

Newsletter

TEXAS STATE BOARD OF DENTAL EXAMINERS

May 2026



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May 2026

This is the season of students becoming dentists and hygienists. As I welcome new graduates to our wonderful profession. I wish them prosperity and encourage them to stay current with the laws and rules that govern their profession.

As TSBDE also prepares for the new influx of license requests, I want to highlight one of the most amazing changes that has occurred since my initial appointment in 2017. When I was first appointed, license processing was somewhere around eight weeks. Two months of no income can be very frustrating to a new graduate with loans, not to mention the number of patients who could be treated by these new dental professionals. So a very insightful opportunity was created by Ms. Christine Mendez our licensing director. I believe, she created the one and only Licensing Expo in the country.

In one day a licensee can come to Austin and obtain their license. Last year TSBDE processed 305 dentist licenses and 320 dental hygiene licenses during the Expo. What an amazing opportunity for new graduates to quickly enter the work force.

Most amazing is how the agency accomplishes this task. Executive Director, Ms. Casey Nichols and Ms. Mendez institute an all hands on deck policy. Every staff member participates to process, verify, notarize licensee applications, and process the applicants. TSBDE walks the applicant through the various stations and leaving the Barbara Jordan Building with a license. Ms. Nichols and Ms. Mendez have been asked to present this license implementation to several other states and, to my knowledge, no other state has been able to implement this.

I welcome and encourage all new license applicants to come for this Expo and with sincere gratitude for Ms. Mendez and her vision to allow such an opportunity to exist in our great state. Thank you, Ms. Mendez!

Sincerely,

Bryan Henderson II, DDS



AGENCY NEWS

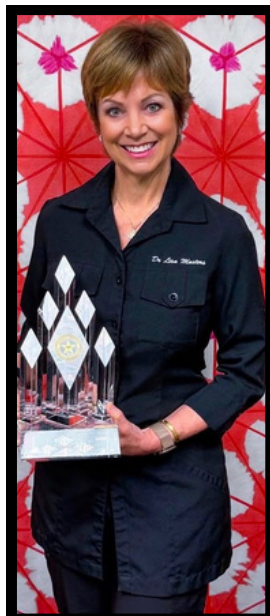
Congratulations to Leticia Kappel

Ms. Leticia Kappel serves as TSBDE's Deputy Executive Director and will retire in June 2026 after an impressive 27 years of state service. Over the past 10 years, Ms. Kappel has been the cornerstone of the TSBDE leadership team. TSBDE staff will miss her kindness, intelligence, loyalty, empathy and unwavering support. Congratulations!



Congratulations to Dr. Lisa Masters

Congratulations to Dr. Masters for receiving the 2026 Texas Dental Association Gold Medal for Distinguished Service, the TDA's highest honor. This is a well-deserved recognition of her exceptional leadership, dedication, and lasting impact on the dental profession. Congratulations, Dr. Masters!





AGENCY NEWS

UT Health Houston School of Dentistry's 2026 Graduation Ceremony



Ms. Lorie Jones RDH, MBA, with Dean John Valenza, who is retiring after 42 years in dental education.



LICENSING

EXPO 2026 for Dental Hygiene Graduates

We are pleased to announce that we will be hosting a Licensing Expo to provide onsite application processing for all recent dental hygiene graduates. Licensing Specialists will be available to review required documentation and provide on-the-spot approvals.

Event Details:

- Date: Monday, June 29, 2026
- Location: Barbara Jordan Building, 1601 Congress Avenue, Room 2.035, Austin, TX 78701
- Time: Doors open at 8:00am, applicants must check in by 3:00pm for same-day processing

Read the flyer with details [here](#).



EXPO 2026 for Dental Graduates

We are pleased to announce that we will be hosting a Licensing Expo to provide onsite application processing for all recent dental hygiene graduates. Licensing Specialists will be available to review required documentation and provide on-the-spot approvals.

