

## Arizona Regulatory Board of Physician Assistants (Board)

Board timely issued initial and renewal licenses, but did not timely resolve complaints, increasing the risk to public safety, and failed to establish oversight and accountability mechanisms for its staff, potentially resulting in inefficient and ineffective operations, noncompliance with Board statutes and policies, and waste of public resources

### Audit purpose

To assess whether the Board issued and renewed licenses and registrations in accordance with statute and rule requirements, investigated and resolved complaints within its jurisdiction in a timely manner and imposed disciplinary action consistent with the nature and severity of violations, provided information to the public as required by statute, and complied with State conflict-of-interest requirements, and to provide responses to the 10 statutory sunset factors.

### Key findings

The Board:

- Is responsible for regulating physician assistants in Arizona including issuing and renewing licenses and registrations; investigating and resolving complaints; and providing information to the public about licensees.
- Issued/denied initial and renewal licenses/registrations within required time frames, took consistent enforcement to address substantiated violations for complaints we reviewed, and involved the public in rulemaking.
- Did not resolve 94% of complaints it closed in fiscal year 2024 within 180 days, and 46% of open complaints had been open for more than 180 days as of June 2024, potentially impacting patient safety. For example, the Board took more than 2 years to resolve a complaint alleging a licensee failed to comply with the standard of care by prescribing high doses of opioids to multiple patients for long-term use without sufficient clinical justification.
- Did not establish oversight and accountability mechanisms for staff, potentially resulting in inefficient and ineffective operations, noncompliance with Board statutes and policies, and waste of public resources, including mismanaging staffing resources that contributed to performance shortfalls and a staff performance incentive pay program was not aligned with many of the Board's statutory objectives.

### Key recommendations

The Board should:

- Investigate and resolve complaints within 180 days.
- Develop and implement policies and procedures for completing, tracking, and monitoring complaint investigations.
- Establish and implement staff oversight accountability measures consistent with Board policy.
- Review and revise its performance incentive program to ensure alignment with measurable, meaningful performance outcomes tied to its key statutory objectives and purposes and staff responsibilities.