

**Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure (MSBML)**  
**Strategic Plan 2026-2030**

**1. Comprehensive Mission Statement**

The mission of the Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure (MSBML) is to ensure the protection of the health, safety and welfare of Mississippians through implementation and enforcement of laws involving the licensing and regulation of physicians, podiatrists, physician assistants, radiology assistants and acupuncturists and through the objective enforcement of the Mississippi Medical Practice Act.

**2. Philosophy**

The MSBML is committed to the continued protection of the health, safety and welfare of Mississippians. The philosophy of the MSBML is to ensure healthcare professionals licensed by the MSBML meet the licensing standards as directed by the Mississippi State Legislature and to regulate the practice of MSBML licensees. The Board seeks to ensure the citizens of Mississippi receive quality health care by carefully licensing and regulating the nearly 7,000 healthcare professionals practicing in the state as well as an additional 5,000 telemedicine practitioners.

**3. Relevant Statewide Goals and Benchmarks**

Statewide Goal #1.: HEALTH – To protect Mississippians from risks to public health and to provide them with the health-related information and access to quality healthcare necessary to increase the length and quality of their lives.

Relevant Benchmark:

- In partnership with Physicians Workforce, research and identify numbers and types of practitioners needed to fill undeserved or shortage areas of the state.

Statewide Goal #2.: GOVERNMENT – To create an efficient government and an informed and engaged citizenry that helps to address social problems through the payment of taxes, the election of capable leaders at all levels of government, and participation in charitable organizations through contributions and volunteerism.

Relevant Benchmarks:

- Average wait time for government services
- Regulatory efficiency: average length of time to resolution of documented complaints to professional licensing agencies

#### **4. Overview of the Agency 5-Year Strategic Plan**

Over the next 5 years the MSBML will strive to educate its licensees, as well as the general public regarding state and federal licensing laws. Statistics show that Mississippi has one of the lowest physician-to-patient ratios in the United States. It is the MSBML's goal to reduce the time it takes for licensees to acquire a license but still protect the public from incompetent healthcare professionals. In doing so, the MSBML will be updating existing software programs, and its laws and rules; utilizing technology more proficiently; and educating licensees and the public of the role of the MSBML. Over the past 6 years, the agency has actively participated in the Interstate Medical Licensing Compact and will continue to encourage new applicants to utilize the services of the Compact.

The epidemic of prescription drug diversion and abuse has improved over the last 5 years due in part to the emphasis and hard work of agencies like the Board. While it remains a point of focus for continuing improvement, the practice of telemedicine has expanded exponentially in that same time frame. The COVID-19 pandemic created new, necessary pathways for licensees and non-licensees to practice medicine in Mississippi via technology. Some licensees have yet to adjust back to normal and continue to practice telemedicine in a relaxed manner that, in certain cases, violates state law and regulations. Further, unscrupulous actors both inside and outside the state engage and/or assist in the illegal practice of medicine via telemedicine at an alarming rate. The Board has conducted and continues to conduct numerous investigations involving telemedicine as a major component of the act(s) constituting a violation of the Medical Practice Act. These are often complex investigations that require significant time commitments, multiple personnel, and outside-the-box thinking.

The Board's investigators continue to also seek to identify impaired providers due to substance use, licensees engaged in unprofessional or illegal conduct with patients, and other violations of the Medical Practice Act.

Planning for the 2025 legislative session, the Board is proposing one primary piece of legislation. Currently we are possibly the only regulatory agency that lack the ability or option to fine our licensees when necessary. Our disciplinary options revolve around suspension of license. With the statutory option of imposing a financial sanction on the licensee, the Board has the discretion of keeping the physician working while applying proper discipline.

Corporate ownership, oversight, and management of financial aspects of medical practice is now the norm, and many of these corporate medical entities involve large multi-state and multi disciplinary teams of physicians. The rise of the Interstate Medical Licensing Compact has both served a need and created an additional level of complexity. These multi-state medical businesses increasingly rely on larger and more sophisticated legal teams to simply overwhelm our disciplinary counsel with superior numbers and resources.

