

PA Access to Provider Health Programs

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Wellbeing Among PAs

- People can experience issues with mental health and/or substance abuse
- PAs are people
- Therefore, PAs can experience issues with mental health and/or substance abuse
 - Depression (6%)
 - Anxiety (12.6%)

Wellbeing Among PAs

- Burnout and work exhaustion exacerbate mental health and substance use issues
 - Prevalence in PAs is 55-80% depending on the study
- Burnout and poor mental health → worse patient outcomes
- Death by suicide more common in physicians vs general population
 - Male physicians +40%
 - Female physicians +130%

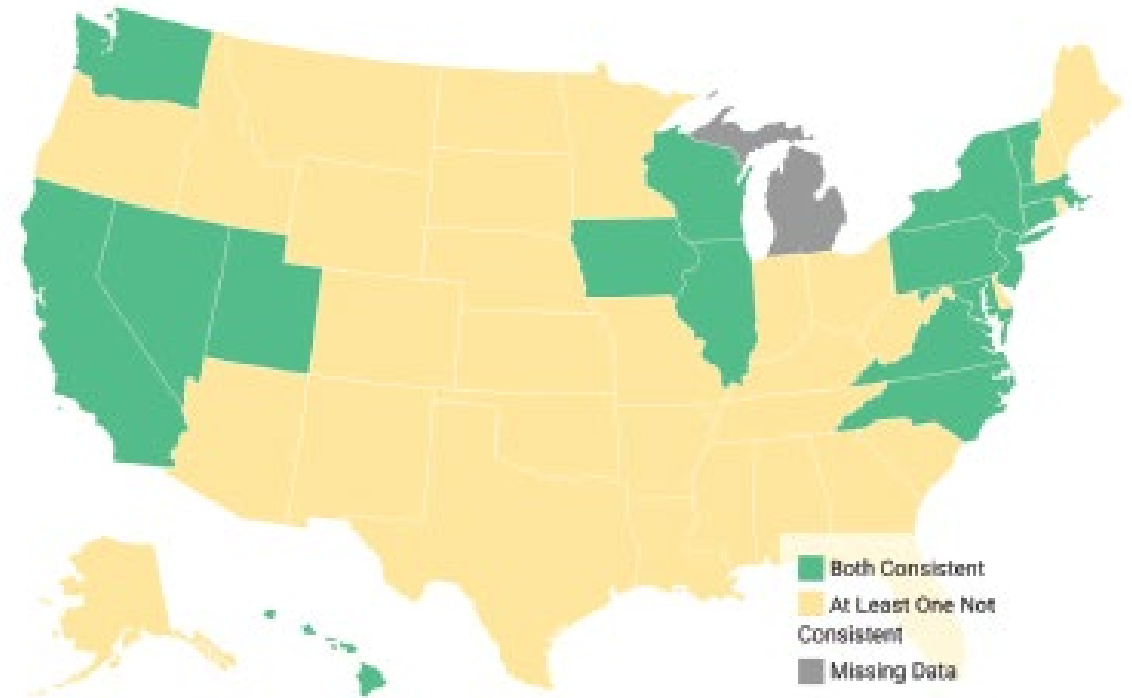
Note: most of what we know is from research on physicians.
Available data on PAs is similar to physicians.

Center et al, 2003
Blackstone et al, 2021

Okay, but surely licensing bodies and other groups that exist to protect patient safety understand the significance of this issue and prioritize provider wellbeing in the interest of patient care???

Licensure Questions and Mental Health

- 18 states were consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act for both initial and renewal licensure applications
- 35% of PAs would hesitate to seek help for a mental health/substance use issue
 - vs 12% for a physical ailment
- PAs in states with noncompliant initial applications were less likely to seek help for a mental health issue



District of Columbia (not pictured) had applications that were both consistent.
Created with Datawrapper

FIGURE 2. ADA consistency of initial and renewal PA license applications by state

What Sources of Support Exist for PAs?

