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Report Highlights

Regulation of the Dental Profession

Louisiana State Board of Dentistry

Audit Control # 40150031

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Why We Conducted This Audit

We evaluated whether the Louisiana State Board of Dentistry (LSBD) is effectively regulating the dental profession in Louisiana to ensure compliance with the Dental Practice Act. We conducted this audit because, although LSBD is created under the authority of the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), neither LDH nor any other entity provides oversight of LSBD's operations.

What We Found

We found that LSBD should strengthen its monitoring and enforcement activities to protect the public and ensure that dentists and hygienists comply with the Dental Practice Act. We identified the following issues:

- **LSBD should establish a consistent policy on how often dental offices should be inspected to provide assurance to the public that offices are monitored regularly. We found that between fiscal years 2012 and 2014, LSBD did not conduct inspections on 568 (35.5%) of 1,600 dental offices.** LSBD has changed its policy regarding inspection frequency twice since May 2014. Its current policy states that LSBD endeavors, but does not require, its inspector to randomly inspect each office at least once every six years. According to LSBD staff, all offices will continue to be inspected once every three years in practice, but it changed the policy so that it cannot be criticized if it fails to comply with the requirements. In addition, LSBD should inspect dentists in close proximity at the same time to help ensure it meets its required number of inspections.
- **LSBD should ensure all violations it identifies are corrected. We found that LSBD did not always notify dental offices of violations needing correction or require dentists to submit proof that violations were corrected.** We found no evidence that LSBD notified dental offices of inspection violations for 107 (26.1%) of the 410 dental offices with inspection violations during fiscal years 2012 through 2014 (see table below).

Inspection Violations Cited, by Category
Fiscal Years 2012 through 2014

Violation Category	Number of Violations	Percentage
Undocumented or lack of sterilization and disinfection techniques (i.e., heat sterilization and spore testing)	296	41.4%
Lack of proof of immunization against Hepatitis B	222	31.0%
LSBD license, permit, and certificate display requirements not met	131	18.3%
Anesthesia violations* (i.e., emergency drugs not available or drug logs not properly maintained)	30	4.2%
No proof of proper sharp items or contaminated wastes disposal	28	3.9%
Disposable gloves, face masks, or protective eyewear not being worn	8	1.1%
Total	715	

*Anesthesia violations are only cited during inspections for dental offices that are permitted to administer anesthesia.

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information obtained from LSBD.

- **LSBD should track its disciplinary actions and develop a disciplinary matrix in order to fairly and equitably administer sanctions to dentists who violate the Dental Practice Act. We found cases with similar violations were not always treated consistently.** Disciplinary matrices are used by the Texas and Mississippi State Boards of Dental Examiners as well as the Louisiana State Board of Nursing.

View the full report, including management's response, at www.la.gov.