



STATE OF WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



Protecting the Public, Promoting Progress

2019–2021 BIENNIAL REPORT
October 2021

2019–2021 Biennial Report

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October 15, 2021

The Honorable Tony Evers
Governor of Wisconsin
115 East, State Capitol Building
Madison, WI 53702

Members of the Wisconsin Legislature
State Capitol Building
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Evers and Members of the Legislature,

It is a pleasure to submit to you the 2019–2021 Biennial Report for the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS). DSPS plays an integral role in ensuring public safety and fueling economic growth in the state. This manifests in our work across our five divisions. We have a workforce of 248 employees spread across five offices located in Hayward, Onalaska, Green Bay, Waukesha, and Madison.

Our agency regulates over 244 different professions and industries. Our work helps to ensure the safety of all Wisconsinites while providing economic stability. Our licensed professions include doctors, nurses, cosmetologists, and social workers as well as electricians, plumbers, firework manufacturers, and elevator professionals. On average, DSPS processes more than 70,000 new credentials and renews over 400,000 credentials each biennium.

Additionally, DSPS performs inspections and plan reviews. The agency also audits third party and municipal inspection agencies. Between July 1, 2019, and June 30, 2021, we conducted more than 30,000 plan reviews. This work with the construction industry and property owners ensures buildings and projects are safe and sanitary. We conducted over 29,000 inspections for the same period. Annually, DSPS investigates over 3,000 complaints.

We also play a part in safeguarding the quality of educational options available to students pursuing higher education through private trade, technical, career, distance learning and degree-granting schools through the Educational Approval Program. It is also within our charge to oversee the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program as a part of Wisconsin's effort to stem prescription drug abuse practices.

Over the past two years, DSPS has achieved several accomplishments, and we are continuing to take steps toward transformational infrastructure changes that will help us realize efficiencies. Our report highlights the department's notable initiatives and success over the last biennial reporting period. These include:

- Consistent with the department's mission to promote economic growth and stability while protecting the citizens of Wisconsin, the agency conducted a statutorily mandated fee study, which resulted in a reduction of licensing fees for several professions;

- The department conducted an occupational license study and compiled a report, which recommended the elimination of certain licenses;
- The department launched an agency-wide IT infrastructure project to modernize technology systems and improve customer service; and
- The department participated in interstate compacts that make it easier for professionals to be licensed across state lines.

Our report also previews some of the agency's future goals and objectives. With input from our staff, our leadership team is working to meet three priorities: stabilizing the agency, modernizing our workforce and infrastructure, and protecting the citizens of Wisconsin. Our agency looks forward to continuing the work with our customers and partners who drive economic growth and job creation throughout the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dawn B. Crim".

Dawn B. Crim, Ph.D.
Secretary

Department of Safety and Professional Services Description, Mission and Vision

The Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) is headed by a secretary appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The department provides policy coordination and administrative services for boards, committees, and councils. The department also oversees the regulation of credential holders, professional and industry standards, and safe construction of public and private buildings. The department comprises five divisions:

- **Management Services** provides budget and finance, technology, and facilities management services to the department, which includes four field offices.
- **Policy Development** provides administrative support and policy guidance to professional regulatory boards and consultation about continuing education and examination requirements for regulated professions. The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program and the Educational Approval Program are housed in this division.
- **Industry Services** provides services related to the safe construction and operation of buildings.
- **Professional Credential Processing** is responsible for all credential application processing, including determination of credential eligibility and credential renewal.
- **Legal Services and Compliance** provides legal services to professional boards and the agency regarding disciplinary matters involving credential holders. DLSC also conducts business compliance inspections and audits.

Department and board operations are funded through application, renewal, and examination fees, as well as fees associated with required reviews of building plans and other items regulated under the law. A fee schedule for the application and renewal of professional credentials is set by the department with legislative oversight. Examination and other department fees are set by statute and administrative rule.

Agency Mission

The mission of the department is to promote economic growth and stability while protecting the citizens of Wisconsin as designated by statute.

Agency Vision

To create a workplace that values staff and their expertise enabling the department to complete processes efficiently and provide excellent service to the citizens of Wisconsin.

A Biennial Perspective

On March 17, 2020, the workplace as we knew it changed and we all pivoted as we held true to the mission of the agency: to promote economic growth and stability while protecting the citizens of Wisconsin. Since then, we all had to adjust our work and lifestyles while maintaining operations and supporting the pandemic response.

The department was critical to the state's coordinated COVID response. As the licensing body for the vast majority of Wisconsin's health care providers (including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists) DSPS had to maintain licensing operations to maintain the pipeline to the state healthcare workforce.

