

Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure (MSBML)
5-Year Strategic Plan
For the Fiscal Years 2028-2032

1. Comprehensive Mission Statement

The mission of the Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure (MSBML) is to ensure the protection of the health, safety and welfare of Mississippians through implementation and enforcement of laws involving the licensing and regulation of physicians, podiatrists, physician assistants, radiology assistants and acupuncturists and through the objective enforcement of the Mississippi Medical Practice Act.

2. Philosophy

The MSBML is committed to the continued protection of the health, safety and welfare of all Mississippians. The philosophy of the MSBML is to ensure healthcare professionals licensed by the MSBML meet the licensing standards as directed by the Mississippi State Legislature and to regulate the practice of MSBML licensees. The Board seeks to ensure the citizens of Mississippi receive quality health care by carefully licensing and regulating the over 8,000 healthcare professionals practicing in the state as well as an additional 8,000 telemedicine practitioners.

3. Relevant Statewide Goals and Benchmarks

Statewide Goal #1.: HEALTH – 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:

- In partnership with Physicians Workforce, research and identify numbers and types of practitioners needed to fill underserved or shortage areas of the state.
- Collaborate with law enforcement, healthcare institutions, other licensing boards, government authorities, and stakeholders as permitted under state law and Board policy.

Statewide Goal #2.: GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY– To create an efficient government and an informed and engaged citizenry that helps to 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 Benchmarks:

- Average wait time for government services
- Regulatory efficiency: average length of time to resolution of documented complaints to professional licensing agencies

- Integration of licensing, compliance and legal into one system
- State dollars saved by providing online services for license applications, license renewal and document retrieval

4. Overview of the Agency 5-Year Strategic Plan

Over the next 5 years, the MSBML will continue to educate its licensees, as well as the general public regarding state and federal licensing laws. Statistics show that Mississippi has one of the lowest physician-to-patient ratios in the United States. It is the MSBML's goal to reduce the time it takes for licensees to acquire a license but still protect the public from incompetent healthcare professionals. In doing so, the MSBML will continue updating existing software programs, and its laws and rules; utilizing technology more proficiently; and educating licensees and the public of the role of the MSBML. Over the past 8 years, the agency has actively participated in the Interstate Medical Licensing Compact and will continue to encourage new applicants to utilize the services of the Compact.

Planning for the 2027 legislative session, the Board is continuing to propose a comprehensive modernization of the Mississippi Medical Practices Act. One component of this is the ability to fine our licensees when necessary. The MSBML is the only regulatory agency that lacks the ability or option to fine our licensees. Our disciplinary options revolve around suspension of license. With the statutory option of imposing a financial sanction on the licensee, the Board has the discretion of keeping the physician working while applying proper discipline. Another key component would be an update to allow for a smooth pathway for internationally trained physicians to become licensed in the State of Mississippi.

The epidemic of prescription drug diversion and abuse has improved over the last 5 years due in part to the emphasis and hard work of agencies like the Board. While it remains a point of focus for continuing improvement, the practice of telemedicine has expanded exponentially in that same time frame. The COVID-19 pandemic created new, necessary pathways for licensees and non-licensees to practice medicine in Mississippi via technology. Some licensees have yet to adjust back to normal and continue to practice telemedicine in a relaxed manner that, in certain cases, violates state law and regulations. Further, unscrupulous actors both inside and outside the state engage and/or assist in the illegal practice of medicine via telemedicine at an alarming rate. The Board has conducted and continues to conduct numerous investigations involving telemedicine as a major component of the act(s) constituting a violation of the Medical Practice Act. These are often complex investigations that require significant time commitments, multiple personnel, and outside-the-box thinking.

The Board's investigators continue to also seek to identify impaired providers due to substance use, licensees engaged in unprofessional or illegal conduct with patients, and other violations of the Medical Practice Act.

Corporate ownership, oversight, and management of financial aspects of medical practice is now the norm, and many of these corporate medical entities involve large multi-state and multi-disciplinary teams of physicians. The rise of the Interstate Medical Licensing Compact has both served a need and created an additional level of complexity. These multi-state medical businesses increasingly rely on larger and more sophisticated legal teams. The addition of our new Attorney II position has had a positive impact on the resolution of both open cases and provided an additional resource for these complex cases.

Costs involved with investigations have seen a steady rise. The complexity and occurrence of broader medical investigations involving multiple physicians has also grown. To continue to successfully protect public safety, this agency must match these new and evolving medical practices and business operations with equal sophistication and efficient use of technology in both investigations and legal operations. Over the next 18 months, we will continue to integrate the Legal module into the Thoughtspan software system.

Having the appropriate positions in the correct divisions will ensure that the Board meets and exceeds its goals in conjunction with the Statewide Strategic Plan and provide a safer public health community for Mississippians.

5. Agency's External/Internal Assessment

- 1) An increase in the number of graduates from medical, osteopathic and physician assistant schools who apply for a Mississippi medical license will impact the number of applications processed and licenses issued by current staff.
- 2) Additional licensees will increase the number of complaints filed and the number of investigations conducted.
- 3) Changes in federal and state prescription drug laws will determine the availability of drugs prescribed.
- 4) The Board's ability to right-size the agency with the proper job positions filled with staff possessing the proper skill set to take the agency forward.

