

Framework for Accrediting Medical Obesity Centers*

Issued by:

- Swiss Society for Multidisciplinary Obesity (SMOB)
- Swiss Society for Endocrinology and Diabetology (SSED)/Swiss Association for the Study of Obesity (ASEMO)

National criteria for recognizing medical outpatient obesity centers are designed to achieve three key objectives:

1. to ensure the quality and safety of care
2. to promote economic and logistic efficiency in the use of healthcare resources
3. to enable transparent oversight of care through mandatory data reporting

Obesity is a complex and chronic disease that requires an evidence-based, coordinated and interdisciplinary approach. In this context, the proposed criteria aim to structure obesity care by promoting interdisciplinary networks, healthcare efficiency and equitable access across Switzerland.

Interdisciplinarity: From a quality perspective, these criteria are established to ensure that patients benefit from comprehensive assessments, specialized support, and rigorous medical follow-up aligned with international scientific recommendations. A core requirement is structured collaboration among essential specialties, including nutrition, psychology, physiotherapy, and surgery, which is critical for effective and sustainable obesity management.

Transparency: A minimal, standardized reporting system for patient volumes and quality indicators will be established. This initiative strengthens national transparency and quality assurance while carefully avoiding an undue administrative burden for care providers.

Geographic equity: Ensuring equitable access to obesity care across Switzerland requires criteria that are both realistic and proportionate. Centers located in peripheral areas are vital for delivering accessible, community-based obesity care. These structures do not always benefit from the same hospital-based resources as large urban centers, yet they contribute significantly to the care of thousands of patients. For this reason, the criteria must enable such centers to operate within a recognized quality framework built on structured collaboration.

Accordingly, the proposed criteria must reconcile three fundamental objectives:

- Ensuring high-quality and safe obesity care that aligns with best-practice standards.
- Promoting efficient and economically responsible use of treatments, particularly in the context of innovative pharmacotherapies.

- Maintaining territorial accessibility to enable both large hospital-based centers and regional outpatient clinics to fulfill their roles within a coordinated national network.

Obesity is a chronic disease that requires an inclusive, coherent and sustainable care system. The chosen approach must therefore avoid premature exclusion of active and competent centers and instead support their progressive strengthening, particularly through the future certification pathway for physicians, as soon as it becomes available.

A key objective of the recognition criteria is to formally acknowledge the expertise of physicians with long-standing experience and expertise in obesity care. Following the ISFM's approval of the obesity-expertise certificate, this certification will be mandatory for any physician leading an outpatient obesity center.

Of note, the well-established, continuously quality controlled, hospital-based SMOB bariatric surgery centers can already be regarded as obesity centers as the SMOB guidelines-based criteria for their recognition are exceeding the SMOB/SGED newly proposed criteria for outpatient medical obesity centers.

Who should apply for the label and what are the criteria for recognition?

This recognition applies to outpatient clinics, private or public, aiming to offer medical treatment of obesity.

The SMOB regulation for bariatric surgery centers continues to apply to hospital-based structures providing bariatric surgery.

Any private or public practice/outpatient clinic can apply for the «SMOB/SSED-ASEMO recognized medical obesity center» label, provided it meets the following criteria:

1. The obesity center is led by a board approved internist with demonstrated expertise in obesity care, endocrinologist/diabetologist, visceral surgeon specialized in bariatric surgery.
2. The obesity center has at least one additional physician (endocrinologist/diabetologist, internist, visceral surgeon specialized in bariatric surgery or a physician who holds a certificate of obesity specialization from the SGED) to ensure continuity of care in case of absence.
2. The center engages in delivering up-to-date, evidence-based care to patients with obesity.
3. The center is equipped with an adequate infrastructure:
 - Chairs and examinations tables suitable for patients with obesity
 - High capacity weighing scales designed for patients with severe obesity
 - Blood-pressure cuffs available in multiple large sizes
 - Sufficient space in consultation rooms to ensure safe mobility and examination of patients with obesity

4. The center demonstrates a consistent annual caseload of 300 patients receiving comprehensive obesity management.
5. The center has an established collaboration with a SMOB-approved bariatric surgery center.
6. The center has established collaborations, or internal affiliations, with a certified nutritionist, a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist and a physiotherapist.
7. The head of the center must have attended at least two full-days educational meeting annually over the last three years such as the ASEMO-SSED, SMOB, IFSO or EASO annual congress.
8. Physicians within the center who are authorized to prescribe obesity treatments but are not endocrinologists must obtain the obesity treatment certification proposed by ASEMO-SGED within three years of its implementation.
9. The head of the center ensures a non-stigmatizing approach to the care of people living with obesity and provides training for all staff members to support such an approach.
10. The head of the center commits to participate to minimal data reporting.

National Registry

The primary purpose of data reporting by medical obesity centers is to monitor the quality, safety and effectiveness of care at center and system level. The reporting shall further support the understanding of caseloads, access, and variation in practice, informing service planning and resource allocation. Data reporting requirements will be proportionate to each center's infrastructure and data governance framework. Data reporting must be completed on an annual basis. The specific requirements will be defined and communicated by the SMOB-ASEMO/SGED evaluation board. The national data reporting system for obesity centers fulfills four key objectives:

1. **Quality assurance and continuous improvement** To provide centers with a clear overview of their annual activity, enabling them to monitor and improve their service provision over time.
2. **Accountability and transparency** To offer an objective, transparent measure of activity in recognized centers, building confidence among patients, healthcare partners, and insurers.
3. **Health-services planning and territorial equity** To map the national distribution of obesity care, ensuring equitable access across regions and supporting appropriate allocation of healthcare resources.
4. **Public-health support** To generate essential aggregate data for informing future public-health strategies and policy decisions on obesity care in Switzerland.

How to apply for accreditation?

Institutions seeking the “SMOB/SSED-ASEMO recognized obesity center” label must complete the designated application forms and submit them along with the required documentation (such as education certificates, cooperation agreements, etc.) to the joint SMOB/SGED-ASEMO application office: obesitycenter@smob-sged.ch.

Applications are reviewed by an evaluation committee composed of six members, three selected by the SMOB board and three selected by the SSED-ASEMO board.

Physicians working in these centers will receive a provisional authorization with a three-year deadline to obtain the obesity certification qualifying them to work in the field of obesity, as soon as this certification becomes available.

*Note, that the label does not refer to institutions that provide obesity care to children and adolescence since the recognition of respective institution is currently managed by the AKI (<https://www.akj-ch.ch/>)