The department also convened an ad hoc health care task force to advise on potential and proposed actions to bring needed flexibility to the health care system. The task force informed decisions, emergency orders, and rule suspensions that facilitated the increased use of telehealth, remote provider supervision, and pop-up vaccination and testing clinics.

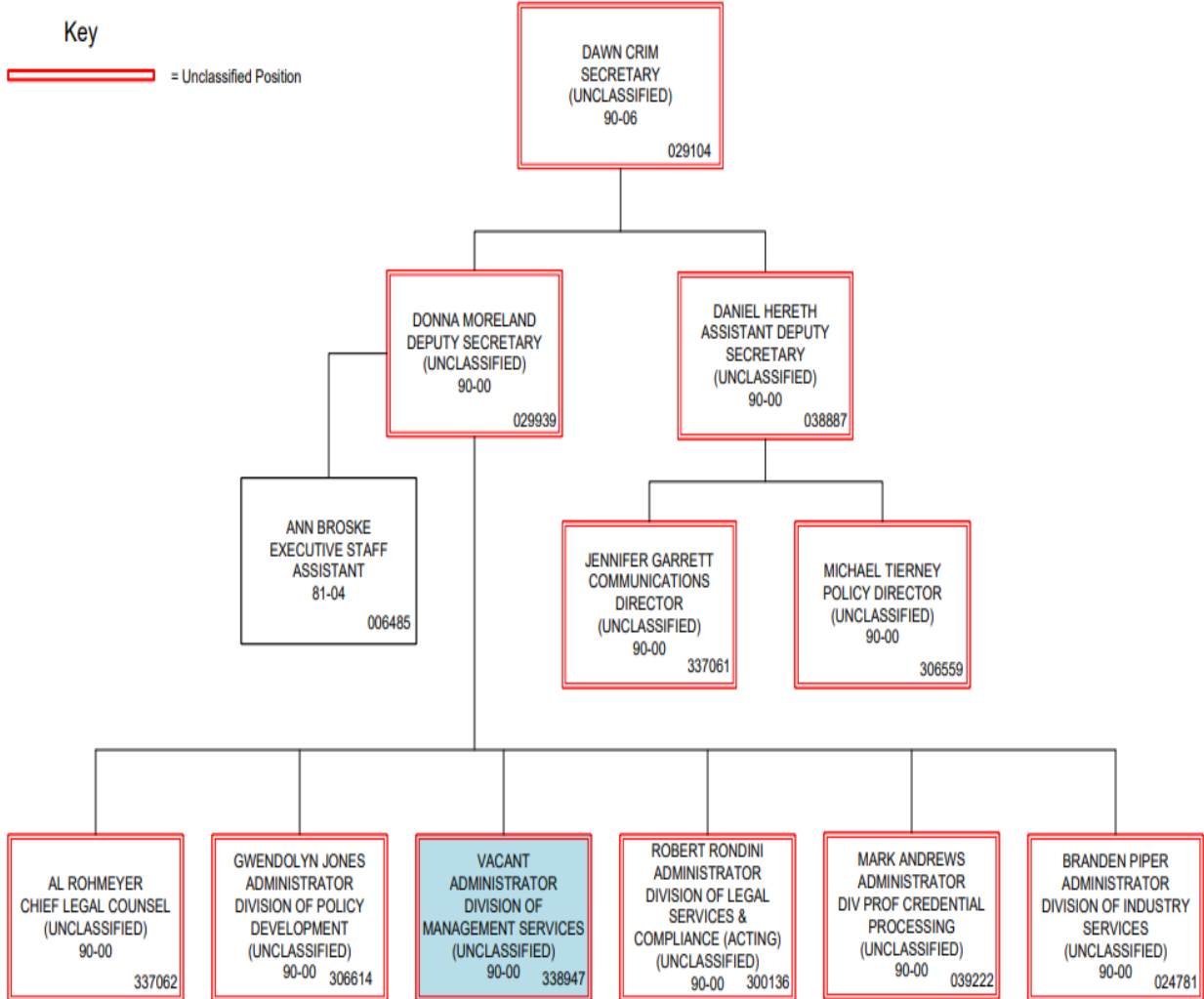
As disease surges strained communities and local healthcare networks, we quickly established new processes for handling temporary license applications for professionals licensed in other states. The department issued over 2,400 temporary licenses to help meet workforce demands. The department also waived late fees and implemented emergency renewals for health professionals whose licenses had expired within the past five years. This allowed for swift re-entry to practice for those who had recently left or retired.