The Board's Executive Director and Deputy Director are directly responsible for assessing the agency's direction and compliance with its mission and goals. Both the Executive Director and Deputy Director take direct supervisory roles with the various divisions in the agency and formally and informally meet with the staff regularly to ensure operations are progressing as planned.

The Board continually monitors the processing time and number of applications processed. During the upcoming year, the Board plans to implement a follow-up survey system to evaluate the license process and improve agency performance.

Weekly meetings are held by the investigative staff to address pending investigations. Strategies and procedures in dealing with arising issues are discussed. Updates and results from current investigations are reviewed. The Mississippi Prescription Monitoring System is one tool utilized to determine if a physician is issuing an unusual amount of controlled substances prescriptions and if a patient is receiving an unusual amount of controlled substances prescriptions. Based on results from the Mississippi Prescription Monitoring System investigations are initiated.

In-house attorneys, along with dedicated staff, have greatly added to the overall review and assessment of proper licensing, investigations, and subsequent disciplinary actions.

6. Agency Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Measures by Program for FY 2028 through FY 2032

Program 1: Licensure

GOAL A: Support and encourage the attempt to recruit healthcare professionals to practice in the State, especially in health professional shortage areas.

OBJECTIVE A.1. Make the licensure and renewal process more user-friendly, providing better customer service

Outcome: Increase in the number of applications received online

Outcome: Increase in the number of licenses issued and renewed

Outcome: Increase in the number of healthcare professionals practicing in the state

Efficiency: Percentage of licensees renewing online

A.1.1. STRATEGY: Participate in the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact

Output: Number of licensees applying/renewing via the Compact

Efficiency: Reduction of wait time for applicants to receive licenses

A.1.2. STRATEGY: Update application submission software programs

Output: Number of programs updated

Efficiency: All applications/renewals come to agency online, eliminating paper handling and speeding turnaround for licensees

OBJECTIVE A.2. Maintain an efficient licensing agency

Outcome: Best use of licensing staff to minimize time of license issuance

Outcome: Develop licensing staff with knowledge and experience in medical licensing field

A.2.1. STRATEGY: Issue licenses properly in a timely and cost-effective manner
Output: Number of licenses received
Output: Number of licenses issued resulting
Output: Number of tenured licensing staff (> 5 years state service)
Efficiency: Decrease in the length of time to issue licenses
Efficiency: Cost of licensing professionals in the medical field
Efficiency: Turnover in licensing staff

Program 2: Investigative

GOAL A: Protect Mississippians from risks to public health by monitoring licensees for violations of the Medical Practice Act.

OBJECTIVE A.1. Monitor the number of licensees who are diverting/abusing prescription drugs and ensure prescribing licensees are doing so for legitimate medical reasons
Outcome: Provide safe-health environments (physician's offices) for the public
Outcome: Decrease in the number of licensees over-prescribing controlled substances

A.1.1. STRATEGY: Update Board policies, rules and laws to require licensees to 1. register with the Mississippi Prescription Monitoring Program, and 2. apply and obtain a permit prior to issuing prescriptions for controlled substances.
Output: Number of updates required
Output: Better information concerning the storage and safeguard of prescription drugs
Efficiency: Decrease in the number of licensees over-prescribing controlled substances
Efficiency: Cost of implementing registration process and administering the program

A.1.2. STRATEGY: Investigate complaints concerning misuse of controlled substances and misuse of prescription authority among licensees
Output: Number of complaints received
Output: Number of investigations resulting
Efficiency: Decrease in the number of licensees over-prescribing controlled substances

Efficiency: Cost of investigations

OBJECTIVE A.2 Investigate complaints regarding licensees' improper behavior as it relates to patient protocol.

Outcome: Provide safe health environments (physician's offices) for the public

Outcome: Decrease in the number of licensees violating the Medical Practice Act by abusing patients and their rights

A.2.1. STRATEGY: Investigate complaints concerning improper behavior of licensees

Output: Number of complaints received

Output: Number of investigations resulting

Efficiency: Decrease in the number of practicing licensees exhibiting improper behavior

Efficiency: Cost of investigations

OBJECTIVE A.3 To maintain an efficient regulatory agency

Outcome: Best use of investigative staff to minimize time of investigation

Outcome: Develop investigative staff with knowledge and experience in medical licensing field

A.3.1. STRATEGY: Investigate complaints in a timely and cost-effective manner

Output: Number of complaints received

Output: Number of investigations resulting

Output: Number of tenured investigators (> 5 years state service)

Efficiency: Decrease in the length of time to resolution of documented complaints

Efficiency: Cost of investigations

Efficiency: Turnover in investigative staff

7. Conclusion

Through this Five-Year Strategic Plan, the Mississippi Board of Medical Licensure is committed to ensuring the protection of the health, safety and welfare of all Mississippians. By continuing to implement modern technology, strengthening licensing services and improving regulatory efficiency, the Board is committed to achieving these goals to the benefit of both providers and patients.