

Arizona Board of Respiratory Care Examiners (Board)

The Board issued licenses to qualified applicants we reviewed, but did not timely do so, potentially delaying applicants' ability to work or impacting the availability of practitioners to treat patients, and did not investigate or timely investigate and resolve all complaints or prioritize them based on risk, increasing public safety risk.

Audit purpose

To assess whether the Board issued licenses in accordance with statute and rule requirements, investigated and resolved complaints within its jurisdiction and in a timely manner, and provided information to the public as required by statute, and to respond to the statutory sunset factors.

Key findings

The Board:

- Is responsible for regulating the respiratory care profession in Arizona by issuing and renewing licenses, investigating and resolving complaints, and providing information to the public about licensees.
- Issued initial licenses to qualified applicants for the applications we reviewed.
- Did not always issue licenses within time frames established in its rules, which could delay applicants' ability to work and impact the availability of respiratory care practitioners to treat patients.
- Did not investigate 2 of 11 complaints we reviewed, including an allegation open for 529 days that a practitioner had been administering unnecessary treatments to 2 patients.
- Took more than 180 days to investigate and resolve 5 of 11 complaints we reviewed, including 1 that was open for 316 days alleging a licensee who tested positive on a drug screening was being investigated for missing medication by their employer, and had 5 additional complaints that had been open for between 421 and 1,095 days.
- Did not document its investigative findings for 8 of 11 complaints we reviewed.
- Reported it had not been prioritizing complaint investigations based on risk as required by Board policy.
- Used multiple databases and spreadsheets that were incomplete or contained inaccurate information to monitor initial license applications, license renewals, and complaints, and its new database lacked important functionalities for overseeing licensing and complaint handling timeliness.

Key recommendations

The Board should:

- Issue or deny licenses within the time frames established in the Board's rules.
- Investigate and resolve complaints within 180 days, ensure Board staff provide the Board with complete investigative reports, and prioritize complaints for investigation as required by its policy.
- Develop and implement monitoring processes to comply with its licensing time frames and track complaint investigations, including recording dates of key licensing application and complaint handling steps.
- Complete implementation of its new database including ensuring that the database contains complete and accurate information for monitoring and overseeing its licensing and complaint handling processes.