We also ensured the smooth continuation of statewide construction. When some customers expressed concern about the safety of routine inspections, we developed a video inspection protocol that enabled our team and our customers to complete inspections using phones and tablets. We enhanced tutorials to help more customers transition to electronic filings. Both minimized in-person employee and customer interactions while maintaining safety standards.

Also, the department worked closely with regulatory boards to extend continuing education and testing deadlines. Early in the pandemic, many conferences, classes, and exams were cancelled at the last minute or indefinitely, putting some license holders in jeopardy of not meeting renewal requirements. We worked with boards to create the flexibility necessary to get people working and keep them working.

As of July 1, 2021, DSPS has a staff of 248 employees. The staff supports the work of the agency in offices in Hayward, Onalaska, Green Bay, Waukesha, and Madison.

Department of Safety and Professional Services Organizational Chart



Division of Policy Development Accomplishments and Initiatives

The Division of Policy Development (DPD) is responsible for managing the administrative rule promulgation process for self-regulated professions, as well as professions and technical programs that are directly regulated by the department. The division also provides administrative support and policy guidance to the professional boards by facilitating board meetings. In this role, the division also serves as a liaison between the boards and the department. Furthermore, the division's Office of Education and Examinations (OEE) is responsible for continuing education, examination requirements and examination administration for regulated professions and skilled trades. It also administers the Educational Approval Program (EAP) and the Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (ePDMP).

Measures of Productivity

The 2019–2021 biennial period began without fanfare, but by the end of March 2020, the DPD staff and board members were collectively facing an onslaught of new challenges. Many of the challenges required them to let go of old, established processes while rapidly adapting to new ways of conducting business amid a deadly pandemic that was also fueling the rapid closing of business and social institutions represented by the board members.

Throughout the pandemic, DPD staff maintained essential operations, including holding board, council, and committee meetings. Staff identified new technology resources that enabled professional boards, councils, and committees to transition smoothly from in-person to virtual meetings. This allowed professional boards to continue to meet in accordance with state statutes. It also enabled the division to minimize health and safety risks for all participants while adhering to open meeting requirements and increasing meeting accessibility for Wisconsin citizens.

Board, Council and Committee Meetings

MEETINGS	July 1–Dec 31, 2019		Jan 1–June 30, 2020		July 1–Dec 31, 2020		Jan 1–June 30, 2021	
	In Person	Virtual	In Person	Virtual	In Person	Virtual	In Person	Virtual
Boards, Councils, Committees	95	25	46	54	0	96	0	112
Total Meetings held by Type	120		100		96		112	
Total Meetings held-Combined	220				208			

During the biennium, DPD provided support to a total of 428 board, council, and committee meetings. Of these meetings, 141 (32.9%) were held in person and 287 (67%) were held virtually.

Administrative Code Projects

PROJECT TYPE	July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020	July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021
IN PROGRESS	112	112
Emergency	10	10
Permanent	102	102
COMPLETED	46	55
Emergency	7	13
Permanent	39	42

In 2019–2020 there were 112 administrative code projects in progress with 46 of them completed. The division had 112 administrative code projects and 55 of them were completed in 2020–2021.

Key Initiatives & Developments

Creation of Legal Unit

The DPD legal unit consists of three attorneys and an attorney supervisor. The DPD legal staff provide legal services to sixty-six professional boards, sections, councils, and committees. DPD legal staff also have rule promulgation responsibilities for the professional boards as well as DSPS rules which including trade professions.

Additionally, the DPD legal unit is responsible for providing legal services and support to the Office of Education and Exams (OEE) as well as the Educational Approval Program (EAP). The legal unit also provides legal services and counsel to the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP), and is also responsible for reviewing and responding to public records requests and providing legal services as the Deputy Records Custodian for DPD.

Skilled Trades Exam Administration

The Division of Policy Development is also responsible for examination requirements and administration for regulated professions and sixty-two (62) skilled trades.

In response to health and safety concerns due to the pandemic, in-person examinations were briefly suspended in March 2020. However, the pandemic did not eliminate the demand for examination and entry into the licensed workforce. Therefore, the Office of Education and Examinations (OEE) developed enhanced safety protocols and resumed exam administration throughout the state in June 2020. Sites included Madison, Brookfield, Eau Claire, and Appleton. With PPE requirements, distancing protocols, and additional time DPD staff were able to re-register all 800+ skilled-trade examinees impacted by the three-month examination suspension, and all sat for an exam by August of 2020.

Over the course of the biennium the Office of Education and Examinations administered 8,279 online exams for business and health professions and 6,324 (multi-page paper) in person examinations for skilled trades. Additionally, the office reviewed and approved 1,142 continuing education (CE) courses/programs and audited 1,344 licenses for continuing education compliance.

