

Department of Commerce, Community
and Economic Development

Division of Corporations, Business
and Professional Licensing

Board of Dental Examiners

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2024



Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing

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This report is required under Alaska Statute 08.01.070(10).

**Board of Dental Examiners
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Board Membership (as of the Date This Report was Approved)

Date of Final Board Approval: 6/25/2024

Dr. Gregory Johnson, Chair
Dr. Dominic Wenzell
Dr. Jonathan Woller
Dr. Newell Walther
Dr. Kenley Michaud
Dr. Jesse Hronkin
Christina Hansen, RDH
Megan Ferguson, RDH
Bradley Heaston

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Accomplishments

Enacted use of BODE's Disciplinary Matrix

Decreased licensuring turnaround times

Completed Full Implementation of Specialty Licenses

Resumed In-person board meetings

Continued Engagement with Radiology Inspections Rollout

Steamlined Investigation processes

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Activities

July 7, 2023 – Special Board Meeting, teleconference

August 23, 2023 – Regular Board Meeting, teleconference

September 8, 2023 – Special Board Meeting, teleconference

October 27, 2023 – Regular Board Meeting, in person

January 11, 2024 – Special Board Meeting, teleconference

February 23, 2024 – Regular Board Meeting, in person

April 12-13, 2024 – AADB Mid-Year Meeting, Chicago, IL, attended by Dr. Newell Walther

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Needs

A deeper understanding (not training) of the case review and investigative processes that extends all the way through to the conclusion of the administrative hearings and consent agreements of the Board phases

Improve investigations processes – the Board of Dental Examiners needs to explore several changes to its current practices.

- a. The current practice calls for two Board members to work with a case investigator to determine if a formal investigation is warranted. In most cases these two Board members spend many hours reviewing the evidence and often call for additional records or determine if an outside expert should become involved in this initial investigative process.
- b. Once the case is brought to the larger Board the assigned investigator presents the case. The reviewing Board members, despite their deeper knowledge of the case do not participate in the case presentation and must also abstain from voting on the case.
- c. The Dental Examining Board believes the assigned case reviewers should assist the investigator(s) with their case presentations to the full Board. This conclusion stems from the deeper understanding these Board reviewers have of dental and dental hygiene practice and the greater knowledge the assigned reviewers gain through the process of reviewing the case.

Improve Board processes for requests for legal opinions from the Department of Law – the Board of Dental Examiners must continue to explore a more structured means to request legal opinions from the Department of Law from what is currently being practiced.

- a. The current practice oftentimes leaves requests the Board makes of the Department of Law as too informal and vague. By its nature this lack of specificity often results in imperfect responses which have little value to the Board.
- b. In addition, such vagueness in requests on the part of the Board can also lead to undue time spent by the Department of Law and unnecessary add additional costs.

Improve Board interactions and coordination with the Office of Administrative Hearings – the Board of Dental Examiners needs to examine meaningful ways to improve communication with the Office of Administrative Hearings.

- a. The current practice oftentimes leaves the Board with little or no ongoing communication as the process proceeds.
- b. The current practice leaves the Board feeling its sole purpose is to rubber stamp agreements for which it was not a participant.

Improve engagement in the legislative process all the way through Statute, Regulation, and Fees – the Board of Dental Examiners needs to examine ways to become more proactive and relevant throughout the entire process.

- a. Current practices leave the Board, along with the licensees it represent, with little more than the appearance of participation in the overall legislative, statutory, regulatory, and fee setting process.
- b. The creation of a Dental Specialist License and the Transfer of Radiologic Inspections to the Department of Health are two of the most recent examples of where the Board, licensees and, frankly, the public at large had little input beyond the legislative process.

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Needs

In fact, with respect to what should have been a relatively simple and straightforward in-office inspection of radiological equipment has now evolved into a complex, burdensome, and punitive process which highlights exactly what a NON-collaborative effort looks like. Unfortunately, this non-collaborative effort, despite offers from the Board and organized dentistry to assist, is now having a impact on nearly every dental office in Alaska that possesses x-ray generating equipment, and in a very negative way.

- c. Again, the current practice leaves the Board feeling its sole purpose is to rubber stamp proposed statutory, regulatory, and fees for which it was not a participant.

Stabilization of board staff – the Board of Dental Examiners has seen significant improvement in staff stability in recent months and the turnaround times for applications have improved tremendously.

- a. The Board is therefore interested and needs to learn how this positive trend can be sustained over a period of months/years.
- b. Executive Administrator Position – the Board wishes to explore this possibility but needs assurances the Board will participate in the process, especially the hiring process.