

Arizona State Board of Optometry

Board did not comply with some State conflict-of-interest requirements, did not answer or respond to our anonymous phone calls or provide some required information on its website, and licensed some applicants without ensuring they met all requirements

Audit purpose

To determine whether the Board issued and renewed licenses/certificates in accordance with statute and rule requirements, resolved complaints in a timely manner and in accordance with Board policy, provided information to the public as required by statute, and complied with conflict-of-interest requirements, and to provide responses to the statutory sunset factors.

Key findings

The Board:

- Was established in 1907 to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public by licensing and regulating optometrists.
- Did not comply with some State conflict-of-interest requirements and had not fully aligned its conflict-of-interest process with recommended practices, such as requiring all employees and Board members to complete a conflict-of-interest disclosure form upon hire/appointment, reminding all employees and Board members to update their disclosure form at least annually or as their circumstances change, and maintaining a special file for substantial interest disclosures.
- Did not answer or respond to any of the 8 anonymous phone calls we made and did not provide some required public information on its website, such as nondisciplinary orders.
- Issued and renewed licenses we reviewed in a timely manner, but did not verify some licensure requirements, such as lawful presence, for 17 of 35 initial and renewal applications we reviewed.
- Resolved all 11 complaints we reviewed within its 120-day time frame, but did not ensure that licensees provided a written response to the notice of a complaint within 20 days for 4 of 11 complaints we reviewed, as required by statute.

Key recommendations

The Board should:

- Revise its internal conflict-of-interest policies and procedures to help ensure compliance with State conflict-of-interest requirements and alignment with conflict-of-interest recommended practices.
- Comply with all statutory requirements for providing public information, including providing public records and information to the public by ensuring that staff answer phone calls and timely return voicemail messages; and posting nondisciplinary orders to its website.
- Develop and implement written policies and procedures to help ensure staff comply with public information requirements.
- Ensure that applicants meet all statute and rule requirements for licensure.
- Develop and implement internal policies and procedures for tracking licensee responses to complaints.