

competence of applicants seeking to be licensed to practice as a physician assistant in California.

Continuing Medical Education (CME) and License Renewal

Consumers are also protected by the PAB's ongoing continuing medical education requirements for licensees. Physician assistants are required to renew their license every two years and satisfy the continuing medical education requirements as a condition of licensure renewal. Licensees may meet the continuing medical education requirement by completing 50 hours of medical education every two years or by obtaining and maintaining certification from the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants.

The PAB is committed to fulfilling its mission and vision, and is focused on statutory and regulatory mandates for consumer protection. By continually re-evaluating its business operations and systems, the Board has improved its infrastructure and is always exploring new ways of doing business and delivering quality services to consumers, applicants, licensees, and other stakeholders.

SIGNIFICANT BOARD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As a part of strategic planning, the PAB evaluated its previous strategic plan goals and identified which objectives were accomplished. The following are the significant Board accomplishments since the 2009 strategic plan was adopted.

800-SERIES REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

SB 1236 (Price) added physician assistants to the 800-series (Business and Professions Code sections 800, 801.01, 802.1, 802.5, 803, 803.1, 803.5, 803.6, and 805).

This requirement further enhances the Board's mandate of consumer protection by requiring reporting to the PAB physician assistant malpractice actions, hospital disciplinary actions, as well as self-reporting by physician assistants of indictments and convictions.

These reporting requirements also apply to professional liability insurers, self-insured governmental agencies, physician assistants and/or their attorneys and employers, peer review bodies, such as in hospitals to report specific disciplinary actions, restrictions, revoked privileges, and suspensions.

CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

For all licenses expiring on or after January 2013, licensees must now report compliance with the Board's continuing medical education (CME) reporting requirements.

The requirement that physician assistants must complete continuing medical education (and now report their compliance) will ensure that physician assistants are enhancing their skills and keeping current with the latest medical techniques. This adds to consumer protection by ensuring that physician assistants are knowledgeable and are employing the latest medical practices.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT TRAINING AND EDUCATION REGULATIONS

Section 1399.536 of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations was amended effective 1 April 2013. This amendment allows for a variety of licensed health care providers to supplement physicians as preceptors of physician assistant students during their training, permits preceptors to supervise more than one student at a time, and deletes outdated fee information. This regulatory change updates the regulations regarding physician assistant training to better reflect current physician assistant educational practices.

ENFORCEMENT ENHANCEMENTS

In 2011, regulations to enhance consumer protection were enacted, and the following are some of the enhancements:

- California Code of Regulations Section 1399.503 – Delegation of Functions – allows the Executive Officer ability to accept default decisions and to approve settlement agreements for the surrender or interim suspension of a license.
- California Code of Regulations Section 1399.507.5 – Physical or Mental Examination of Applications – allows the PAB to require an applicant to submit to a physical and/or mental evaluation whenever it appears reasonable that an applicant may be unable to perform as a physician assistant safely due to impairments.
- California Code of Regulations Section 1399.521.5 – Unprofessional Conduct – Defines unprofessional conduct to include any act of sexual abuse or misconduct, failure to provide documents for an investigation, failure to cooperate with the PAB in investigations, and failing to report to the PAB actions including, but not limited to arrests, convictions, disciplinary actions by other entities or government agencies, and failing or refusal to comply with court orders.
- California Code of Regulations Section 1399.523 – Requires revocation of license in a proposed decision if a finding of fact that the licensee committed a sex offense or was convicted of sex offense.

WEBCASTING OF BOARD MEETINGS

The PAB began to webcast their board meetings in November 2011. This allows consumers, licensees, and interested others to view and participate in the board meetings if they are unable to attend in person. The webcasts are also archived and available on the PAB and DCA websites. Additionally, meeting materials are now available on the Board's website.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT APPLICATION EFFICIENCIES

To make the physician assistant application process more efficient and decrease application review times, the Board implemented procedures to allow for the emailing of deficiency and licensing letters to applicants who choose to provide an email address on their application. Applicants who do not provide their email address will continue to receive notifications via mail. The new procedure saves postage, handling and paper costs, in addition to providing applicants with information regarding their pending application on a more timely basis.

APPLICATION AND LICENSING AUTOMATION ENHANCEMENTS

In October 2013, the PAB implemented the Department of Consumer Affairs-sponsored BreEZe licensing and enforcement system. This system replaces two legacy systems. Eventually, BreEZe will allow for on-line applications and on-line renewals.

OUR VISION

The vision of the Physician Assistant Board is to assure that health care needs for all persons are met in a compassionate, competent, and culturally-sensitive manner. Physician Assistants can better contribute to this outcome as they are increasingly recognized as quality providers and as their utilization is expanded.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Physician Assistant Board is to protect and serve consumers through licensing, education, and objective enforcement of the Physician Assistant laws and regulations.

