

# Report of the Meeting of the Dental Board of California

November 7-8, 2011

## Prepared for the California Society of Pediatric Dentistry

*The Dental Board of California met November 7-8, 2011, in Studio City. The following summarizes actions and issues coming before the Board pertinent to pediatric oral health*

### Pathways to Dental Licensure

With the passage of legislation in 2004 that established a pathway to California dental licensure by passage of the Western Regional Examination Boards (WREB), demand for the clinical examination administered by the Dental Board of California has all but disappeared and the examination is no longer offered. Current pathways to California Licensure are listed below:

- **WREB Clinical Examination (2004)** - Applicants must have graduated from an approved dental program or have previously passed the Board's restorative technique exam and must pass the Western Regional Examination Board's clinical exam and pass the California Law and Ethics examination.
- **Licensure by Residency (LBR) (2006)** - Applicants must have graduated from an American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) accredited dental program and completed at least one year of postgraduate education in an approved Advanced Education in General Dentistry or General Practice Residency and pass the California Law and Ethics examination.
- **Licensure by Credential (2002)** - Applicants must have been licensed in another state for at least 5 years and provide documentation of at least 5,000 hours of clinical practice in the preceding 5 of 7 years, or agree to at least a two year contract with an approved dental program in California as an instructor, or practice in a public health clinic in an underserved area as designated by Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD).
- A fourth pathway, **Portfolio Examination**, is in development for the future. The Portfolio examination will assess a California dental student's experiences within the clinic settings of his or her dental program as the measure of competence for issuance of a California dental license.

In addition, all applicants must undergo a criminal background check and have a Social Security number before a license may be issued.

*Comment: Licensing statistics for 2010 and 2011 are as follows:*

Pathway	Issued in 2010	Issued in 2011	Net Issued to Date	Pathway Implemented
California Exam	0	0	53,977	Prior to 1929
WREB Exam	558	664	4,022	2006
LBR	159	182	694	2007
LBC	131	162	2,226	2002
LBC Clinic Contract	3	4	23	2002
LBC Faculty Contact	0	0	3	2002

*At its peak, the California examination was administered to approximately 1,500 candidates annually. The reduced number of candidates taking the WREB examination in California reflects the number of out-of-state candidates preferring to take the WREB exam in other states or obtain the California license by one of the alternate pathways.*

**Licensure by Portfolio Pathway**

AB 1524, passed by the legislature in 2010, creates a new format of clinical licensure examination for students enrolled in a California dental school, commonly referred to as a “portfolio examination.” The Board is now charged with implementing the law by developing standardized criteria for the assessment of the applicant’s competency, training and calibration of examiners, and the process by which the Board will independently monitor and audit the portfolio examination. The Board has contracted with COMIRA, a commercial testing provider, to assist in the development of the regulations and in the creation of an applicant application and candidate handbook, selection criteria for each school’s competency examiners, and to ensure the process is suitable for statistical outcome analysis.

As part of the process, COMIRA created six work groups (Oral Diagnosis and Treatment Planning, Endodontics, Removable Prosthodontics, Periodontics, Indirect Restorations, and Direct Restorations) recruited from each of the six California dental schools to define the purpose and testing criteria of each competency section. These representatives were selected by the Associate Dean of their respective schools and fields. The drafts of the work products of each of the groups will next be reviewed by the faculty and administration of the schools.

*Comment: The Board initially indicated that the process to develop regulations would include a series of focus groups assembled by the Board to develop the specific examination criteria for each clinical area to be assessed. Instead, the Board has ceded to the process recommended by COMIRA. CSPD and other stakeholders / parties of interest will have opportunity to comment upon and influence the final product once draft regulations are released and the regulatory process initiated.*

*If the process runs smoothly, the first candidates for licensure by portfolio could be evaluated in 2013. A more likely date is in 2014.*

**Registered Dental Assistant Written Examination Statistics**

In July of 2009, with the dissolution of the Committee on Dental Auxiliaries (COMDA), responsibility for the licensing of Registered Dental Assistants (RDA) passed to the Dental Board of California. The 2009 pass rate for the RDA written examination barely exceeded 50%. Utilizing a new written examination, the pass rate increased last year to 61%. For 2011 the pass rate for the RDA examination is as follows:

Examination Type	Candidates	Pass Rate
RDA Written Exam First Time Candidate	1,421	77%
RDA Written Exam Repeat Candidate	571	55%
RDA Practical Exam First Time Candidate	1,594	88%
RDA Practical Exam Repeat Candidate	310	66%

*Comment: The pass rate for the RDA Law & Ethics examination is very similar. The numbers for the new Orthodontic Assistant and Dental Sedation Assistant examinations (59% and 72% respectively) are too small as yet to be statistically significant.*

*Still to be addressed is the discrepancy between the overall pass rate of those qualifying for the RDA examination by a formal educational program (64%) and those by on-the-job training (45%). Candidates qualifying through the work experience pathway are not exposed to the same content and variety of training materials as those who go through the educational process. The Board will explore the possibility of providing feedback reports to failing candidates and posting a comprehensive RDA candidate handbook or online information bulletin.*

### Fingerprinting Requirement for Licensees

Since July 1, all licensees for whom no fingerprint record exists at the Department of Justice (DOJ) have been required to submit evidence they have completed a Live Scan fingerprint data-entry process as a condition of license renewal. The requirement includes dentists as well as licensed auxiliary categories and is generally affects those originally licensed before 1986. The DOJ has provided the Board with a list of all licensees for whom no record of fingerprinting exists and the Board began notifying licensees in May whose pending renewals are be affected by this requirement. Information, including Frequently Asked Questions, has been placed on the Board's website.

*Comment: The Board estimates approximately 18,000 dentists and a like number of RDA and RDAEF licensees are affected by the requirement. Compliance by dentists has been excellent, slightly less so for dental auxiliaries.*

### Posting Notice to Consumers of Licensure by the Dental Board

Senate Bill 540, signed by Governor Brown September 30, 2011, requires the Board to adopt regulations that require a licensed dentist engaged in the practice of dentistry to provide notice to each patient of the fact that he or she is licensed and regulated by the Dental Board of California and require the notice contain the Board's toll-free telephone number and Web site address. To meet this requirement, the Board instructed staff to draft regulations that would specify the notice be provided by one of the following methods:

1. Prominently posted in an area visible to patients on the premises where services are provided in at least 48-point type
2. Included in a written statement, signed and dated by the patient or patient's representative and retained in the patient's dental records, stating the patient understands the dentist is licensed and regulated by the Board
3. Including the notice in a statement on letterhead, discharge instructions, or other document given to a patient or the patient's representative, where the notice is placed immediately above the signature line for the patient in at least 14-point type.

*Comment: The statute requires that regulation be adopted by January 1, 2013.*

**Respectfully submitted,  
Paul Reggiardo, DDS,  
Public Policy Advocate, California Society of Pediatric Dentistry.**