

Statement from Director Carrie Lopez regarding the fingerprinting of licensees:

I have and fully intend to make use of all resources to ensure that we remove threats to the public safety and well-being of Californians. I intend to make this Department and its regulatory entities the model for consumer protection and licensing in the nation and will continue to invest resources to accomplish that goal.

I am committed to making continuous improvements to further strengthen consumer confidence in the services provided by our licensees. Under my watch, the Department of Consumers Affairs has instructed all of the healing arts boards and bureaus to quickly move forward with a number of administrative and policy changes to further strengthen the screening of existing licensees, initiate appropriate disciplinary actions, and create transparency for the public concerning questionable licensees.

Actions taken include:

- Collection of fingerprints from all active healing arts licensees not fingerprinted. DCA has established a timeline of no more than one renewal cycle (two years) in order for this to be accomplished.
 - To date, the Board of Registered Nursing has adopted emergency regulations to effect this change and will begin enforcing this requirement March 1, 2009.
 - This week, the Bureau of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians will submit for review emergency regulations to implement fingerprinting and will increase its statutorily authorized fees to help cover the costs of implementation.
 - All other healing arts boards will schedule at their next regular meeting for approval, moving forward with implementing by regulation the fingerprinting requirement.
- Inclusion on all healing arts renewal forms a question requiring licensee to disclose any conviction or administrative action taken against them by a government agency since their last renewal.
- The internet posting of the entire text of formal accusations filed against a licensee for those currently pending and for any new accusations filed by each board or bureau.
- A thorough review of all pending complaints and accusations to identify any cases that require immediate action to suspend a license in order to ensure public safety.
- The fingerprinting directive currently applies to health boards and bureaus, but will be expanded to include all of the Department's boards and bureaus. Consumer public safety is the Department's #1 priority and it has been determined that those boards and bureaus that put licensees in direct contact with consumers will have priority when it comes to financial and personnel resources.
- The Department has re-affirmed and amplified its expectation that all regulatory programs seek interim suspension orders and PC 23 intervention for those licenses posing a clear and imminent threat to the public if allowed to practice.