Event Details:

- Date: Tuesday, June 30, 2026
- Location: Barbara Jordan Building, 1601 Congress Avenue, Room 2.035, Austin, TX 78701
- Time: Doors open at 8:00am, applicants must check in by 3:00pm for same-day processing

Read the flyer with details [here](#).



LICENSING

Altering a TSBDE-Issued Certificate

All dental professionals licensed or registered with TSBDE have the ability to print a renewal certificate through their online licensing account. Please do not alter a TSBDE-issued certificate in any way. All licenses, registrations, and permits are government documents issued by a state agency. Altering government documents may result in criminal repercussions and is a violation of Board rule and statute.

If there is an error on your certificate, please log in to your online account or contact licensinghelp@tsbde.texas.gov for assistance.

E-Prescribing Waivers

Please request and renew an electronic prescribing waiver through your online licensing account. Simply log on to your account and follow the instructions provided. Please use the [TSBDE Public License Search](#) link to verify your electronic prescribing waiver status. Dentists with an approved waiver will have its expiration date displayed under "Electronic Rx Waiver Expiration Date."

Service Animals in Dentistry

Service animals are being used more frequently in dental offices as a tool to lessen patient anxiety. The use of service animals is a right protected by both the state and federal law. Generally, businesses and non-profits that are open to the public as well as state and local governments must allow service animals to go most places where the public can go. This is true even if the establishment has a "no pets" policy. A business or government can ask someone to remove their service animal only if 1) the animal is not housebroken or 2) if the animal is out of control, and the person cannot get the animal under control.

If a patient brings in a service animal a dental office must accommodate them. There are only two questions you may ask to ensure the animal is a service animal: 1) Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability? 2) What work or task has the animal been trained to perform? Only a licensed health professional who practices in the state of Texas may provide an "emotional support animal" letter in Texas. Those professionals include therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, nurses, counselors, and social workers—but not dentists. Diagnosing the need for a service animal is outside the scope of practice for a DDS.

If you provide a service animal for patients at your practice:

- a) Follow federal and state law regarding the use of service animals;
- b) Follow ADA guidelines for sanitation protocol;
- c) Obtain patient consent;
- d) Provide written policies and procedures for your staff on service animals; and
- e) Refrain from diagnosing the need for a service animal.

While there are no specific, enhanced CDC sanitation protocols for service animals, offices should maintain their standard, high-level disinfection procedures. If an animal is present, thorough cleaning of the area should occur, especially if patients or staff have allergies.

For additional information please visit:

<https://www.ada.gov/topics/service-animals/>

https://gov.texas.gov/organization/disabilities/assistance_animals



DENTAL PRACTICE

Senate Bill 1188 Update: Electronic Health Record Requirements

Effective September 1, 2025, SB 1188 set new regulations for dental electronic health records (EHRs). The law has storage requirements for electronic health records; it requires adding a “biological sex (as observed at birth)” field with limited edits; and gives parents full access to a minor’s patient records. EHRs must be physically maintained within the United States or its territories. Access to resident health information is restricted to authorized personnel performing duties related to treatment, payment, or operations. The law bans inclusion of credit scores or voter registration data and requires dentists to disclose and review any AI use in diagnosis.

Regulatory agencies must investigate credible allegations of violations. Entities or providers with three or more violations may face disciplinary actions, including the suspension or revocation of licenses. The Texas Attorney General may pursue civil penalties for violations, ranging from \$5,000 for negligent acts to up to \$250,000 if protected information is knowingly used for financial gain. Please be aware of this updated law and review your own electronic health records processes to determine compliance.

Dental Laser Use Regulations Review

Please see below for helpful information related to laser use in dental offices in Texas by TSBDE board member Janessa Bock, RDH FADHA.