- Provider Health Programs (PHPs)
 - Seek to protect patients through identification, treatment, remediation, and/or monitoring of clinicians with a health-related issue that could compromise patient safety

Great! Where can PAs learn more???



Study Methods

- We audited the websites of the PA licensing board and state/district constituent group for each state and the District of Columbia in October and November of 2022
- In addition to presence/absence of information on PHP, was there physician-centric language that could dissuade PAs from seeking help?

| Variable | Data |
|--|------------|
| State | State name |
| Is there a PHP serving PAs? | Yes |
| | No |
| Does the PHP use physician-centered language? | Yes |
| | No |
| Is PHP information on the website of the state's constituent organization? | Yes |
| | No |
| Is PHP information on the website of the state's PA licensing agency? | Yes |
| | No |

Results

- Every state except 1 (MA) currently has a PHP serving PAs
 - MA just passed legislation mandating the creation of one
- This means virtually all PAs can get support from a PHP if they need it

| Variable | Data | Frequency (%) |
|-----------------------------|------------|---------------|
| State | State name | N/A |
| Is there a PHP serving PAs? | Yes | 50 (98%) |
| | No | 1 (2%) |



Results

- But, many PHPs have physician-centered titles
 - e.g., “Physician Health Program”
- This represents a potential barrier to care
 - PAs may assume that they are not eligible to participate

| Variable | Data | Frequency (%) |
|---|------------|---------------|
| State | State name | N/A |
| Is there a PHP serving PAs? | Yes | 50 (98%) |
| | No | 1 (2%) |
| Does the PHP use physician-centered language? | Yes | 19 (38%) |
| | No | 31 (62%) |

Results

- Most constituent organizations and licensing boards DO NOT have information on PHPs listed

| Variable | Data | Frequency (%) |
|--|------------|---------------|
| State | State name | N/A |
| Is there a PHP serving PAs? | Yes | 50 (98%) |
| | No | 1 (2%) |
| Does the PHP use physician-centered language? | Yes | 19 (38%) |
| | No | 31 (62%) |
| Is PHP information on the website of the state's constituent organization? | Yes | 9 (18%) |
| | No | 41 (82%) |
| Is PHP information on the website of the state's PA licensing agency? | Yes | 23 (46%) |
| | No | 27 (54%) |

