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New brochure helps consumers understand Board investigations

DES MOINES, IA – The Iowa Board of Medicine is offering a “consumer guide” to help Iowans understand how the Board receives, evaluates and investigates complaints against physicians and complaints that allege the unlicensed practice of medicine.

One of the most important ways the Board protects the public is by receiving and investigating complaints and reports that alleged a physician is incompetent, unprofessional or cannot practice safely due to impairment. The new quarter fold brochure, which can be downloaded at the Board’s website or by clicking [HERE](#), explains the complaint investigation process and how complaints are most often resolved.

The Board receives about 750 complaints and reports annually, most of them from patients or their family members. Complaints and reports are also filed by other health care professionals, law enforcement agencies, pharmacies, hospitals and clinics, insurance companies and other regulatory agencies in Iowa and from throughout the nation.

Although all complaints are evaluated, most complaints do not result in public disciplinary action. If charges are filed, sanctions range from a public reprimand and civil penalty to suspension or revocation of the license.

To find out if a disciplinary action has been imposed, you may review the physician’s licensure file at the Board’s website, www.medicalboard.iowa.gov, using the “find a physician” link.

Here is the new consumer guide brochure:

ABOUT THE BOARD

The Iowa Board of Medicine is a public agency that licenses allopathic (M.D.) and osteopathic (D.O.) physicians and acupuncturists (L.Ac.) who diagnose and treat patients in Iowa. Licenses are issued only after a meticulous and comprehensive review process. The Board regulates licensees by enforcing state laws and administrative rules.

The Board consists of 10 individuals appointed by the Governor – five M.D.s, two D.O.s, and three members of the public. The Board's administrative and regulatory work is carried out by a professional staff. The Board does not receive taxpayer dollars, but is funded exclusively with fees paid by licensees and license applicants. The Board conducts its business at meetings and hearings at the agency's office in Des Moines. While some matters discussed by the Board are confidential under Iowa law, meetings are otherwise open to the public. Disciplinary hearings may be closed to the public at the discretion of the licensee. Agendas for these activities are posted on the Board's website. The Board is governed by Chapters 147 and 148 of the Iowa Code and section 653 of the Iowa Administrative Code.

PROTECTING THE PUBLIC

One of the most important ways the Board protects the public is by receiving and investigating complaints and reports that allege the unlicensed practice of medicine and concerns that a physician or acupuncturist is incompetent, unprofessional, or



cannot practice safely due to impairment. The Board receives about 750 complaints and reports annually, most of them from patients and their family members. Many complaints and reports are filed by other health care professionals, law enforcement agencies, pharmacies, hospitals and clinics, insurance companies, and other regulatory agencies in Iowa and from throughout the nation. The Board does not have the authority to get involved in some matters, such as complaints involving health care professionals regulated by other agencies and complaints against hospitals, nursing homes and insurance companies. The Board cannot be involved in suing a licensee for damages or settling disputes over billing or disability ratings.

Questions?

Iowa Board of Medicine
400 SW 8th St., Suite C
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-4686

Hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.,
Monday through Friday
Tel: 515-281-5171
Fax: 515-242-5908
web: www.medicalboard.iowa.gov
email: ibm@iowa.gov



THE BOARD OF MEDICINE DOES NOT REGULATE THESE PROFESSIONS:

Chiropractors	Paramedics
Dentists	Pharmacists
Family & Marriage Counselors	Physician Assistants
Hearing Aid Dispensers	Physical Therapists
Hospitals and Clinics	Podiatrists
Insurance Companies	Psychologists
Laboratories	Social Workers
Nurses	Speech Pathologists
Nursing Homes	Veterinarians
Optometrists	X-ray Technicians

Complaints about these professionals, businesses, and institutions should be directed to the Iowa regulatory agencies by which they are licensed.

HEALTH RELATED AGENCIES:

PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE | 515-281-0254
(The Bureau of Professional Licensure is within the Iowa Department of Public Health with 19 licensure boards regulating 39 professions.)

