



MEMORANDUM

TO: Professional Licensing Board Members

DATE: July 26, 2019

FROM: Sara Chambers, Division Director

SUBJECT: Professional Licensing Reform

Happy New Year! We are nearly a month into Fiscal Year 2020, and with it comes a new division budget, as well as new opportunities to evaluate how we are doing, where we are going, and how we plan to get there. Often, the beginning of a new year inspires us to set resolutions, and we are doing just that in FY20.

Governor Dunleavy set the stage for us to dig into this task when he issued his State of the State Address in January. As our new chief executive, he promised to accomplish the following during his tenure in office:

- We're going to declare war on criminals.
- We're going to get our spending in line with our revenue.
- We're going to protect Alaskans' Permanent Fund dividends.
- We're going to grow our economy and put Alaskans to work.
- And we must restore public trust in government and elected officials.

Several of these goals relate to our work as professional licensing leaders: We must spend less than our allocated budget, ensure public safety, and inspire the trust of the public through responsibility and transparency. **Most of all, we must strike the delicate balance between growing our economy and putting Alaskans to work while protecting the public interest.** We accomplish these goals as partners in active, accountable governance and defensible, reasonable administration.

Further, Commissioner Anderson has tasked our division and our partner boards with the following immediate focus:

- Consider whether our occupational licensing requirements are reasonable responses to actual potential harm rather than hypothetical harm.
- Review statutes and regulations to ensure any licensing requirement is necessary and tailored to fulfill legitimate public health, safety, or welfare objectives.
- Review the license application process with a goal of substantially reducing the time required to review applications and issue licenses.

In celebration of the new year—and to keep us on track with our mandate—I've developed a few New Year's Resolutions for our boards and staff. (And, yes...true to tradition, these resolutions do involve losing weight!)

1. **At all times, our governance should demonstrate that we have *internalized the purpose of professional licensing: safeguarding the public interest.***
 - a. Records of decisions should reflect that *the board considered the risk of harm* to consumers, the *impact on those seeking or holding a license*, the *effect on the market*, and any *unintended consequences* to any party.
 - b. All board deliberations should be *thorough, balanced, and grounded* in law and logic.
 - c. Board business should reflect *accountability and responsiveness* in addressing concerns.

2. ***Make decisions that reflect proficiency in the statutes, regulations, division policies, and state/national issues that affect our licensing programs.***
 - a. Read all centralized statutes ([AS 08.01-03](#)) and regulations ([12 AAC 02.010-400](#); [12 AAC 02.900-990](#)) and *know how to utilize them*, as appropriate.
 - b. Read [your program's](#) statutes under AS 08 and regulations under 12 AAC 02 and *take responsibility for being the state's experts* in what they say and how they impact the public, applicants, licensees, and other stakeholders.
 - c. Refer regularly to your [board member training resources](#) located on the division's web site, especially the Guide to Excellence in Regulation, which will help you navigate the intricacies of service on a quasi-judiciary government board.

3. **Add value to the bottom line by delivering *excellent service* to all internal and external customers.**
 - a. Communicate *transparently, proactively, and clearly*.
 - b. Respond to inquiries *promptly and professionally*.
 - c. *Resolve any roadblocks* that are delaying review or issuance of licenses to qualified individuals.
 - d. *Maximize efficiencies* where possible and practical.
 - e. Identify when *additional resources* are needed, and make solution-oriented suggestions to the director.

4. **Prioritize changes to statutes and regulations that *streamline, modernize, and reduce barriers* to employment of qualified individuals.**
 - a. *Develop a strategic plan for your board.* The division can provide resources to assist you.
 - b. *Look for low-hanging fruit:* What has created a regulatory roadblock in the last five years? What is outdated or outmoded, given current tools, trends, and technology?
 - c. *Think big:* Now is the time to consider those ambitious changes you've dreamed about making. Join a licensure compact? Adopt reciprocity with other states? Put it on the table.
 - d. *Challenge biases and "the way we have always done it":* Does the data support the decision? What does the requirement accomplish? Is it based on fact, fear, familiarity, or faction?
 - e. *Build into each agenda ample time to review* a portion of your program statutes and regulations to ensure they are serving the public interest.
 - f. *Set deadlines to assertively draft changes to statutes and regulations.* Consider assigning committees to work on them at publicly noticed gatherings between board meetings. Use the division's administrative resources to maximize outputs and opportunities.

I have directed staff to provide you with various tools to begin addressing New Year's Resolution #4 at your next board meeting. Either your board executive (if you have one), the deputy division director, or I plan to attend during the standard Division Update agenda item to walk through these tools and the task ahead.

Board progress on this review and your suggested regulatory changes will be reported up to the governor's office, and we stand at the ready to support your work. As always, our division regulations specialists are here to assist in drafting regulations. If you plan to navigate legislation that meets these objectives, please contact me directly or through your staff so we can leverage all our resources toward our common goal.

We are scheduling a survey to licensees and industry stakeholders to gather their input, which will be shared with each relevant board. You may also wish to encourage public comment on this topic in advance of a future board meeting. As resources allow, we may hold "town hall"-style meetings to solicit thoughts from the public. If you have additional ideas for outreach, please let me know. Please be sure to check the division's [board member training resources web site](#) for additional links to helpful resources.

The year ahead may move us out of our comfort zones, but it will fine tune our agency into a high-functioning, laser-focused, mission-oriented team. I look forward to actively working with you to accomplish these goals. Please reach out to me any time with questions, concerns, and ideas. I'm happy to think through both the small tweaks and the big ideas along with you. My direct line is 907-465-2144 and email is sara.chambers@alaska.gov.