require extra CE
Test is too easy --- waste of time
Test is too hard --- especially for retail techs
Not enough support for techs trying to pass
Some good employees are not good “test takers”
May lose some of our most experienced techs
Increased employer costs

SUMMARY

57% of responding membership favors a certification requirement in Alaska, believing it will result in more qualified pharmacy staff and improved patient care. However, two major issues come up as serious areas of concern in respondent's comments:

1. Hiring problems already exist and may worsen if a certification requirement is added
2. The current Board of Pharmacy requirement that all support personnel in the pharmacy be licensed technicians, including cashiers, bookkeepers and billers, will be problematic. Many respondents suggested two “levels” or “tiers” of technicians.