

“What Happens To My Pennsylvania License When ...”

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“What happens to my license when I retire?”
“... if I move to another state?”
“... if I am disciplined by a dental board in another state?”
“... if I forget to renew?”

These questions reflect the very different perspectives of dental health professionals in vastly different circumstances.

Licensees maintain a property right in their licenses to practice their professions, as determined by the Commonwealth Court in *Brady v. State Board of Chiropractic Examiners*, 79 Pa. Commw. 608, 471 A.2d 572 (1984). Therefore, as long as your Pennsylvania license remains valid and susceptible to revival – whether it is active or inactive – you have a property right in your license and are within the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania State Board of Dentistry. Unless a license is revoked by the board or voluntarily surrendered through a consent agreement, the license carries with it the legal and ethical responsibilities of all active licenses in Pennsylvania.

According to Pennsylvania’s Dental Law, the State Board of Dentistry shall have the authority to refuse, revoke or suspend the license of an applicant, licensee or certificate holder for a variety of reasons. Causes for discipline include making misleading, deceptive, untrue or fraudulent representations; having been found guilty of a crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or having been found guilty of a felony in violation of the laws of this commonwealth or any other state; revocation, suspension or other disciplinary actions imposed by another state; and other violations of the Dental Law or the board’s regulations.

The property right and the board’s jurisdiction remain whether a license is active, inactive, expired, suspended, or on probation. Even if a licensee holds an inactive license in Pennsylvania and has never practiced in this commonwealth, that license is still susceptible to revival through the filing of forms, an application fee, and proof of completed continuing education credits.

The board’s jurisdiction is critical to protecting the safety of the public and professional standards in Pennsylvania.

Consider a hypothetical situation in which a licensee obtained a license to practice dentistry in Pennsylvania 30 years ago, then chose to move away from Pennsylvania after dental school to set up a practice in Idaho. The licensee then engaged in egregious conduct that leads to the revocation or suspension of his license in Idaho. Because the board can discipline that individual’s Pennsylvania license, he could not return to Pennsylvania and reactivate his license to practice dentistry here. The public is protected, and the integrity of the dental profession in Pennsylvania is safeguarded.

It is not unusual for the State Board of Dentistry to find that a practitioner is in violation of the Dental Law by continuing to practice with a license or permit that is inactive because it has not been renewed. Often, this is due to oversight on the part of the license holder, but can still result in discipline being imposed by the board. Additionally, an applicant for reactivation of a Pennsylvania license who has failed to renew for more than five years may be subject to re-examination according to Section 3.1(b) of the Dental Law, 63 P.S., 122.1(b), and the board’s regulations at 49 Pa. Code §33.106(b).

As always, the goal of the State Board of Dentistry remains to protect the public and the professional standards of the dental community in Pennsylvania.

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