



# The Crucial Role of Practical Exams in Chiropractic Licensure

## Unpacking the Benefits of Centralization

### Why Third-Party Testing is Necessary

While chiropractic colleges play a vital role in educating and training future chiropractors, relying solely on in-school testing for clinical skills may not be sufficient for licensure. Variations in assessment styles and rigor among colleges can lead to inconsistencies in skill evaluation. Factors such as differing educational approaches and examination conditions may affect the outcomes of in-school tests. Furthermore, state licensing boards require an independently administered clinical skills assessment to ensure a uniform standard of competency across all practitioners. A standardized, independent practical exam like the NBCE Part IV ensures that all candidates, regardless of where they are educated, meet the same stringent criteria required by state licensing boards, thereby upholding the integrity of the chiropractic profession.

### The Importance of Practical Exams

Practical exams play an indispensable role in assessing a candidate's ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. Unlike written exams, which primarily evaluate cognitive understanding, practical exams focus on hands-on skills and clinical judgment, crucial for any healthcare provider. For chiropractors, this means demonstrating proficiency in areas such as patient examination, diagnosis, appropriate treatment, and chiropractic technique.

- **Benefits to the Chiropractic Profession Standardization and Consistency:** Centralizing exams guarantees uniform evaluation, removing regional discrepancies and ensuring fair, consistent assessments, crucial for licensure integrity.
- **Enhanced Training and Evaluation:** Video recordings enable detailed reviews of candidate performance, promoting more objective evaluations and supporting examiner training for consistent assessments. They also facilitate inter-rater reliability studies, ensuring uniformity through routine comparison and calibration of evaluators.
- **Resource Optimization:** By consolidating the exam to a single location, the NBCE can optimize the use of resources, reducing redundancy and operational costs. This efficiency translates into cost savings that can be reinvested into improving the exam process and maintaining reasonable exam fees, which benefits the entire profession.
- **Research and Development:** A centralized facility can serve as a hub for ongoing research and development in chiropractic assessment. Continuous improvement efforts can lead to the development of new testing methods and better alignment with

evolving clinical practices, keeping pace with advancements in chiropractic care.

#### Specific Benefits to the Chiropractic Community

- **Accessibility and Flexibility:** The new centralized testing facility in Greeley will operate 48 weeks out of the year, offering multiple testing dates and greater scheduling flexibility. This allows candidates to choose times that best fit their personal and educational schedules. This flexibility can also lead to better performance, as candidates can take the exam when they feel most prepared.
- **Cost-Effective Solutions:** While travel costs are a concern, the NBCE is actively working to mitigate these expenses. Negotiations with local hotels and airlines for discounted rates aim to reduce the financial burden on examinees. Additionally, the stabilization of exam fees through centralized operations helps ensure that the overall cost of licensure remains manageable, benefiting both students and the profession at large.
- **Community and Collaboration:** Centralizing the exam fosters a sense of community among examinees, who will have the opportunity to interact with peers from different regions. This can lead to valuable networking and the sharing of diverse perspectives, enriching the professional experience.
- **Enhanced Public Trust:** By ensuring that all licensed chiropractors have met rigorous and standardized requirements, the profession can enhance public trust and confidence. Patients can be assured that their chiropractors possess the necessary skills and competence to provide high-quality care, which is crucial for the reputation and growth of the profession.

#### Conclusion

The centralization of the Part IV exam to a single location in Greeley, Colorado, represents a strategic and forward-thinking move by the NBCE. While the transition involves initial challenges, particularly concerning travel costs, the long-term benefits for the chiropractic profession and community are substantial. Enhanced standardization, improved training and evaluation mechanisms, better resource utilization, and increased accessibility and flexibility are just a few of the advantages that will ultimately elevate the quality of chiropractic care. As the profession continues to evolve, these changes will help ensure that chiropractic practitioners are well-prepared to meet the demands of modern healthcare and continue to provide exceptional care to their patients. In the evolving landscape of healthcare, ensuring the competency and readiness of practitioners is paramount. For chiropractors, the Part IV exam administered by the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners (NBCE) serves as a critical component in this process, testing the practical skills essential for safe and effective patient care. With the recently announced changes that will centralize this exam to a single year round assessment center located in Greeley, Colorado beginning in 2026, it's an opportune moment to delve into the broader benefits of practical exams in chiropractic licensure and the specific advantages these changes bring to the chiropractic community. Visit [mynbce.org](https://mynbce.org) to learn more.

The American Chiropractor  
8530 NW 72nd St  
Miami, FL 33166