

BUILDING A BETTER MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI STATE BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

FOR THE FISCAL YEARS 2021-2026

Building a Better Mississippi

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Strategic Plan 2021-2026

1. MISSION STATEMENT

The Mississippi State Board of Funeral Service is responsible for implementing the provisions of the Funeral Service Law for the purpose of better protection of life and health and regulating the practice of embalming, funeral directing and the care and disposition of dead human bodies.

2. PHILOSOPHY

In order to carry out its mission, the Board is authorized to prescribe a standard of proficiency as to the qualifications of embalmers and funeral directors, to revoke or suspend licenses for any violations of this law, to adopt rules and regulations and to set standards of sanitation to be observed in the embalming or cremation of dead human bodies.

Any person desiring to engage in the practice of embalming and/or the practice of funeral directing or operating a funeral establishment must first meet the requirements of the law and rules and be licensed by the Board. Through its established procedures, the Board ensures that each applicant to become a funeral director, funeral service, crematorium operator or resident trainee meets the established minimum licensure requirements and once licensed maintains the certifications as required. The Board also ensures that each funeral home establishment and crematorium meets and maintains licensure requirements.

Inspections are conducted bi-annually on all regulated facilities to maintain the integrity of the establishment. The Board also responds to complaints from citizens.

The philosophy of the Board is to safeguard public health by adherence to the established statutes, guidelines and regulations concerning burial practices while ensuring all who contact the agency for services are treated professionally and that citizens contacting the Board for assistance with an issue involving a licensee are treated with compassion in a timely manner.

3. RELEVANT STATEWIDE GOALS AND BENCHMARKS

Statewide Goal # 1: To protect Mississippians from risks to public health and to provide them with the health-related information and access to quality healthcare necessary to increase the length and quality of their lives.

Relevant Benchmark #1:

There is not a specific benchmark associated with the service provided by the Mississippi State Board of Funeral Service. However, the services provided by the Board do protect

the health of the citizenry by ensuring dead bodies do not emit diseases when properly embalmed and buried or cremated.

Statewide Goal # 2: To create an efficient government and an informed and engaged citizenry that helps address social problems through the payment of taxes, the election of capable leaders at all levels of government, and participation in charitable organizations through contributions and volunteerism.

Relevant Benchmark #2:

- Cost of Government

- Number of government employees per 10,000 population.

The Board has two employees and uses contract inspectors who live in the region they oversee. The employment of inspectors in this manner has reduced the reliance on employees who would be required to travel to all areas of the state thereby providing a cost savings to the Board.

- Government Efficiency

- Administrative efficiency: Expenditures on state government administrative activities as a percentage of total operational expenditures

The majority of the Board's expenditures are for its regulatory functions and not its administrative functions.

- Average wait time for state government services

Licenses are issued 3 days from receipt of a completed application.

Office staff are generally able to answer questions the same day as they are received.

Complaints are acknowledged two days from receipt. The investigative process has been streamlined over the years and hearings are conducted as needed.

- Regulatory efficiency: Average length of time to resolution of documented complaints to professional licensing agencies

The Board's website has been updated to not only include a complaint form but now has an online form which can be completed via a fillable pdf format that is transmitted directly to the Board. This has assisted in lessening the response time for complaint processing.

Complaints are acknowledged two days from receipt and the investigative process initiated, on average, 30 days from receipt of original complaint.

- Number and average cost of regulatory actions taken, by regulatory board and type of action

The Board issued approximately 95 licenses in the past year and conducted 220 inspections and responded to 28 complaints. The efficiency of the office is reflected in these statistics.

- State dollars saved by providing government services online

The implementation of the licensing system several years ago has been a model for other agencies. To date our system has been reviewed and adapted by at least five other state licensing boards. The Board continues to use document imaging to maintain license files and complaints within this system.

- Percentage of state employees leaving state service within five years of employment.

The percentage of state employees leaving state service within five years of employment is 0%. The current Executive Director was hired August 1, 2016 to replace the previous Executive Director. The previous Executive Director was employed with the agency for almost 26 years before her retirement on June 30, 2016.

- Engage Citizenry

Although there is no relevant benchmark for the services provided by our Board, all citizens of the state are affected by these services. Every citizen will at some point need the services of a funeral provider and the professionalism exhibited by the providers is directly attributed to the regulation of the industry. In addition, the citizens have an advocate when they experience issues during a funeral through the complaint processes.