TRADES EXAMS ADMINISTERED – APPROVED EDUCATIONAL COURSES & LICENSES AUDITED FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

Time Period: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020, and July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

EXAM MONTH	Trades Exams Administered		Online Exams Administered		Educational Courses Approved		Licenses Audited for CD	
	7/1/19–6/30/20	7/1/20–6/30/21	7/1/19–6/30/20	7/1/20 –6/30/21	7/1/19–6/30/20	7/1/20 –6/30/21	7/1/19–6/30/20	7/1/20–6/30/21
July	297	339	765	411	52	59	2	4
August	312	405	482	268	27	63	0	11
September	312	296	377	258	31	58	5	54
October	289	294	387	264	18	41	3	52
November	284	299	356	429	42	75	4	44
December	187	0	220	345	52	0	4	0
January	287	344	189	401	32	47	126	7
February	253	307	285	165	50	53	175	12
March	247	354	268	98	37	59	12	9
April	1	329	115	454	41	91	7	19
May	0	338	230	614	39	60	3	339
June	219	331	238	660	62	53	6	446
Total	2,688	3,636	3,912	4,367	483	659	347	997

Mass Timber Task Force

During April and May of 2021, the division began both the permanent and emergency rule processes to expand allowable use of mass timber products in Wisconsin commercial buildings. These rules will be incorporated into the Wisconsin Commercial Building Code.

Upon both permanent and emergency scope implementations on June 22, 2021, DPD began a coordinated effort with the Office of the Secretary to officially launch the ad-hoc Mass Timber Task Force. The task force is composed of five industry expert members from diverse specialty areas. They have come together to discuss and ultimately implement an alternative guidebook to the Commercial Building Code update that will transform industry processes. The Mass Timber Task Force has the ability and expertise to make Wisconsin a leader in mass timber construction.

The Enhanced PDMP

Value Added Enhancements with User Satisfaction

The ePDMP is a critical component of the state's effort to curb opioid use, and it has transformed prescriber culture. Since its inception, it has steadily reduced the overall number of opioid prescriptions dispensed in Wisconsin and has driven other practice improvements.

The department continued building upon the success of the ePDMP during the biennium. In recognition of the steady expansion of electronic health record (EHR) systems, the department added additional functionality to the ePDMP. This included adopting RxCheck to expand the reach of interstate queries within the EHR.

Other system refinements improved usability and patient matching within the ePDMP and granted law enforcement officers the ability to report the administration of Naloxone. Proactive notifications were established to encourage prescribers to review their metrics so they can better understand how their prescribing practices compare to their peers. And thanks to investments supported by the governor and the Legislature in the 2019–2021 budget, opioid naïve alerts were launched for first-time opioid prescriptions. These enhancements have been incredibly popular with ePDMP users, with 85 percent of survey respondents indicating they were either "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with the system.

Further, data shows that the PDMP is contributing to greater awareness about safe prescribing practices of opioids and other controlled substances. Utilization has grown to more than 600,000 patient queries per month, with over 7.7 million dispensing records submitted per year. In addition to a decrease in the dispensing of opioids, the PDMP shows fewer occurrences of data-driven alerts that may indicate overdose risk and/or "doctor shopping." These alerts have decreased by an average of 45 percent since 2017, with alerts that may indicate doctor shopping decreasing by up to 70 percent.

ePDMP Grant Award

In October 2020, the ePDMP program was awarded a \$1.9 million grant from the Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which supports state and local governments in detecting and preventing the diversion and abuse of pharmaceutically controlled substances such as opioids and other prescription drugs. This funding is used for overall infrastructure enhancements that will increase security, user satisfaction, and adoption.

Reduction of Prescription Drug Abuse

The Controlled Substances Board's 2020 year-end report also showed an overall decreased dispensing rate compared to prior years. While there was a three percent decrease in the total number of all monitored prescription drugs dispensed in 2020 versus 2019, there was a total decrease of about eight percent when compared to 2018. Overall dispensing rates of monitored prescription drugs were nearly 30 percent lower than they were at their peak in 2015.

PDMP Budget Highlights

The department will launch a grant program to enable health care providers who face financial barriers to integrate the ePDMP into their practice. While 55 percent of patient queries in the ePDMP flow through electronic health record systems, the integration costs can be initially prohibitive. This grant program will make it more affordable to invest in necessary upgrades so that ePDMP use is seamless. This will ultimately increase utilization rates.

