

Department of Commerce, Community
and Economic Development

Division of Corporations, Business
and Professional Licensing

Alaska State Medical Board
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).

**Alaska State Medical Board
FY 2024 Annual Report**

Table of Contents

Board Membership

Page 1

Accomplishments

Page 2

Activities

Page 3

Needs

Page 4

Alaska State Medical Board
FY 2024 Annual Report

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

Date of Final Board Approval: 6/13/2024

Eric Nimmo, MD
Board Chair

Sarah Bigelow Hood, PA-C
Vice-Chair

Lydia Mielke, Public Member
Board Secretary

David Barnes, DO

Matt Heilala, DPM

David Paulson, MD

Brent Taylor, MD

David Wilson, Public Member

**Alaska State Medical Board
FY 2024 Annual Report**

Accomplishments

The Alaska State Medical Board (ASMB) is responsible for protecting the public through the licensing, regulation, and discipline of allopathic and osteopathic physicians, podiatrists, and physician assistants. The Board establishes and evaluates competency standards for applicants to practice medicine in Alaska.

During FY2024 the Board explored joining the Interstate License Medical Compact (ILMC). After considerable review, discussion and listening to presentations, the Board opted to proceed with multiple regulation changes aimed at in-house efficiencies and streamlining the licensure process, rather than to endorse the ILMC. These proposed changes are still being worked through the regulatory change process.

The Board finalized a regulation package aimed at modernizing the practice of physician assistants. Oral and public comments were received on the proposed changes. After reviewing the public comments, the Board voted to table the regulation project and form a new work group consisting of State Medical Board members, Alaska Physician Assistant Academy Board members, and other members of the public to continue to discuss and identify new recommended changes to the regulations. The work of the appointed group was tabled during the 2024 legislative session.

**Alaska State Medical Board
FY 2024 Annual Report**

Activities

During FY 2024, The Alaska State Medical Board met 10 times, including 4 quarterly meetings and 6 special meetings. A significant amount of time was spent considering potential board actions to address violations by licensees and reviewing the process by which board members arrive at such decisions. The Board received two trainings and held multiple discussions on the role of Reviewing Board Members in the deliberative process.

Board Investigators received and opened 128 new investigative cases and closed 138 cases on behalf of the Medical Board during this fiscal year. Out of those 138 cases, 100 cases were referred to board members to review and make recommendations. Licensed board members are tasked with reviewing all case documents (medical records, interviews, documents, etc.) and making recommendations to resolve the matter, which may include either no further action or imposing a sanction on the licensee. In cases that involve standard of care violations, two licensed board members must review the case to ensure a thorough review is completed. Standard of Care violations, comprising 20% of the cases brought to the board, were the most common types of violations; while violations of reporting requirements and failing to meet continuing education requirements were the next most common types of violations.

The Board reviewed 24 malpractice cases reported by licensees, screening for gross negligence and avoidable patient harm. Following their case review, licensees were notified regarding recommended follow up actions.

The Medical Board continues to experience a high volume of applicants, a trend that began in 2020 and continues as the practice of telemedicine becomes increasingly ubiquitous in Alaska.

During FY 2024 (July 1, 2023, through June 24, 2024), the board issued 901 licenses, including:

- 670 allopathic physicians
- 93 osteopathic physicians
- 0 podiatrists
- 44 residents
- 3 locum tenens
- 86 physician assistants
- 5 military courtesy licenses

Every complete application is reviewed by a licensed Board member prior to the applicant being approved for a permanent (renewable) license.

Licensing staff compile and review applications for completeness and accuracy. In addition to the 901 license applications completed in FY24, at any given time there are also approximately 300 license applications in various stages of completions for which staff are monitoring and working with applicants to complete.

**Alaska State Medical Board
FY 2024 Annual Report**

Needs

Board members continue to cite the heavy work load put on them due to the high volume of investigative cases and application reviews as being unsustainable. As unpaid volunteers, with numerous other professional and personal obligations, many worry about not being able to commit to their four year appointments. The board continues to explore options for how to address these issues.

The board has requested the following statutory change to recognize and allow for more modern, efficient and timely methods of communication:

“Sec. 08.01.087. (b) If it appears to the commissioner that a person has engaged in or is about to engage in an act or practice in violation of a provision of this chapter or a regulation adopted under it, or a provision of AS 43.70, or a provision of this title or regulation adopted under this title dealing with an occupation or board listed in AS 08.01.010, the commissioner may, if the commissioner considers it in the public interest, and after notification of a proposed order or action by telephone or email ~~facsimile~~ to all board members, if a board regulates the act or practice involved, unless a majority of the members of the board object within 10 days,”