OUR VALUES

ACCOUNTABILITY

We are accountable to the people of California and each other as stakeholders. We operate transparently and encourage public participation in our decision-making whenever possible.

EFFICIENCY

We diligently identify the best ways to deliver high-quality services with the most efficient use of our resources.

EFFECTIVENESS

We make informed decisions that make a difference and have a positive, measurable impact.

INTEGRITY

We are honest, fair, and respectful in our treatment of everyone, which is demonstrated through our decision-making process.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

We acknowledge all stakeholders as our customers, listen to them, and take their needs into account.

EMPLOYEES

We are an employer of choice and strategically recruit, train, and retain employees. We value and recognize employee contributions and talent.

UNITY

We draw strength from our organizational diversity as well as California's ever-changing cultural and economic diversity.

GOAL 1: WORKFORCE

Address and promote physician assistant workforce needs.

1.1 Identify and mitigate barriers to licensure in order to increase the number of physician assistants in the workforce.

1.2 Work with the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) to identify and implement strategies that will address the anticipated physician assistant workforce shortage resulting from passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

1.3 The Physician Assistant Board will proactively collaborate with the Medical Board of California to identify and address regulatory barriers to physician assistant practice that may impact access to care.

1.4 Identify and implement strategies to increase the diversity and number of physician assistants in the state, especially in rural and underserved areas.

GOAL 2: PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND EDUCATION

Improve continuing medical education and examination standards to ensure excellence in practice and promote public safety. Advance higher education standards to increase the quality of education and ensure consumer protection.

- 2.1** Identify and recommend improvements to the accreditation process to shorten the review time for new schools.
- 2.2** Identify alternatives and resources to protect existing physician assistant educational programs and increase the number of available openings, particularly in underserved areas.
- 2.3** Explore options for ethics coursework to be disseminated throughout the education program to emphasize professional responsibility and the moral code of conduct that accompanies a physician assistant license.
- 2.4** Perform random continuing medical education audits on renewal applications to ensure licensee compliance.

GOAL 3: LEGISLATION, REGULATION, AND POLICY

Ensure that statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures strengthen and support the Board's mandate and mission.

3.1 Develop and implement a system to capture Board discussions on legislative issues to facilitate onboarding of new Board members.

3.2 Review and update regulations to address legislative changes.

3.3 Explore legislative solutions to maximize the physician assistant scope of practice and responsibility in healthcare delivery to address workforce shortage and increased patient access.

GOAL 4: COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Inform consumers, licensees, applicants, and other stakeholders about the practice and regulation of the physician assistant profession in an accurate, accessible manner.

4.1 Identify resources that would allow the Board to conduct more outreach activities to better educate consumers about the role of physician assistants and the Board.

4.2 Better inform licensees and supervising physicians about the responsibilities, requirements, and subtleties of the Physician Assistant Practice Act.

4.3 Increase consumer and licensee usage of the Board's website.

4.4 Inform physician assistant students who are close to graduating about the professional responsibilities, ethics, and moral code of conduct that accompany the license.

4.5 Educate licensees about the new self-reporting statute (Title 16, California Code of Regulations Section 1399.521.5e).

GOAL 5: ENFORCEMENT

Protect the health and safety of consumers through the enforcement of the laws and regulations governing the practice of physician assistants.

5.1 Explore the feasibility of dedicating some Division of Investigation and Enforcement investigators exclusively for the Physician Assistant Board to reduce investigation cycle times.

5.2 Conduct a review of past disciplinary actions to identify best enforcement practices.

GOAL 6: LICENSING

Promote licensing standards to protect consumers and allow reasonable access to the profession.

6.1 Collaborate with DCA to provide online license renewal through the BreEZe system, including acceptance of credit card and other payment options, for greater convenience to licensees and to improve the physician assistant application cycle time.

6.2 Facilitate voluntary data collection by other Board-approved organizations to identify physician assistant licensee demographics that will assist the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) with providing services and designating resources.

GOAL 7: ADMINISTRATION

Build an excellent organization through Board governance, effective leadership, and responsible management.

7.1 Improve onboarding of new Board members by creating a Board specific orientation program that also includes instruction on the legislative process and regulation development beyond the DCA Board Member Orientation Training.

7.2 Create and implement a workforce and succession plan to guide the Board's preparedness in workforce, retention of institutional knowledge, and leadership continuity.

7.3 Develop a forecast to ensure the Board has the staffing, budget, and tools necessary for the successful functioning of Board processes.



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This strategic plan is based on stakeholder information and discussions facilitated by SOLID for the Physician Assistant Board from October to December 2013. Subsequent amendments may have been made after Board adoption of this plan.

