

Arizona State Board of Nursing

Performance Audit and Sunset Review

Board timely issued licenses/certificates in fiscal years 2023 and 2024, but continues to take more than 180 days to resolve complaints and its backlog of open complaints has grown, which may affect patient safety

Audit purpose

To determine whether the Board issued and renewed licenses/certificates as required by statute and rule, resolved complaints timely and in accordance with its policy, and provided information to the public as statutorily required; and to respond to the 10 statutory sunset factors.¹

Key findings

- ▶ Board timely issued licenses/certificates, issued initial licenses/certificates to qualified applicants for most applications we reviewed, and renewed licenses/certificates we reviewed to qualified applicants in fiscal years 2023 and 2024.
- ▶ Board did not resolve within 180 days 56% of complaints it closed between July 2024 and January 2025, including 28 high-risk complaints, despite 4 prior audit reports spanning 33 years recommending that it timely investigate and resolve complaints.
- ▶ Board has a backlog of 2,177 open complaints as of January 2025, 1,543 of which have been open and unresolved for more than 180 days, including 51 high-risk complaints. This backlog has increased by more than 86% since March 2023 and includes some unresolved complaints dating back more than 7 years.
- ▶ Board's failure to timely investigate and resolve complaints may negatively impact patient safety and lead to licensees and certificate holders being under investigation for lengthy periods of time. For example, the Board took 293 days to investigate and resolve a complaint involving a patient's death.

Key recommendations to the Board

- ▶ Investigate and resolve all complaints within 180 days.
- ▶ Establish time frames for investigating and resolving all complaints the Board receives, including time frames for completing key investigatory steps.
- ▶ Take steps to identify and address the causes of investigation delays.

¹ The Arizona Auditor General conducted this performance audit and sunset review of the Board pursuant to a November 21, 2022, resolution of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. This audit was conducted as part of the sunset review process prescribed in Arizona Revised Statutes §41-2951 et seq.