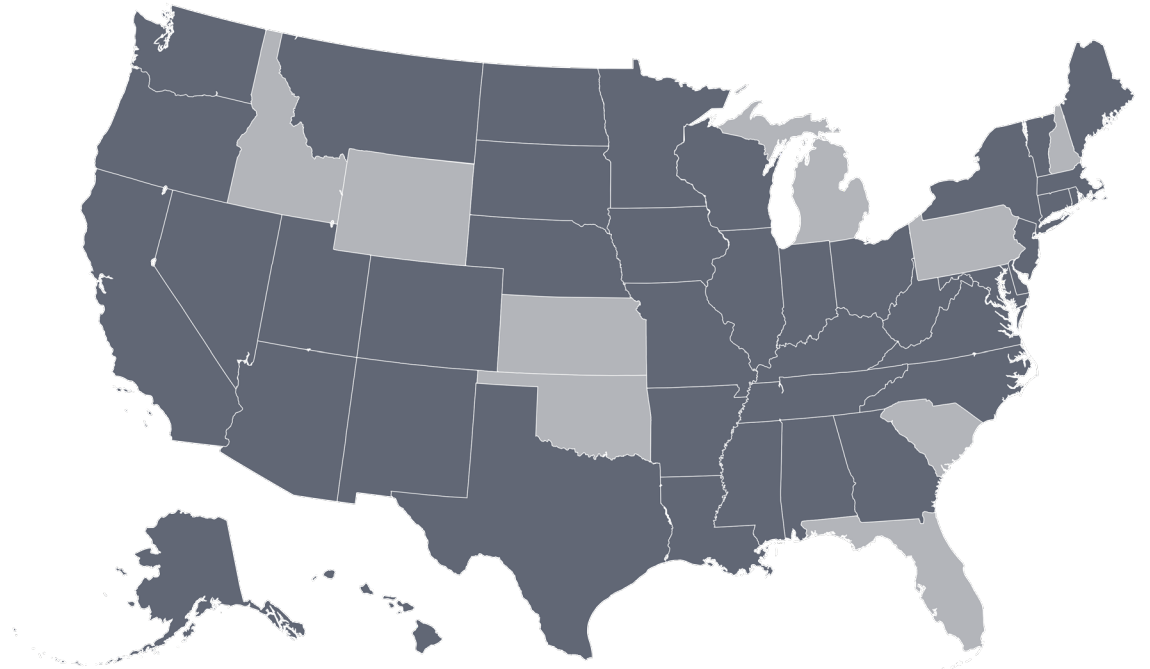
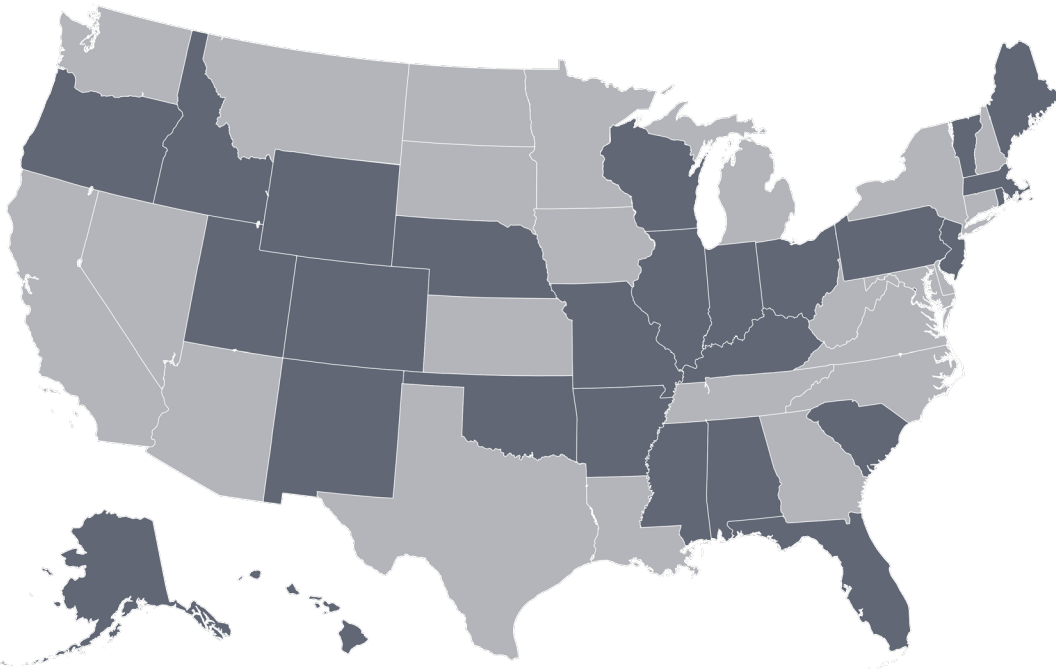
Information on C.O. and Licensing Board Sites by State

Constituent Organization

Licensing Agency

■ No
■ Yes

■ No
■ Yes



(Yes = PHP information available on website)

Discussion

- Every state has, or will soon have, a PHP for PAs
- In many states, no information about it is posted on constituent organization/licensing board websites
 - How will PAs know about this resource???
- Advocacy efforts will be needed to increase awareness and address real or perceived barriers to care
 - Promote information and accessibility
 - Add PA students to PHPs?
 - Some states do this already

References

- Blackstone SR, Johnson AK, Smith NE, McCall TC, Simmons WR, Skelly AW. Depression, burnout, and professional outcomes among PAs. *JAAPA*. 2021;34(9):35-41. doi:10.1097/01.JAA.0000769676.27946.56
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