To continue to successfully protect public safety, this agency must match these new and evolving medical practices and business operations with equal sophistication and efficient use of

technology in both investigations and legal operations. Under the supervision of the senior attorney, a new Attorney II would take a primary day-to-day role in investigations and development of disciplinary matters, including initial drafting of charging affidavits and related documents, tasks which currently must be performed by non-legal staff, with extensive review and revisions by the board attorney. Other duties would include reviewing and responding to public records requests, development and revision of regulations, and responsibility for routine legal administrative tasks. This would permit the senior attorney to focus more on complex disciplinary and regulatory matters.

We are currently contracting the services of providing information and news releases to Cornerstone Government Affairs. MSBML would like to move this function in house to provide faster response time. MSBML is requesting a Public Relations Specialist II. The incumbent in this position could develop focused and feasible strategic and tactical agency communication plans, aligned with the department's strategic priorities/objectives and designed to enhance the profile of MSBML. The incumbent in this position will need to possess knowledge of MSBML mission, functions, and strategic priorities, objectives; public relations, advertising tactics and techniques; communication tools; MSBML stakeholders; knowledge of how governmental processes work; knowledge of how public opinion is influenced. They would be expected to coordinate with the MSBML board members, agency senior management, and program staff along with the public, and the media to effectively implement communication plans on time and within budget to achieve intended results. Also expected, will be knowledge of communication tools; knowledge of media contacts; knowledge of MSBML stakeholders. The incumbent will need to assure that MSBML makes optimum use of the agency's Web page and social media in communication with the public and stakeholders. Knowledge of internet technology and computer software is required. Additionally, the incumbent will develop and maintain effective external and internal electronic newsletter for staff and stakeholders. Incumbent must be familiar with desktop publishing software, understand and utilize editorial practices.

Having the appropriate positions in the correct divisions will ensure that the Board meets and exceeds its goals in conjunction with the Statewide Strategic Plan and provide a safer public health community for Mississippians.

Costs involved with investigations have seen a steady rise. The cost of expert review and hearing testimony have increased. The complexity and occurrence of broader medical investigations involving multiple physicians has grown. On average, our costs have increased 33% over what they were just two years ago.

## **5. Agency's External/Internal Assessment**

- 1) An increase in the number of graduates from medical, osteopathic and physician assistant schools who apply for a Mississippi medical license will impact the number of applications processed and licenses issued by current staff.

- 2) Additional licensees will increase the number of complaints filed, the number of investigations conducted, and the number of pain management medical practices and bariatric medicine clinics.
- 3) Changes in federal and state prescription drug laws will determine the availability of drugs prescribed.
- 4) Board's ability to right-size the agency with the proper job positions filled with staff possessing the proper skill set to take the agency forward.

The Board's new Executive Director and Deputy Director, having been in place 5 years now, are directly responsible for assessing the agency's direction and compliance with its mission and goals. Both the Executive and Deputy Directors take direct supervisory roles with the various divisions in the agency and formally and informally meet with the staff regularly to ensure operations are progressing as planned.

The Board reviews applications quarterly to determine processing time and number of applications processed. Currently the timeframe for the MSBML to complete their part of the license process has been reduced to 1 week. If there is a rise in any of the number of processing days, measures are taken to determine why there is an increase and changes are made to eliminate the extra processing time. Quarterly surveys are sent to new licensees in order to gather information regarding the licensure process and customer service. Based on survey results, action is taken to correct and improve agency performance.

Weekly meetings are held by the investigative staff to address pending investigations. Strategies and procedures in dealing with arising issues are discussed. Updates and results from current investigations are reviewed. The Mississippi Prescription Monitoring System is one tool utilized to determine if a physician is issuing an unusual amount of controlled substances prescriptions and if a patient is receiving an unusual amount of controlled substances prescriptions. Based on results from the Mississippi Prescription Monitoring System investigations are initiated.

In-House Counsel along with dedicated staff will add greatly to the overall review and assessment of proper licensing, investigations, and subsequent disciplinary actions.

