



The Oregon Dental Association represents over 2,100 dentists practicing in all corners of the State and the Oregon Dental Hygiene Association membership including over 600 licensees, with a combined membership of over 2,700 licensees statewide. Our two organizations write to formally request that the Oregon Board of Dentistry consider changes to the mental health questions that are currently part of the licensing process.

Recognizing the need to reduce stigma around mental health, the Oregon Medical Board recently moved to an attestation model in line with the [Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation's](#) recommendations.

Yet, the line of questioning used by the Oregon Board of Dentistry during licensing remains outdated and stigmatizing—even though, according to the American Dental Association, the suicide rate amongst dentists is even higher than that of physicians, “Male dentists hold the highest suicide rate at 8.02 percent. Female dentists hold the fourth highest suicide rate at 5.28 percent. Physicians (7.87 percent), pharmacists (7.19 percent) and nurses (6.56 percent) also hold suicide rates much higher than the national average”.

Notably, this data was gathered before the COVID-19 pandemic. More recently, the 2021 Dentist Well-Being Survey Report by the American Dental Association revealed that the percentage of dentists diagnosed with anxiety more than tripled in 2021 compared with 2003. Yet, providers report that they are fearful to seek the help that they need.

In recognition that healthcare providers encounter mental health and substance use disorders, the Oregon Medical Board uses the below form and wording for initial licensure and renewal. the Oregon Dental Association and the Oregon Dental Hygiene Association respectfully urge the Oregon Board of Dentistry to adopt similar language to replace stigmatizing language currently being used. Thank you for your consideration.

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