



February 2005

AFPA / NBFE / Industry Update

Dear Colleagues,

These are very exciting times for the personal training profession. Without a doubt, this year will go down in history as the year the entire fitness profession came of age. The [AFPA - American Fitness Professionals & Associates](#) and its members, along with hundreds of certification organizations, health clubs, physicians, colleges and industry leaders will play an important role assisting the personal training industry evolve into a medically and legally recognized facet of the allied health care profession.

As you may have heard, over the past year, a coalition of nearly twenty leading national fitness education / certification organizations and industry leaders have been working together in a joint effort to "raise the bar" for the entire fitness profession. Our goal to create national standards and help personal trainers receive the education, practical training and recognition they deserve has been a challenging, but very rewarding initiative.

The Problems:

Today, almost anyone can call themselves a "certified" personal trainer. Each of the nearly 100 certifying organizations have different criteria for the educational requirements, courses, classes, workshops and tests (whether accredited or not) to become a certified personal trainer.

There is a woeful lack of national standards and defined scopes of practice regarding what knowledge or skills should be required of an individual to become a "certified" personal trainer.

And unfortunately, the overall unprofessional perception of personal trainers by medical and allied health professionals today has resulted in a general reluctance on their part to refer their patients to personal trainers.

Accreditation:

One proposed solution was that certifying organizations obtain accreditation of their tests, but accreditation of a test alone isn't the answer. Test accreditation addresses the way certifying organizations develop and deploy their exams and how they conduct business.

It does not address the educational course requirements, hands on skills or training needed to become a competent trainer.

Accreditation of a test does not address the fact that our industry has no national standards or defined scopes of practice. Furthermore, the accreditation initiative currently proposed doesn't even review the organizations textbooks, courses or curriculum as it relates to their exam.

The result of that initiative would be that we'd still have one hundred different standards for becoming a personal trainer without a required education component. Basically, individuals who want to become "certified" personal trainers are doing so without being required to take specific courses, classes and practical training.

Under the proposed test accreditation standards, organizations would actually lose their accreditation if they were to **require** their students to take prescribed courses, read prescribed textbooks or attend practical workshops prior to examination.

We strongly disagree with this approach. We believe mandatory educational requirements and hands-on practical training are of paramount importance. They are the fundamental requirements, which prepare students for any career!
Why should our profession settle for anything less?

A common growing pain:

Because this has been a common problem for many of the allied health professions during the evolutionary stages of their development, a majority of organizations and leaders in our industry have agreed to adopt a very well established, proven approach that will protect the public, ensure competency through establishing comprehensive national standards for the personal training education/certification profession.

All medical and health care professions require their students to complete prescribed coursework. They also require reading specific textbooks and require learning the practical skills needed for their respective jobs. Then they must pass exams and finally, sit for standardized National Board examinations.

This is how virtually all professions function. Medicine, law, accounting, veterinary medicine, lab technicians, nurses, x-ray technologists, and physician assistants – the list goes on!

Again, why should our profession settle for anything less?

If the medical and allied health professions utilize this model, we will too. We believe certified personal trainers deserve recognition as a vital part of the allied health care profession. By incorporating their time tested, proven approach to becoming certified -- following the same accepted protocols they follow – we will have taken the first critical step toward demonstrating our commitment to raising the standards for our profession.

The Solution:

In 2003, the National Board of Fitness Examiners (NBFEE) was founded as a non-profit organization specifically to address the lack of national standards for becoming a personal trainer, to define the scopes of practice for the fitness profession, and lobby that medicine, chiropractic and allied health professions refer their patients to competent fitness professionals.

This was the first major step our industry has ever taken to help personal trainers become a legitimate branch of the allied health profession. Obviously, [AFPA](#) is proud and extremely excited to support this initiative toward gaining recognized, professional status.

Collectively, hundreds of leaders from all facets of our profession have agreed that it is in our best interest to establish national standards and scopes of practice for the fitness profession. By working together to accomplish this, it helps prevent local, state or federal government, or some outside profession, from stepping in and regulating personal trainers. And it's happened.

