

Arizona Board of Osteopathic Examiners in Medicine and Surgery

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Board issued licenses and permits to qualified applicants within required time frames

Our Conclusion

The Arizona Board of Osteopathic Examiners in Medicine and Surgery (Board) issues licenses, permits, and registrations to doctors of osteopathy (DO); investigates complaints against licensees; and provides information to the public, such as DOs' license status and disciplinary history. We found that the Board issued licenses and permits only to applicants who met statutory and rule requirements, and did so in a timely manner. Additionally, the Board appropriately investigated and adjudicated the complaints reviewed, but did not resolve some complaints in a timely manner. The Board should continue to take steps to improve its complaint resolution timeliness, such as assessing its investigative staffing needs and taking appropriate action based on the results of the analysis. Finally, the Board provided appropriate, accurate, and timely information to the public.

Board issued licenses and permits to qualified applicants—We reviewed random samples of ten board-approved applications for DO licenses and five board-approved applications for post-graduate training permits approved in fiscal years 2014 and 2015 and found that the Board issued licenses or permits only to qualified applicants. To help ensure the Board issues licenses, permits, and registrations only to qualified applicants, board staff use checklists to document that applicants submit all necessary paperwork, including the application, fee, citizenship form, and education and training documentation.

Board ensured licensee compliance with continuing medical education requirements—DOs must meet various requirements every 2 years in order to renew their licenses, including attesting that they have met continuing medical education (CME) requirements, providing a statement regarding history of professional conduct, and submitting the required fee. To help ensure DOs complete the required 40 hours of CME every 2 years prior to renewal, the Board randomly selects and then audits 5 percent of its licensees for compliance with CME requirements. DOs selected for audit must submit documentation to demonstrate compliance with the CME requirements to renew their licenses. If board staff identify noncompliance, the Board allows licensees to apply for an extension of their current license in order to address the noncompliance before renewing their license.

Board issued licenses and permits in a timely manner—The Board issued licenses and permits within the time frames specified in rule. We reviewed a random sample of 20 DO license applications and 20 post-graduate training permit applications approved in fiscal years 2014 and 2015 and found that these licenses and permits were processed within the time frames allowed by board rules.

Board appropriately resolved complaints, but should continue its efforts to improve timeliness

Board has adequate controls to guide complaint resolution process—The Board has implemented adequate controls to guide its complaint investigation and adjudication processes, including policies and procedures, board member review of investigated complaints, and the use of a database to organize all complaint documents and information and monitor complaint investigation and resolution progress. We reviewed complaint data, including a random sample of 20 complaints opened and resolved from July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2015, and determined that the Board appropriately investigated and adjudicated these complaints.

Some complaints not resolved in a timely manner—The Office of the Auditor General has determined that Arizona health regulatory boards should resolve complaints within 180 days of receiving them, which includes the time to both investigate and adjudicate the complaints. The Board resolved 12 of the 20 complaints we reviewed within 180 days, but took longer than 180 days to resolve 8 complaints. Multiple factors contributed to the Board's untimely resolution of these 8 complaints, including the lack of



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space on board meeting agendas, delays caused by licensees, and board staff delaying the investigation of some complaints to address higher-priority complaints. Although none of the 8 untimely complaints represented a threat to public health and safety, lengthy investigations and/or adjudications may delay board actions that protect the public.

Board should continue to take steps to improve complaint resolution timeliness—The Board began gradual implementation of three measures starting in 2012—additional board meetings, tracking complaints, and complaint review process by committee—with the goal of improving complaint-handling timeliness. The Board should continue to implement these measures, monitor their effect on complaint resolution timeliness, and make changes as needed to its complaint-handling process. However, because the resolution of some complaints continues to be untimely and the number of complaints the Board has been receiving is increasing, the Board should also assess its investigative staffing needs and take appropriate action based on its assessment. This action could involve maximizing its allocated resources and/or working with the Legislature to request additional resources to hire more staff or contract for additional resources as needed.

Recommendations

The Board should:

- Continue to implement the measures it adopted to improve complaint resolution timeliness, monitor their effect on resolving complaints in a timely manner, and make changes as needed to its complaint resolution process; and
- Assess its investigative staffing needs and take appropriate action based on its assessment, such as maximizing its allocated resources and/or working with the Legislature to request additional resources to hire more staff or contract for additional resources, as needed.

Board provided accurate, appropriate, and timely information to the public

The Board provided information to the public on its Web site and over the phone. We reviewed 30 randomly selected profiles of DOs on the Board's Web site and placed four phone calls to request information about licensees. The Board provided accurate and appropriate information on its Web site and accurate, appropriate, and timely information over the phone. Specifically, the Board provided all information about DOs' complaint histories in compliance with statute. For example, although statute prohibits the Board from divulging information about dismissed complaints and nondisciplinary actions on its Web site, the Board provided this information to members of the public who contacted the Board directly.