

# PA Licensure Questions and Help-Seeking for Mental Health Conditions

## Background

- Pointed questions on states' physician assistant licensure applications concerning mental/emotional health have been identified as a barrier to treatment noted by healthcare professionals. They may also violate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

## Methods

- Initial (n = 51) and renewal (n = 47) licensure applications were reviewed for consistency with the ADA.
- A pass-through survey on PA attitudes and mental health followed the AAPA 2021 Salary Survey.
- The results of this survey were analyzed alone and in conjunction with the results of the review of state licensure applications.

## Results

- 1588 out of 2697 PAs presented with the opportunity to take this survey chose to complete it, for a response rate of 58.9%.
- Males were more likely than females to have concerns about licensure repercussions due to mental health issues (p < .05).

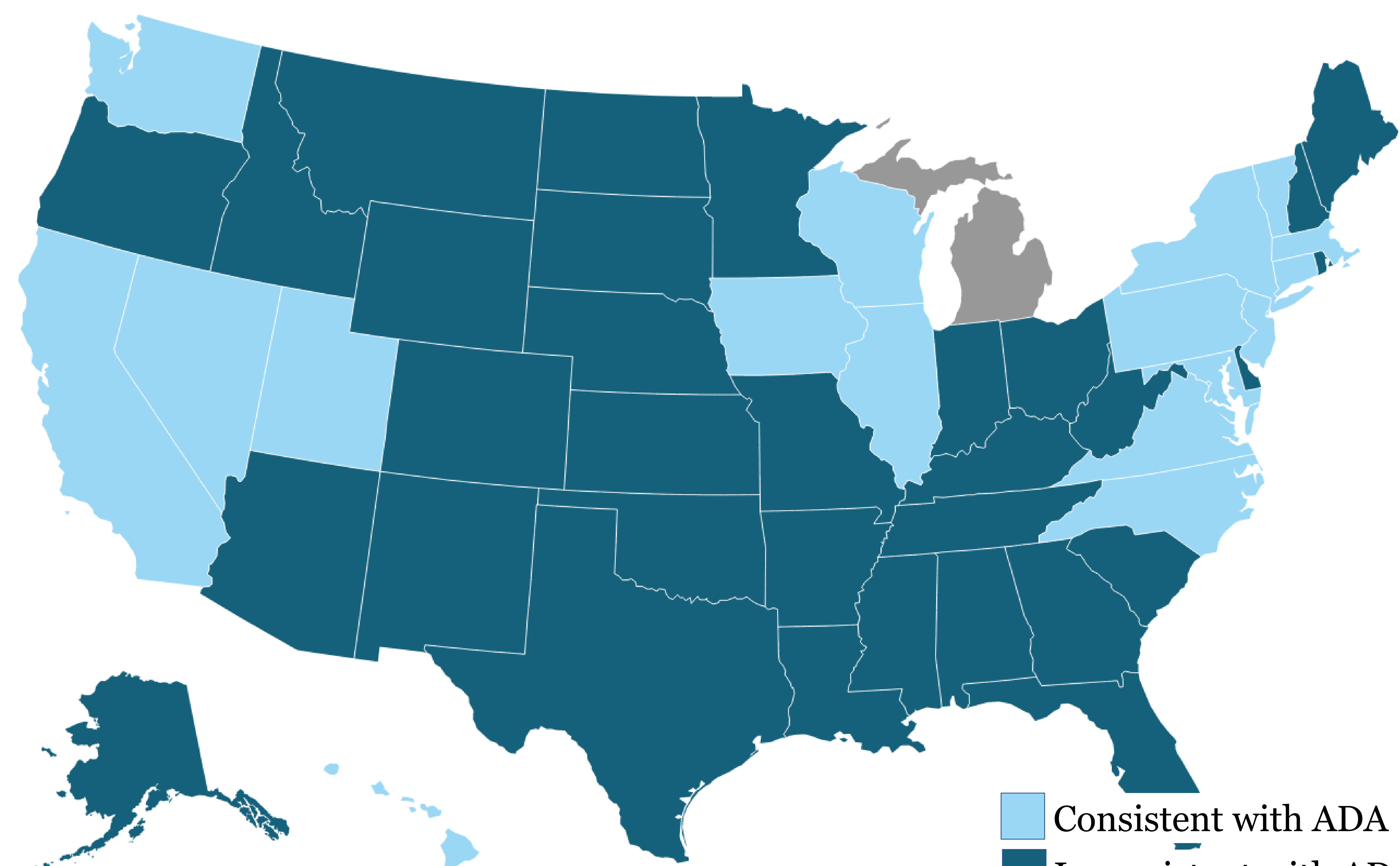
Only 18 states were consistent with the ADA in their approach to both physical health and mental health/substance use questions within both the initial and renewal applications (see Figure).

35% of PAs would be reluctant to seek help for a mental health or substance use issue due to concerns about repercussions on licensure, compared to 12% for a physical ailment.

PAs in states whose license applications were inconsistent with the ADA were significantly more likely to be reluctant about seeking help due to licensure concerns (p < .05).

Advocacy is needed to reduce stigma of mental health and substance use, and to modernize licensure applications.

## ADA Compliance by State (incl. initial and renewal applications).



Note: District of Columbia (not pictured) was consistent.

Christopher Roman<sup>a</sup>, Stephanie Neary<sup>b</sup>,

Emily Nettesheim<sup>a</sup>, Jennifer Zorn<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Butler University Physician Assistant Program  
Indianapolis, IN

<sup>b</sup> Yale Physician Assistant Online Program  
New Haven, CT

✉ [croman@butler.edu](mailto:croman@butler.edu)

## References

1. Dyrbye LN, West CP, Sinsky CA, et al. Medical licensure questions and physician reluctance to seek care for mental health conditions. *Mayo Clin Proc.* 2017;92(10):1486-1493.
2. Nettesheim EN, Neary S, Roman C. Do PA licensure questions violate the Americans with Disabilities Act? *JAAPA.* 2021;34(3):46-48.