A number of states have, in concert with allied health care professions, written bills in an effort to control the education, continuing education, scopes of practice and licensure of personal trainers. We believe that our profession can maintain a form of self-regulation that has been so desperately needed without government interference.

About the Boards:

National Board Examinations provide industry developed, standardized exams that allow the testing of personal fitness trainers in much the same way that doctors are now tested under the supervision of the National Board of Medical Examiners. The standards of practice to be tested are defined by the industry rather than by any one individual certifying organization. The tests will be both written (Part I) and practical (Part II).

To ensure the fairness, validity, reliability and legal defensibility of the boards, the NBFE contracted Thomson-Prometric, the largest third- party testing company in the world, to help. Their team of psychometric examination experts assisted the NBFE in the planning and development of Part I.

Soon, the exams will be available at any of over 300 Thomson-Prometric testing centers around the U.S. and can be scheduled Monday through Friday rather than just 2 or 4 times per year, like most board exams in other professions.

To further validate the NBFE's examinations and testing procedures, the NBFE sought assistance and guidance from the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) who understood our needs and agreed to help.

Since 1915, the NBME has been responsible for overseeing and developing virtually all-medical examinations. They also have tremendous experience assisting similar allied health professions evolve. We are honored to have their assistance.

The first written component (Part I) of the National Boards for Personal Trainers is scheduled to be offered in April 2005. We urge you to visit www.nbfe.org and click on Pre-Registration.

The practical component (Part II) of the National Boards is currently being planned for development and scheduled to be deployed toward the end of 2005. The practical exams will be available at health clubs; universities and hospital based fitness facilities that are granted "Affiliate" status by the NBFE.

For the past 18 months, Dr. Sal Arria, Dr. J. Robert Sapp and literally dozens of world-renowned leaders have taken the necessary steps to gather a profession-based consensus and orchestrate the foundation of the NBFE.

The NBFE invited the [AFPA](#) along with all certification organizations to participate in the founding. The [AFPA](#), along with other NBFE Affiliates, will assist in the development of both the written and practical board exams. Today, the [AFPA](#) continues unconditionally support the efforts of the National Board and we are proud to announce that we have been granted "Provisional Affiliate" status by the NBFE.

What that means to you is that after successfully completing [AFPA's Certified Personal Trainer](#) program, you will be eligible to sit for the national boards. The [AFPA Certified Personal Trainer](#) course will help prepare you for the National Boards.

Of course, we cannot guarantee that everyone who takes and passes the [AFPA Certified Personal Trainer](#) course will pass the National Boards, it is definitely the best way to start preparing for the National Board exams.

Here's how the National Boards work. Any personal fitness trainer who holds a current certification from [AFPA](#) (or another NBFE Affiliate organization or an individual or trainer who meets other eligibility criteria) is eligible to take the National Boards. Those candidates who successfully complete the Boards will become Registered Personal Fitness Trainers.

Every month, the list of NBFE Registered trainers will be passed on to local, state, regional and national chiropractic and medical associations. The registry will also be made available to the public, health clubs, insurance companies and employers responsible for hiring personal trainers.

It is the intent of the NBFE to recommend that physicians, chiropractors and allied health professionals refer their patients to competent personal fitness trainers.

The NBFE will offer a 50% discount on the exam fees for Part 1 of the National Boards to any personal fitness trainers who hold a current certification from [AFPA](#) or another approved NBFE Affiliate and who register for the National Boards through [AFPA](#) (or another NBFE affiliate organization) on or before June 30, 2005.

To take advantage of this, please go to [NBFE.org](#) and click on Pre-Register.

The Next Step:

[AFPA](#) firmly believes that the National Boards offer a much-needed step that will take Certified Personal Trainer to the next level of professionalism.

[AFPA](#) will incorporate the National Board examinations as part of our complete education/certification process and we urge all of [AFPA's Certified Personal Trainer](#) to take the next step with us.

For more information about the National Boards, visit the NBFE Website at [www.NBFE.org](#) and click on Pre-Registration.

Feel free to drop them a line if you have any questions or e-mail info@NBFE.org and someone will get back with you.

Professionally,

Mark J. Occhipinti, Ph.D., N.D.c.