

# Dept. of Safety and Professional Services: Wisconsin receives top 10 ranking for protecting patients

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A new report from Public Citizen's Health Research Group shows Wisconsin is a leader in protecting its citizens from the extremely small percentage of physicians who injure or endanger patients through their actions.

[The study ranked](#) state medical boards by the average number of serious disciplinary actions per 1,000 physicians each year from 2019-2021. Wisconsin ranked 8<sup>th</sup> among all states and the District of Columbia, with 1.23 serious disciplinary actions per 1,000 physicians. That equates to about 36 such disciplinary actions annually.

"This is an important measurement," said Dr. Sheldon Wasserman, Chairperson of Wisconsin's Medical Examining Board. "Every board member the Evers Administration has appointed has a strong commitment to protecting the public. We've been assertive in trying to weed out any bad actors."

The 8<sup>th</sup>-place ranking is Wisconsin's highest ever in these regular reports and marks a drastic improvement. Public Citizen ranked Wisconsin 24<sup>th</sup> in its previous report on serious disciplinary actions, which included data from 2017-2019.

"The Medical Examining Board should be credited for its efforts. This report reinforces the seriousness with which Board members take their charge of protecting Wisconsinites," said Dan Hereth, Secretary-designee of the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS), which provides administrative support for Wisconsin's professional boards.

Public Citizen said the purpose of the report is to examine the extent to which medical licensing boards are taking action to protect the public from licensed physicians who injure patients or behave inappropriately or illegally.

“Because, to date, no objective standards have been developed to measure board performance in the abstract, we compare the performance of the state medical boards based on the annual average number of serious disciplinary actions taken by the boards per 1,000 licensees,” the report reads.

“There is no reason to believe that physicians in any one state are more or less likely to be incompetent or miscreant than the physicians in any other state. Therefore, we believe all observed differences between the boards reflect variations in board performance rather than in physician behavior across different states.”

Chairman Wasserman emphasized the role of the Governor and his office in appointing current Medical Examining Board members.

“These board members were not appointed for political purposes, but for their expertise. This is a diverse group with expertise in areas where the board commonly sees complaints,” Dr. Wasserman explained.

Hereth pointed out this is just the latest example of DSPS, under this administration, working to help protect the citizens of Wisconsin while pushing innovations that help the department be more efficient.

“Fruits of that work include historically low plan-review turnaround times and the increased licensing efficiency numbers Governor Evers announced last month with the launch of [DSPS's new public dashboard](#),” Hereth said, noting that the current average time for DSPS to review new application materials is about three calendar days.

In the Public Citizen report, all data on licensing-board disciplinary actions came from the National Practitioner Data Bank. The authors defined “serious disciplinary actions” as those that had a clear impact on a physician’s ability to practice, using the NPDB’s reporting categories of license revocations, suspensions, summary restrictions, summary suspensions and voluntary surrenders while under investigation, among others.

The report’s recommendations included adding more “public members” to state

medical boards. The Wisconsin Medical Examining Board currently has three public members, making up nearly a quarter of the board.

## **About DSPS**

DSPS issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, runs the state fire prevention program, and maintains the award-winning Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to stem excessive opioid prescribing. A fee-based agency, DSPS is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With five offices and 250 employees throughout Wisconsin, DSPS collaborates with constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.