

PROTECT KENTUCKY PATIENTS: CONSISTENT STANDARDS FOR ALL OPTOMETRISTS

April 24, 2026

The Crisis in Kentucky Optometry began years ago when the Kentucky Board of Optometric Examiners (KBOE) secretly voted to waive vital licensing exam requirements for at least 21 optometry graduates. These waivers allowed individuals to practice independently without having passed national licensure exams required by KBOE and relied on by every state. **The Kentucky Attorney General declared these waivers invalid in October 2025, calling the licenses "null, void, and unenforceable".**

The Dangerous Workaround: Instead of following the Attorney General's directive to make these individuals pass the required exams, the KBOE has created a special loophole that permits the individuals who received invalid waivers to avoid ever demonstrating competence in the practical skills assessment on the NBEO Part III Patient Encounters and Performance Skills exam.

This substitution puts patients at risk. The ABO exam is a multiple-choice test that has never been validated for use in licensing decisions. It was designed as a voluntary credential for already licensed optometrists, not as a test of clinical skill competence for new optometrists. No matter the level of "book knowledge," poor patient examination and treatment skills can cause missed diagnoses and harm.

Patient Safety is on the Line This is not a bureaucratic technicality; it can have severe, real-world consequences.

- **Allegations of Actual Harm:** A Louisville TV station reported that one of these invalidly licensed optometrists— who had not passed any parts of the NBEO exam—is currently being sued for allegedly causing permanent eye injury to a patient during laser surgery.
- **Profession Alarm:** The Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry and at least 19 Kentucky optometrists have formally warned that this dual standard undermines public confidence and safety. Furthermore, the state of Nevada recently passed a law blocking Kentucky optometrists from licensure in Nevada unless they have passed all three NBEO exams.
- **Public Kept in the Dark:** The KBOE has refused to release the names of the individuals who are practicing based on invalid waivers, meaning Kentucky patients have no way of knowing if their doctor of optometry actually passed the required exams.

The Solution is Simple Just like the DMV wouldn't let you skip the road test for getting your driver's license, KBOE should not let any optometrist skip the practical clinical exam. Kentucky must return to a single, consistent standard for **all** optometrists. In order to ensure public protection, the KBOE must require all invalidly waived-in individuals to demonstrate competence by passing the Part III exam just as every other optometrist in the Commonwealth has. There is no excuse for permanently exempting them from demonstrating safe, hands-on clinical skills.



What does It test?

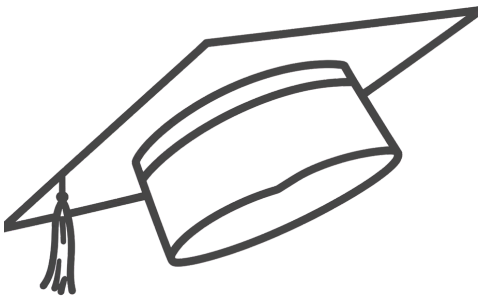


Hands-on clinical testing. Tests practical, case analysis, critical thinking and essential clinical skills to ensure a doctor of optometry can appropriately perform the clinical evaluation necessary to practice optometry.



Multiple-choice questions only. Assesses zero hands-on, clinical patient encounters or skills.

Who is It for?



Initial Licensure. Specifically designed, developed, validated, and required by nearly every state in the country to grant a new license for a doctor of optometry.



Voluntary Credentialing. Designed only for doctors of optometry who are already fully licensed and practicing.

Is it validated for licensing?



Yes. Created with over 200 diverse subject matter experts (including some from KY), a highly qualified psychometrics team, and involving 90 standardized patients to explicitly measure competencies required for entry into the independent practice of optometry.



No. Has never been validated for use in deciding whether someone is competent to receive an initial license. Using this exam for licensure is a direct violation of professional testing standards.