

State of California  
Physician Assistant Board

2014-2018



Strategic  
Plan

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MEMBERS OF THE  
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT BOARD

Robert E. Sachs, PA-C, President

Charles Alexander, Ph.D., Public Member

Michael Bishop, M.D., Physician Member

Sonya Earley, PA Licensee Member

A. Christina Gomez-Vidal Diaz, Public Member

Jed Grant, PA-C, Licensee Member

Catherine Hazelton, Public Member

Rosalee Shorter, PA-C, PA Licensee Member

Glenn L. Mitchell, Jr., Executive Officer

## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



The Physician Assistant Board is pleased to present the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan.

The planning process was accomplished during the past six months with all Board members participating. During this process all interested parties and stakeholders gave input, which was used to create the final plan.

The primary function of the Board remains consumer protection. The document identifies our mission statement and goals of the Board. We will use this plan to continue to improve service to both the consumer and to the licensees.

The Board is committed to continuing the creation of the BreZE program with the Department of Consumer Affairs. We will also work with all state agencies to improve access to care for all Californians.

As President, I invite all interested stakeholders to join the Board in accomplishing these goals.

Robert E. Sachs

President

Physician Assistant Board

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## **ABOUT THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT BOARD**

In 1975, the Physician's Assistant Examining Committee (PAEC), within the jurisdiction of the Medical Board of California, was created by the California Legislature to address the existing shortage and geographic maldistribution of health care services in California. A new category of health manpower – the Physician Assistant (PA) was created to provide an additional resource for California's health care consumers. This promoted more effective utilization of the skills of physicians, and physicians and podiatrists working in the same medical group practice by allowing them to delegate health care tasks and procedures to qualified physician assistants when consistent with the patient's health and welfare, and with the laws and regulations governing physician assistants. As highly skilled professionals, physician assistants work under the supervision of a physician and surgeon to provide patient services ranging from primary care medicine to specialized surgical care. Senate Bill 1236 (Price), Statutes of 2012, Chapter 332, changed the name of the Physician Assistant Committee to Physician Assistant Board (PAB). The Board is responsible for licensing and regulating the practice of physician assistants in the State of California.

### Physician Assistant Practice Act

The primary responsibility of the PAB is to protect California consumers from incompetent, and/or fraudulent practice through the enforcement of the Physician Assistant Practice Act under Division 2, Chapter 7.7, of the Business and Professions Code, and through the Physician Assistant Regulations (Title 16, Division 13.8) of the California Code of Regulations (CCR). Under the Department of Consumer Affairs, the PAB promotes safe practice of physician assistants by:

- Approval of the educational and training requirements of physician assistants.
- Licensing of physician assistants.
- Promoting the health and safety of California health care consumers by enhancing the competence of physician assistants.
- Coordinating investigation and disciplinary processes.

- Providing information and education regarding the PAB or physician assistant professionals to California consumers.
- Managing a diversion program for physician assistants with alcohol/substance abuse problems.
- Collaborating with others regarding legal and regulatory issues that involve physician assistant activities or the profession.

Within the physician assistant profession, the PAB establishes and maintains entry standards of qualification and conduct primarily through its authority to license. With over 9,590 licensed physician assistants, the PAB regulates and establishes standards for the education and training of physician assistant practice.

### Board Composition

The PAB consists of nine members who serve four-year terms and may be reappointed. The Board is currently comprised of: one physician member from the Medical Board of California, four licensed physician assistants, and four public members. The Governor appoints the four physician assistant members and two public members. The Speaker of the Assembly and the Senate Rules Committee each appoint one public member. Board members play a critical role as policy and decision makers in licensing requirements, disciplinary matters, approval of physician assistant training programs, contracts, budget issues, legislation and regulatory proposals, and consumer and public outreach.

Committees serve as an important component of the PAB to address specific issues referred by the public, the Legislature, the Department of Consumer Affairs or recommended by staff. Committees are generally composed of at least two Board members who are charged with gathering public input, exploring alternatives to the issues, and making a recommendation to the full Board. The PAB does not have committees established by statutes or regulations, but the President may appoint task forces and committees as issues arise. The PAB currently has The Legislative Committee, which serves to identify legislation that the Board may want to be notified and/or take a position.

## Board Functions

The PAB appoints an Executive Officer to oversee a staff of three full-time staff and one half-time staff that support the following major Board functions:

- Licensing: Reviewing applications for licensure and issuing licenses.
- Enforcement: Reviewing and investigating complaints; Disciplining physician assistants who violate physician assistant laws and regulations.
- Education: Educating consumers, licensees, physicians, and interested others regarding physician assistant practice.
- Regulatory: Reviewing and updating laws and regulations regarding consumer protection and physician assistant practice.
- Diversion: Administering a drug and alcohol monitoring program for licensees with chemical dependency issues.
- Administration: Providing administrative services supporting the operational functions of the Board.

Together, all of these functions protect the health and safety of Californians.

## Physician Assistant Training and Examination

Physician assistant applicants are required to graduate from a nationally accredited and California approved physician assistant training program. There are currently 181 physician assistant training programs accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), which oversees the accredited programs and the standards of accreditation for physician assistant training programs. Training programs accredited by ARC-PA are deemed to be approved by the PAB.

In addition to meeting the education requirement, physician assistants must achieve a passing score of the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE) for licensure. The National Commission on the Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) has established a scientifically-based process for examination question development and scoring the examination, which evaluates the

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.



**Physician Assistant Board**  
**2000 Evergreen Street., Suite 1100**  
**Sacramento, CA 95815**  
**Phone: (916) 561-8780 Fax: (916) 263-2671**  
**[pacommittee@dca.ca.gov](mailto:pacommittee@dca.ca.gov) [www.pac.ca.gov](http://www.pac.ca.gov)**

Prepared by:



Department of Consumer Affairs  
1747 N. Market Blvd., Suite 270  
Sacramento, CA 95834

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.