DENTAL BOARD | 515-281-5157

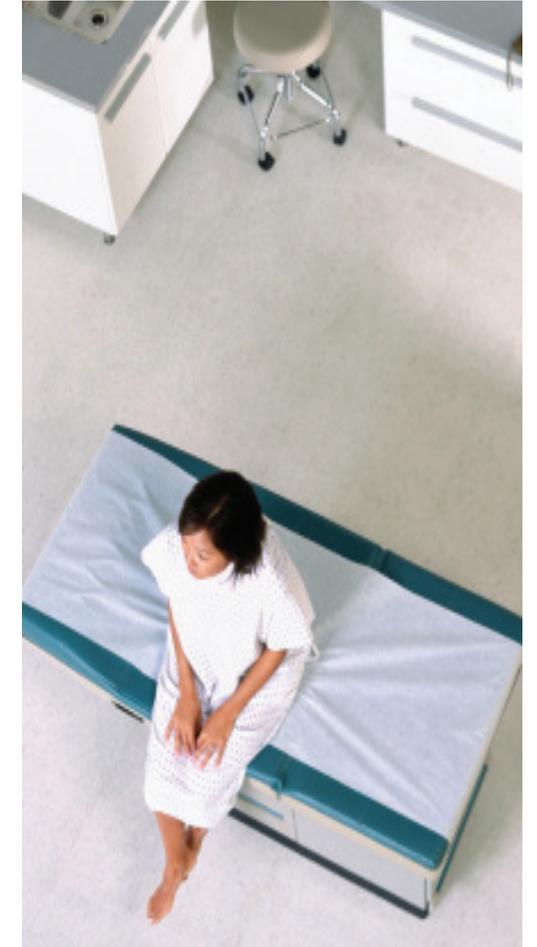
NURSING BOARD | 515-281-3255

PHARMACY BOARD | 515-281-5944

VETERINARY BOARD | 515-281-8617

INSURANCE DIVISION | 515-281-5705

CONSUMER GUIDE IOWA BOARD OF MEDICINE



The Iowa Board of Medicine promptly responds to public complaints concerning the competency and conduct of Iowa-licensed physicians and acupuncturists. The Board is committed to protecting the public by ensuring that these health care providers are qualified to practice and that they adhere to laws, rules and standards that regulate their practices.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU FILE A COMPLAINT

FILING



It is the public's right to file a complaint with the Iowa Board of Medicine. Complaints may be submitted online via the Board's website, or can be filed by mail, e-mail, FAX or over the telephone. A form on the website identifies the kind of information that the Board needs to effectively review a complaint. For the Board to consider a complaint, it must include the name of the health care professional, a description of the actions prompting the complaint, the place, date and time of occurrence, and name and telephone number of the complainant. Complaints that do not include the name of the person making the complaint are sometimes difficult to investigate. The identity of the complainant is protected and kept confidential by law.



Access this link at: www.medicalboard.iowa.gov

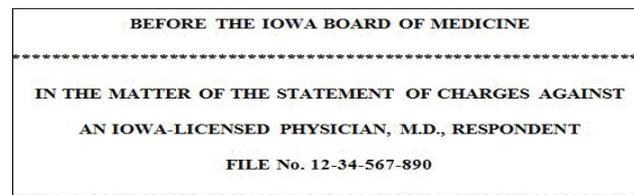
INVESTIGATIONS

- All complaints are initially reviewed by agency staff to determine if the matter requires an investigation.
- Complaints that appear to be less serious or outside of the agency's authority are reviewed by the Board to determine if investigations are needed or if these complaints should be referred to another regulatory board.
- All other complaints are immediately assigned to an investigator.
- The complainant is sent a letter with the investigator's name and phone number.
- If it's determined the complaint will not be investigated, the complainant will be notified by letter.
- If the complaint is investigated, the investigator will conduct interviews and collect medical records and prepare a report for review by the Board, which will determine if the case should be closed without action or if the licensee should be disciplined.
- Investigations can take several months, depending on the complexity of the issue.
- Before the Board resolves a case, the licensee may be asked to appear before the Board for a private interview or ordered to undergo a professional evaluation, or the Board may have the case reviewed by qualified members of the profession within the relevant field.

OUTCOMES

Complaints are most often resolved in one of three ways:

- 1. No formal action.** Typically, this is the result when no violation of laws, rules or medical care standards has occurred. However, the licensee is notified and the information is kept on file. This allows the Board to spot recurrent issues or a pattern of behavior that may cause the Board to intervene in the future.
- 2. Confidential action.** There may be no violation of laws, rules or medical care standards that warrants public action, but the Board is nonetheless concerned about some aspect of the licensee's conduct or performance. In such cases, the Board will issue a confidential letter of education or a confidential letter of warning, cautioning the licensee against repeating similar conduct.
- 3. Public charges filed.** In these cases, the Board determines there is a violation of laws, rules or medical care standards and files public charges and a disciplinary hearing is scheduled. Once the case is resolved, either by settlement agreement or by a disciplinary hearing, the complainant is notified of the outcome.



PUBLIC DISCIPLINE

Public action against a licensee who has been found to have violated a law, rule or medical care standard may include civil penalties (fines), reprimands, remedial training, limitations or conditions on practice, or suspension or revocation of the license. All disciplined licensees are monitored to ensure they are in compliance with their sanctions. To find out if a public disciplinary action has been imposed, view the licensee's profile on the Board's website or call the Board's office.



CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

The Iowa Board of Medicine is required by state law to maintain the confidentiality of all information related to Board investigations. This includes complaints and investigative reports. Consequently, complainants cannot receive information or be briefed on any aspect of the investigation or how the case is resolved beyond what is presented in public documents about the case.