1. Device Registration with Department of State Health Services (DSHS)

- Who: Class 3B and Class 4 lasers must be registered with DSHS.
- How: Submit a Certificate of Laser Registration (COR) application with device details, facility info and designated Laser Safety Officer (LSO).
- Renewal: Every two years. Equipment additions must be reported to DSHS promptly.
- LSO: Every registered facility must designate an LSO; may be the dentist or qualified staff.

2. Use by Dentists and Dental Hygienists

- Supervision: Hygienists may use lasers only under the direct supervision of a Texas- licensed dentist.
- Scope limit for Dental Hygienists: No irreversible procedures; no intentional cutting of soft or hard tissue.
- CE required: Minimum 12 hours of in-person laser CE before non-diagnostic use, including 3 hours of clinical simulation, from a TSBDE-recognized provider.
- Documentation must be kept on file.
- Dentist responsibility: Supervising dentist must also meet the same 12-hour CE requirement and bears full responsibility for all delegated laser acts (§258.003, Dental Practice Act).
- Dental Assistants may not use a dental laser.

3. Scope of Practice

- All laser procedures must fall within the practitioner's licensed scope of practice.



Proactive Minute: Do You Do a Time-Out?

As a kid, I spent what felt like a fair amount of time in “time-out.” That is not the kind of time-out I am talking about here. I am talking about the kind of time-out that helps prevent wrong-site, wrong-tooth, wrong-procedure, or wrong-patient errors.

Before surgical procedures, physicians are trained to mark the operative site when possible and to pause before starting to confirm that the right procedure is being performed on the right patient in the right location. Such a time-out and marking are a requirement in hospitals. Dentistry should take the same concept seriously.

Having appropriate systems in place matters. Team members can verify what is on the schedule, confirm that a signed consent exists, confirm that the consent matches the planned procedure, and perform their own pre-procedure check with the patient. These steps are not bureaucracy. They are patient safety systems.

But as with many things in healthcare, the ultimate responsibility rests with the provider performing the procedure.

One of the simplest habits we can build is asking the patient, in their own words, what they understand is being done that day. How we ask matters.

A team member may ask, “Mrs. Jones, can you tell me what we are doing for you today?”

That may be well-intended, but the patient may hear it differently: “What do you mean you don’t know what you’re doing today?” That does not exactly inspire confidence.

Compare that with:

“Mrs. Jones, as part of our safety system, can you please tell me in your own words what you understand the doctor is doing for you today?”

That framing reassures the patient that the question is part of a deliberate safety process, not confusion.

It is also usually less effective to ask, “We are doing a crown on tooth number 3 today, correct?” Many patients do not know tooth numbers. Others may simply agree because they assume the dental team knows best. That kind of yes-or-no confirmation can create false reassurance. A better time-out requires the patient, the record, the consent, the schedule, the clinical findings, and the team to line up.

At a recent disciplinary review committee meeting, we discussed a JADA study reviewing TSBDE disciplinary actions. One of the reminders from that discussion was that many problems in practice often are not caused by a lack of knowledge. They are often caused by systems that break down, communication that fails, or small assumptions that go unchecked.

That is why I would encourage every dental office to make the time-out a habit before procedures. It does not need to be complicated. It does need to be consistent.

Before starting, pause. Confirm the patient. Confirm the procedure. Confirm the site. Confirm the consent. Ask the patient to describe, in their own words, what they understand is being done.

Great systems matter. But even the best systems can fail. A thoughtful time-out gives the provider, the team, and the patient one more opportunity to catch a mistake before it happens.

In dentistry, a pause of less than a minute can prevent a problem that may follow everyone involved for much longer.

Robert G. McNeill, DDS, MD, MBA
Board member

Link to the Journal of the American Dental Association article:

[Click for Journal of the American Dental Association Journal article on TSBDE data](#)



Board Meeting May 8, 2026 Adopted Rules

Rule 108.2 Fair Dealing

Rule 108.7 Minimum Standard of Care

Rule 108.8 Records of the Dentist

Rule 114.12 Continuing Education for Certificate Holders

Repeal 115.20 Dental Hygiene Advisory Committee

Fingerprint Renewal Requirement

All licensees lacking a State Identification (SID) number in the agency's licensing database will be mandated to undergo a fingerprint background check as a prerequisite for license renewal. An individual's SID serves as a unique identifier during background screenings, particularly for licensure and employment purposes.

