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## “Recent Accomplishments and Continuing Challenges”

A Message from Dr. Stephen Morse, Chair of the Maine Board of Dental Practice

As the Board’s newly elected Chair, I have accepted the task of leading the Board toward achieving its organizational goals, setting priorities to meet those goals, and to periodically assess its progress to ensure the Board is meeting its statutory obligations. To that end, I am taking this opportunity to share with you my observations of the Board’s work.

The Board’s sole mission, as defined by statute, is to protect the public. The Board accomplishes that mandate by setting standards to ensure competent and honest practitioners via its testing, licensing, regulating, and disciplining processes. The Board’s vision to successfully achieve that mandate is to identify clear expectations regarding the practices it regulates in a manner that is fair and consistent.

Below are my observations regarding the Board’s progress to date, and the work that lies ahead in the following areas:

**New Dental Practice Act:** In 2016, the Board’s proposal to repeal and replace the former statute was the single most important accomplishment. This work set the statutory framework needed to address a variety of issues ranging from licensing provisions, scopes of practice, and administrative functions. However, the Board and its stakeholders identified additional statutory revisions needed to address issues such as tele-dentistry, refinements of scopes of practice, and to examine the evolving models of practice to avoid barriers to dental care.

**Rulemaking Efforts:** The Board has adopted five separate rulemaking efforts ranging from the licensing of denturist externs, to setting the curriculum requirements for a dental hygiene therapy program, continuing education, sedation requirements for dentists, and the requirements for independent practice dental hygienists in exposing ionizing radiation (dental radiographs) to patients. It has proposed a complete repeal and replace of all rulemaking chapters to fully implement the new Dental Practice Act. The remaining work is to reconvene stakeholders to examine Chapter 14 (Sedation) and Chapter 21 (Controlled Substances - Pain Management) regarding sedation requirements in the context of treating pain and anxiety, with a focus on the new opioid prescribing requirements.

**Case Management:** In 2018, the Board closed more than 100 compliant cases. Its goal is to continue to reduce its aging caseload in 2019, and to fill the vacant position of Board Investigator.

**Licensing Process – Online services:** The Board launched its new website in 2016 and made several enhancements to its online services for users. This work, along with improvements to the application process, have provided a higher level of customer service in how licenses are issued, maintained and renewed. The Board also transitioned five year licenses and permits into a two-year fixed licensure cycle to streamline licensure expiration dates. See: <https://www.maine.gov/dental/>

**Communication/Outreach:** The Board does not provide legal or practice advice; however, it does attempt to highlight and clarify its existing statutes and rules when appropriate. To that end, the Board has issued several informational letters via email to licensees and participated in continuing education seminars, dental professional association meetings, dental education programs offering informational sessions to students for providing an overview of the Board's licensure program. It is a dental professional's responsibility to practice in accordance with current regulations. The Board provides updated regulations on its website, and identifies a variety of other resources relevant to dental professions. Utilizing the website is one of the most accessible tools you can use to stay current.

**Get Involved:** If you are interested in receiving electronic notifications regarding future Board meeting agendas, then please email the Board at [dental.board@maine.gov](mailto:dental.board@maine.gov) The Board encourages your feedback, particularly during its rulemaking proceedings, to ensure its proposed changes to dental regulations are sufficiently vetted during the public comment period.

Thank you and Happy Spring!