## **6. Agency Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Measures by Program for FY 2026 through FY 2030**

### **Program 1: Licensure**

**GOAL A: Support and encourage the attempt to recruit healthcare professionals to practice in the State, especially in health professional shortage areas.**

**OBJECTIVE A.1.** Make the licensure and re-licensure process more user-friendly, providing better customer service

*Outcome:* Increase in the number of applications received online  
*Outcome:* Increase in the number of licenses issued and re-issued  
*Outcome:* Increase in the number of healthcare professionals practicing in the state  
*Efficiency:* Percentage of licensees renewing online

**A.1.1. STRATEGY:** Participate in the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact  
*Output:* Number of licensees applying/renewing via the Compact  
*Efficiency:* Reduction of wait time for applicants to receive licenses

**A.1.3. STRATEGY:** Update application submission software programs  
*Output:* Number of programs updated  
*Efficiency:* All applications/renewals come to agency online, eliminating paper handling and speeding turnaround for licensees

**OBJECTIVE B.1.** Maintain an efficient regulatory agency

*Outcome:* Best use of licensing staff to minimize time of license issuance  
*Outcome:* Develop licensing staff with knowledge and experience in medical licensing field

**A.1.1. STRATEGY:** Issue licenses properly in a timely and cost-effective manner  
*Output:* Number of licenses received  
*Output:* Number of licenses issued resulting  
*Output:* Number of tenured licensing staff (> 5 years state service)  
*Efficiency:* Decrease in the length of time to issue licenses  
*Efficiency:* Cost of licensing professional in the medical field  
*Efficiency:* Turnover in licensing staff

**Program 2: Investigative**

**GOAL A: Protect Mississippians from risks to public health by monitoring licensees for violations of the Medical Practice Act.**

**OBJECTIVE A.1.** Monitor the number of licensees who are diverting/abusing prescription drugs and ensure prescribing licensees are doing so for legitimate medical reasons

*Outcome:* Provide safe health environments (physician's offices) for the public  
*Outcome:* Decrease in the number of licensees over-prescribing controlled substances

**A.1.1. STRATEGY:** Update Board policies, rules and laws to require licensees to 1. register with the Mississippi Prescription Monitoring Program, and 2. apply and obtain a permit prior to issuing prescriptions for controlled substances.

*Output:* Number of updates required

*Output:* Better information concerning the storage and safeguard of prescription drugs

*Efficiency:* Decrease in the number of licensees over-prescribing controlled substances

*Efficiency:* Cost of implementing registration process and administering program

**A.1.2. STRATEGY:** Investigate complaints concerning misuse of controlled substances and misuse of prescription authority among licensees

*Output:* Number of complaints received

*Output:* Number of investigations resulting

*Efficiency:* Decrease in the number of licensees over-prescribing controlled substances

*Efficiency:* Cost of investigations

**OBJECTIVE B.1** Investigate complaints regarding licensees' improper behavior as it relates to patient protocol.

*Outcome:* Provide safe health environments (physician's offices) for the public

*Outcome:* Decrease in the number of licensees violating the Medical Practice Act by abusing patients and their rights

**A.1.1. STRATEGY:** Investigate complaints concerning improper behavior of licensees

*Output:* Number of complaints received

*Output:* Number of investigations resulting

*Efficiency:* Decrease in the number of practicing licensees exhibiting improper behavior

*Efficiency:* Cost of investigations

**OBJECTIVE C.1** To maintain an efficient regulatory agency

*Outcome:* Best use of investigative staff to minimize time of investigations

*Outcome:* Develop investigative staff with knowledge and experience in medical licensing field

**A.1.1. STRATEGY:** Investigate complaints in a timely and cost-effective manner

*Output:* Number of complaints received

*Output:* Number of investigations resulting

*Output:* Number of tenured investigators (> 5 years state service)

*Efficiency:* Decrease in the length of time to resolution of documented

*Efficiency:* complaints  
*Efficiency:* Cost of investigations  
*Efficiency:* Turnover in investigative staff