Consequently, individuals licensed prior to 2016 may not have a SID number in the agency's licensure database. The absence of a SID number precludes the agency from receiving notifications regarding any criminal history events. Licensees lacking requisite fingerprint information will be notified by the TSBDE ninety (90) days prior to license expiration. You will receive an email and mail notification.

The Board is authorized to request this information in accordance with rules 101.1(c)(6), 103.1(c)(10), and 114.2(b)(3), and Section 411.12504 of the Government Code, which permits the acquisition of fingerprints for criminal history background checks. TSBDE staff respectfully ask licensees to refrain from contacting the Board to verify the presence of their information in the database. Please refer to the TSBDE website for the most up to date information.



SOLICITATION OF INFORMAL COMMENTS

May 22, 2026

The Board requests stakeholder input on the following topic related to rulemaking proceedings:

Potential Amendments to Board Rule 108.5 – Patient Abandonment

At the May 7, 2026, Dental Practice Committee meeting, the committee discussed potential changes to Board rule 108.5 regarding patient abandonment.

Link to rule 108.5: https://texas-sos.appianportalsgov.com/rules-and-meetings?locale=en_US&interface=VIEW_TAC_SUMMARY&queryAsDate=05%2F19%2F2026&recordId=93557

The committee is seeking stakeholder input on whether the Board should change the requirements to release a patient, including the option to send notices to patients via email. Additionally, the committee is seeking stakeholder feedback on whether the Board should change the rule or propose a new rule that addresses the requirements a dentist must follow when leaving a practice or location, whether by retirement, sale, transfer, termination of employment, or otherwise.

Stakeholders can watch the committee meeting on the Board's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN6ySQMUdvQ>).

Stakeholders and members of the public may submit informal input until June 22, 2026, by mail to the Board's General Counsel at 1801 Congress Avenue, Suite 8.600, Austin, Texas, 78701, by fax to (512) 649-2482, or by email to stakeholders@tsbde.texas.gov. Mailed comments should be received on or before June 22, 2026. Information regarding Board proceedings and the laws and rules related to dentistry are available at www.tsbde.texas.gov.

This solicitation of informal comments does not serve as an official comment period or rulemaking as required by Texas law or Board rules. Consideration of any rulemaking topics will occur at a future meeting of the Board held pursuant to Texas Government Code Chapter 551 (Texas Open Meetings Act), and all Board rulemakings will be conducted pursuant to Texas Government Code Chapter 2001 (Texas Administrative Procedure Act).



SOLICITATION OF INFORMAL COMMENTS

May 22, 2026

The Board requests stakeholder input on the following topic related to rulemaking proceedings:

Potential Amendments to Board Rule 115.10 – Administration of Local Infiltration Anesthesia

At the May 7, 2026, Dental Practice Committee meeting, the committee discussed potential changes to Board [rule 115.10](#) regarding the requirements a dental hygienist must follow to administer local infiltration anesthesia. The committee is seeking stakeholder input on whether the rule should specify how to correctly or safely use lasers.

Stakeholders can watch the committee meeting on the Board's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN6ySQMUdvQ>).

Stakeholders and members of the public may submit informal input until June 22, 2026, by mail to the Board's General Counsel at 1801 Congress Avenue, Suite 8.600, Austin, Texas, 78701, by fax to (512) 649-2482, or by email to stakeholders@tsbde.texas.gov. Mailed comments should be received on or before June 22, 2026. Information regarding Board proceedings and the laws and rules related to dentistry are available at www.tsbde.texas.gov.

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