

Department of Commerce, Community
and Economic Development

Division of Corporations, Business
and Professional Licensing

Alaska Board of Examiners in Optometry
Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2024



Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing

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This report is required under Alaska Statute 08.01.070(10).

Alaska Board of Examiners in Optometry
FY 2024 Annual Report

Table of Contents

Board Membership

Page 1

Accomplishments

Page 2

Activities

Page 3

Needs

Page 4

**Alaska Board of Examiners in Optometry
FY 2024 Annual Report**

Board Membership (as of the Date This Report was Approved)

Date of Final Board Approval: 6/26/2024

Members of the Board:

- Dr. Bradley Cross, OD (Chair)
- Dr. Ethan Arndt, OD
- Dr. Pamela Steffes, OD
- Dr. Kathleen Rice, OD
- Charles Rudstrom, Public Member

**Alaska Board of Examiners in Optometry
FY 2024 Annual Report**

Accomplishments

During the fiscal year 2024, the board approved and adopted new regulations which went into effect November 14, 2023.

These regulations included the following:

- 12 AAC 48.011(a)(7), 48.020(c)(5), 48.900(c)(6) Verification of Federal Employment. This reduces barriers to licensure for applicants who are or have been employed by Federal Agencies.

- 12 AAC 48.020(c) License by Credentials: This clarifies that the referenced course must be taken after graduating optometry school.

- 12 AAC 48.200 License Renewals and Continuing Education: This change allows the board to exercise flexibility in granting license renewals to applicants who may have encountered acute illness or other hardship during the license renewal period.

- 12 AAC 48.370 Telehealth: This adds to the scope and standards for optometric services provided via telehealth in Alaska.

Four investigations were opened during the fiscal year. Two of them were related to continuing education audit requirements and were resolved and closed. One was a PDMP violation which was resolved and closed. The fourth investigation is still ongoing and related to standard of care.

**Alaska Board of Examiners in Optometry
FY 2024 Annual Report**

Activities

During the fiscal year 2024, 2 meetings were held. The board made a unanimous decision to continue holding teleconference meetings until further notice.

- October 06, 2023 – Teleconferenced
- April 08, 2024 – Teleconferenced

Dr. Arndt was appointed to the board in June, 2023, filling an empty seat. The public member seat remained unfilled for a majority of the fiscal year until May, 2024 when Charles Rudstrom was appointed as the public member.

These meetings were held to review and adopt changes to regulations, license application reviews, reviewing any remaining open audits, and discussing future regulation projects.

The trust of the public and the protection of Alaskans is the primary mission of the board and that mission was represented as the focus of our meetings and ongoing regulatory projects. License applications were carefully reviewed throughout the year using OnBoard, Board Secure Board Portal Software. This platform with online voting allowed for expedient decisions when appropriate. Some applications required full board discussions which took place during our teleconferenced meetings.

An annual report has been compiled and delivered to the Association of Regulatory Board of Optometry (ARBO).

23 applications were received during the period, with 17 licenses being issued and 6 awaiting applicant responses or submissions before consideration.

**Alaska Board of Examiners in Optometry
FY 2024 Annual Report**

Needs

The board is looking to make the following regulation changes:

- 12 AAC 48.011(a)(3) License by Examination
- 12 AAC 48.020(c)(1) License by Credentials
- 12 AAC 48.200(a) and (b)(4) License Renewals and Continuing Education
- 12 AAC 48.210(a) Hours of Continuing Education
- 12 AAC 48.220(a) Report of Continuing Education
- 12 AAC 48.350(a) Use of Controlled Substances; Limitations
- 12 AAC 48.900(b)(2) and (c)(1) Reinstatement of a Lapsed License
- A new regulation to describe and clarify the role and use of Optometric Assistants in Alaska optometry practices as necessitated by HB309.

The board is awaiting the appointment of a new board member fill Dr. Steffes' seat as her term ended March 01, 2024 but is willing to continue on the board until a new member is appointed.