

Physician Assistant Board

Strategic Plan

2019-2023

Physician Assistant Board

Board Members

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Sonya Earley, PA-C, Licensee Member
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Alexis Podesta, Secretary, Business Consumer Services and Housing Agency
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Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT	4
ABOUT THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT BOARD	5
MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES	8
STRATEGIC GOAL AREAS	9
1. WORKFORCE.....	10
2. LICENSING & PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS.....	11
3. LEGISLATION, REGULATION, & POLICY	12
4. COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH	13
5. ENFORCEMENT	14
6. ADMINISTRATION.....	15
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS	16

Message from the Board President

The Physician Assistant Board (Board) is pleased to present the 2019-2023 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



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 labor force 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 Board 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 Board promotes safe practice of physician assistants by:

- 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 Board 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 Board establishes and maintains entry standards of qualification and conduct primarily through its authority to license. Currently there are over 12,000 licensed physician assistants in California.

Board Composition

The Board consists of nine members who serve four-year terms and may be reappointed. The Board is currently comprised of: five licensed physician assistants, and four public members and one ex officio physician and surgeon from the Medical Board of California. The Governor appoints the five 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, budget issues, legislation and regulatory proposals, and consumer and public outreach.

Committees serve as an important component of the Board 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 Board does not have committees established by statutes or regulations, but the President may appoint task forces and committees as issues arise. The Board currently has the Legislative Committee, which serves to identify legislation that the Board may want to be notified of and/or take a position on, Education Committee, and Budget Committee.

Board Functions

The Board appoints an Executive Officer to oversee three full-time employees and one half-time employee 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 physician assistant training program. There are currently 235 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 Board.

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 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 protected by the Board's ongoing continuing medical education (CME) requirements for licensees. Physician assistants are required to renew their license every two years and satisfy the CME requirements as a condition of license renewal. Licensees may meet the CME requirement by completing 50 hours of CME every two years or by obtaining and maintaining certification from the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants.

The Board 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.

Mission, Vision, and Values

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.

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.

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.

Customer Service – We acknowledge all stakeholders as our customers, listen to them, and take their needs into account.

Effectiveness – We make informed decisions that make a difference and have a positive, measurable impact.

Efficiency – We diligently identify the best ways to deliver high-quality services with the most efficient use of our resources.

Employees – We are an employer of choice and strategically recruit, train, and retain employees. We value and recognize employee contributions and talent.

Integrity – We are honest, fair, and respectful in our treatment of everyone, which is demonstrated through our decision-making process.

Unity – We draw strength from our organizational diversity as well as California’s ever-changing cultural and economic diversity.

Strategic Goal Areas

1. Workforce

Address and promote physician assistant workforce needs.

2. Licensing & Professional Qualifications

Promote licensing standards to protect consumers and allow reasonable access to the profession and ensure that licensees medical knowledge is current.

3. Legislation, Regulation, & Policy

Ensure that statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures strengthen and support the Board's mandate and mission.

4. Communication & Outreach

Inform consumers, licensees, applicants, and other stakeholders about the practice and regulation of the physician assistant profession in an accurate, accessible manner.

5. Enforcement

Protect the health and safety of consumers through the enforcement of the laws and regulations governing the practice of physician assistants.

6. Administration

Build an excellent organization through Board governance, effective leadership, and responsible management.

1. Workforce

Address and promote physician assistant workforce needs.

- 1.1 Educate stakeholders about Optimal Team Practice to increase workforce and mitigate the barriers to hiring physician assistants.
- 1.2 Respond to the increasing need for qualified licensed physician assistants in California.

2. Licensing & Professional Qualifications

Promote licensing standards to protect consumers and allow reasonable access to the profession and ensure that licensees medical knowledge is current.

- 2.1 Explore accepting electronic and digital signatures to increase efficiency.
- 2.2 Explore the feasibility of providing electronic verification of license status and history to increase efficiency and conserve resources.
- 2.3 Monitor Board staffing levels, and take action as needed, to maintain timely licensure.

3. Legislation, Regulation, & Policy

Ensure that statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures strengthen and support the Board's mandate and mission.

- 3.1 Engage in grassroots outreach for practicing physician assistants and students about pending regulations and legislation to better inform physician assistant stakeholders.
- 3.2 Review and evaluate the legislative requirements of Optimal Team Practice to maximize utilization of physician assistants and improve patient access to care.
- 3.3 Review and update regulations to implement legislation.

4. Communication & 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 Utilize social media to maximize outreach and communication.
- 4.2 Educate graduate students and applicants about the licensing process to establish realistic expectations.
- 4.3 Educate the public and stakeholders regarding the mission of the Board to improve stakeholder involvement.
- 4.4 Update Board's web address to increase accessibility.

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 Evaluate use of physician assistant, as subject matter experts, at the beginning of the enforcement investigation to determine the validity of the complaint.
- 5.2 Conduct a review of past disciplinary actions to identify best enforcement practices.
- 5.3 Use Quality Business Interactive Reporting Tool (QBIRT) to identify cases that have aged more than eight months to make timely enforcement decisions.

6. Administration

Build an excellent organization through Board governance, effective leadership, and responsible management.

- 5.4 Research the feasibility of the Board becoming completely independent of the Medical Board of California to increase efficiencies and enhance consumer protection.
- 5.5 Request and review accurate, monthly budgetary information to make informed financial decisions.
- 5.6 Create a succession plan for the Executive Officer to help ensure successful transition and preserve institutional knowledge.

Strategic Planning Process

To understand the environment in which the Board operates as well as identify factors that could impact the Board's success in carrying out its regulatory duties, the Department of Consumer Affairs' SOLID Unit conducted an environmental scan of the Board's internal and external environments by collecting information through the following methods:

- ◆ Online survey sent to Board members. There was a total of four responses from a population of eight for a 50%¹ response rate.
- ◆ Online survey sent to Board Executive Officer and staff. There was a total of two participants from a population of five for a 40% response rate.
- ◆ Paper and online surveys sent to educational institutions. There was a total of five responses from a population of twenty-five for a 20% response rate.

The most significant themes and trends identified from the environmental scan were discussed by the Board Members, Executive Officer, and select staff and during a strategic planning session facilitated by SOLID on April 23, 2018. This information guided the Board in the development of its strategic objectives outlined in this 2019 – 2023 strategic plan.

¹ All response rates are rounded to the nearest one (whole number).



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Strategic plan adopted on August 10, 2018.

This strategic plan is based on stakeholder information and discussions facilitated by SOLID for the Physician Assistant Board in April 23, 2018. Subsequent amendments may have been made after the Board's adoption of this plan.