

Allopathic and Osteopathic Family Medicine

Family physicians, both allopathic (MD) and osteopathic (DO), undergo 4 years of medical school to obtain their degree and then complete at least 3 years of post-graduate training in a residency program. Additionally, to be board certified, both types of family medicine physicians must complete residency and pass board certification examinations. *(see comparison table on reverse)*

What is the difference between allopathic and osteopathic medicine?

The distinctions between allopathic and osteopathic physicians lie in training and accreditation. Slightly different than allopathic medicine, osteopathic medicine focuses special attention on the musculoskeletal system, teaching a unique skill known as “osteopathic manipulative treatment.” Allopathic medical schools are accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) and allopathic residency programs are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). Osteopathic schools and residency programs are both accredited through the American Osteopathic Association (AOA).

What are the training options for MDs and DOs in Washington State?

In Washington state, we have one public allopathic (University of Washington) and one private osteopathic (Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences) medical school. All ACGME-accredited residency programs in WA are affiliated with the University of Washington through the UW Family Medicine Residency Network (UWFMRN), and the AOA-accredited programs work closely with PNWU. ACGME-accredited programs can accept MD and DO graduates, while AOA accredited programs can accept only DO graduates. The ACGME requires that all programs must have at least 4 resident positions per training year (i.e. 4 residents in their 1st year, 4 in their 2nd year, and 4 in their 3rd year), while the AOA allows programs of 2 residents per year.

Currently in WA, there are 16 existing ACGME-accredited family medicine residency programs (see list of UW affiliated programs). Of these 16 programs, 1 is dually-accredited (ACGME and AOA). In addition, there are DO-only family medicine residency programs in WA. These programs locations are as follows:

- ☐ Kennewick General Hospital, Kennewick, WA
- ☐ Skagit Valley Hospital, Mount Vernon, WA
- ☐ Puyallup Tribal Health Authority, Tacoma, WA

Allopathic and Osteopathic Family Medicine At-A-Glance

	Allopathic	Osteopathic
<i>Degree</i>	MD	DO
<i>Length of medical school</i>	4 years	4 years
<i>Medical School Association</i>	Association of American Medical Colleges (www.aamc.org)	American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (www.aacom.org)
<i>Medical school accrediting body</i>	Liaison Committee on Medical Education (www.lcme.org)	American Osteopathic Association – Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation (www.osteopathic.org)
<i>Medical School in WA</i>	University of Washington (www.uwmedicine.washington.edu)	Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences (www.pnwu.org)
<i>WA Medical School Financing</i>	Public	Private non-profit
<i>Length of post-graduate residency training</i>	3 or 4 years	3 years
<i>Minimum residency program size</i>	4-4-4 (4 residents per training year)	2-2-2 (2 residents per training year)
<i>Residency program accrediting body</i>	Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (www.acgme.org)	American Osteopathic Association (www.osteopathic.org)
<i>Medical school graduates eligible for residency training</i>	MD or DO	DO only
<i>Can obtain full license to practice in WA</i>	After 2 years of residency training	After 1 year of residency training
<i>Can obtain Board certification</i>	After 3 years of residency training	After 3 years of residency training
<i>Board certification</i>	American Board of Family Medicine (www.theabfm.org)	American Osteopathic Association (www.osteopathic.org)
<i>Eligible to obtain Board certification through above organization</i>	MD or DO students completing ACGME residency training	DO students completing DO accredited program only