4. OVERVIEW

The Mississippi State Board of Funeral Services has been very successful in meeting its goals over the past few years. The implementation of on-line renewal capabilities continues to streamline operations of the office. The upgrade to a paperless office component also continues to improve upon our effectiveness as it eliminated the need to maintain file folders and the continued maintenance of those files. Our inspection/investigative services continue to improve as the contracted investigators continue to learn about the profession. The accomplishment of these goals continue to have a positive impact on the agency allowing the Board to focus on its remaining priorities for the next five years.

The first goal is the development of a new Funeral Director Exam. This will be an exam separate from the State Board Exam prepared by the National Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards. In September 2018 the Board selected a vendor to help develop and administer the new exam. A group of exam writers were selected from a group of volunteer licensees, funeral director and funeral service.

Board staff, the vendor and the group of exam writers are continuously meeting to develop and write questions for the exam. We strongly anticipate for the exam to be completed and ready for administration before the end of 2019.

A second goal for the office is to promote additional legislation to upgrade the rules and regulations of the funeral industry so that Mississippi has comparable rules and regulations as those of her sister states. This can only be accomplished by the Mississippi State Legislature adding additional rules and regulations to those currently being enforced.

A final goal is the promotion of the National Funeral Directors Association code of ethics; the assurance that all funeral homes comply with all rules and regulations as set forth by the Mississippi State Legislature; and the assurance that all funeral homes are knowledgeable of the regulations of EPA, OSHA and the Federal Trade Commission. This would also require that the Board develop a state ethics examination.

The overall objective of the above goals is to ensure that consumers are served by qualified licensed personnel of funeral establishments; that said personnel and funeral establishments have current licenses; and that new applicants meet all of the requirements, including the certification of the National Board Examination or the State Board Examination as prepared by the National Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards.

5. EXTERNAL/INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

The Mississippi State Board of Funeral Services has an in-house strategic plan in place to establish the direction of the agency. Through a process of regularly scheduled board meetings, the Board determines how well the agency is meeting the needs of all Mississippians. Management policies are in place to address the deficiencies in the process, and these deficiencies are addressed and corrected as time and budgetary constraints allow.

The strategic planning process, the annual internal control review assessment and the annual budget process are all tools utilized to assist the agency and its Board members to perform internal assessments. These processes are key components of the assessment since there is not an external assessment provided by a federal agency and the review from the State Auditor's Office is limited and seldom.

External factors which can effect performance of the agency have been identified as:

- A potential lack of funding based on the license fee set in statute when there is a decline in the number of licenses issued.
- Significant changes in rules and regulations established by the legislature.
- Significant increases in the number of consumer or industry complaints or the complexity of those complaints.

6. PROGRAM GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND MEASURES BY PROGRAM

The Board's sole program is Licensure.

Goal A: License Funeral Services, Funeral Home Directors, Crematorium Operators, Resident Trainees, and Funeral Establishments

Objective A.1: Ensure that consumers are served by qualified licensed personnel of licensed funeral establishments.

Outcome: All applicants meet the minimum requirements as annotated in the State laws, rules and regulations governing employees in the funeral service profession.

Outcome: Licensees are knowledgeable of the burial practices of all religions and of the state regulations for proper cremation and burial of dead human bodies.

Strategy A.1.1 Review rules and regulations of sister states to promote additional legislation to upgrade the rules and regulations of the funeral industry in Mississippi.

Output: Issue or deny license or renewal applications in accordance with established laws, rules, regulations and guidelines.

Efficiency: Increase the number of renewal applications received online.

Goal B: Inspect Funeral Establishments

Objective B.1 Ensure the funeral establishments are operating within the requirements of the State Board laws, rules and regulations.

Outcome: Deficiencies noted during an inspection are addressed within the timeframe allotted.

Outcome: Hearings are held in a timely manner for all unaddressed deficiencies.

Strategy: Hire regional independent contractors to conduct at least 6 inspections a month.

Output: Inspections are conducted on each establishment bi-annually.

Efficiency: Fewer findings of non-compliance are noted when subsequent inspections are performed.

Goal C: Receive, investigate and resolve all valid consumer and industry complaints

Objective C.1: Address consumer complaints concerning services, facilities and operations.

Outcome: Receive complaints and determine if complaint has validity.

Outcome: Respond to all complaints and inform complaining party of action taken.

Strategy C.1.1: Provide a clear mechanism for citizens to lodge complaints and utilize established procedures to address each complaint received.

Output: Communications are enhanced during the complaint process.

Efficiency: Receipt of complaint is acknowledged within 2 days.

Efficiency: Complaint process is begun within the week the full complaint is received.

Efficiency: Complainant is notified of the result of the complaint process.

Efficiency: Reduce the average length of time to resolve valid complaints received.

Goal D: Increase office efficiency

This goal was completed in FY16 with the implementation of a paperless office system