Division of Industry Services Accomplishments and Initiatives

The Division of Industry Services (DIS) is divided into the Bureau of Field Services, Bureau of Technical Services, and the Administrative Services Section.

The Bureau of Field Services inspects commercial buildings, amusement rides, ski lifts, boilers, elevators, and pressurized gas systems. It also reviews plan submissions for elevators and private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS), and it oversees the public sector safety and mine safety programs. The bureau also administers the Wisconsin fire prevention program that distributes 2% dues funding and provides consultation, support, and training to over 800 fire departments throughout the state.

The Bureau of Technical Services performs commercial building, plumbing and fire-suppression plan review. It also administers the state's electrical permitting and inspection program. The bureau is also responsible for administering the Uniform Dwelling Code program and the federal HUD Manufactured Housing program. It also provides consultations and training to local building officials as well as, commercial and residential contractors.

With the implementation of the agency's Electronic Safety and Licensing Application (eSLA), the Administrative Services Section has taken an almost 100% manual process and converted to a fully automated system. This has substantially changed the role of the staff to that of program troubleshooter and program developers. The section has found much of their time over the last three years has been spent on improving and refining the eSLA software and training external customers on its use.

Measures of Productivity

Commercial Building Plan Reviews

Year	Plans Reviewed	Revenue Generated
2019	5,618	\$4,339,975.86
2020	5,933	\$4,828,120.30
2021*	6,830	\$6,069,243.74

Plumbing Plan Reviews

Year	Plans Reviewed	Revenue Generated
2019	1,319	\$575,945.15**
2020	2,686	\$1,252,285.27
2021*	2,277	\$1,010,146.38

**In 2019 plumbing moved from the legacy system to eSLA and this year that legacy system was decommissioned making report pulling very difficult, we used the numbers reported in 2019 for consistency

* These numbers are pulled from Jan 1-October 1st (when the report was compiled) they will continue to increase over the next 3 months

POWTS Plan Reviews

Year	Plans Reviewed	Revenue Generated
2019	3,061	\$1,198,667.97
2020	3,438	\$1,430,990.51
2021*	4,188	\$1,893,069.56

Two Percent Fire Dues Distribution

Year	Number of Municipalities	Funds Distributed
2019	1,843 municipalities (807 Fire Departments)	\$20,133,993.89
2020	1,848 municipalities (804 Fire Departments)	\$22,037,952.49
2021	1,835 municipalities (801 Fire Departments)	\$23,758,586.76

Key Initiatives

Electronic Safety and Licensing Application (eSLA)

Beginning in June of 2018, the division began the long process of replacing the antiquated Regulated Objects database with the new eSLA system. The process was tedious and painstaking but on July 19, 2021, we launched our final program in the new system. The road to get here was long and made more difficult by the pandemic and the fact that we performed all the development in tandem with our usual tasks with no additional staff. We are far from done with eSLA as tweaks and adjustment will likely be made for years to allow us to provide the simplest and most efficient customer experience. However, we are very proud of the efforts our staff has made over the last three years to work out of their comfort zone to benefit our customers.

All Electronic Plan Review System

The pandemic affected DIS as it did other agency divisions and state operations. As an essential industry, commercial construction continued while other businesses closed or shifted to remote work. This presented unprecedented safety considerations and prompted innovative solutions and decision making.

To best meet our customer's needs while maintaining the safety of our employees during the pandemic we decided to move to an all-electronic plan submission process. This decision has provided us the flexibility to work remotely and has freed us from the logistical and financial burden of having to ship and store thousands of bulky paper plans. This improvement will continue to benefit the agency and state beyond the pandemic recovery.

Improved Plan Review Turnaround Times

Amid growing work volume and comparatively flat staffing. The department launched a complete analysis and redesign of the plan-review process. The process had been largely unchanged in decades. The deep dive resulted in a new process that substantially reduced customer wait times. As little as 3 years ago, turnaround time on a commercial building plan was as high as 16 weeks. For the last year, we have averaged less than 6 weeks.

Educating the Public

The division has continued to provide consultation and educational services to all regulated program areas. During the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 these efforts continued while they largely shifted to virtual platforms. We participated in the UW code refresher, all four building inspector association seminars and various seminars, and events for the League of Municipalities, Wisconsin Onsite Water Recycling Association, Farm Technology Days, and the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association, among others.

Commercial Building and Plumbing Code Councils

It is the primary mission of the division to ensure the safety of all citizens within our state. We are additionally tasked to consider that old or inefficient regulation places an undue burden on those same citizens. In other words, we must continue to update codes as technology, materials, and practices evolve.

Therefore, we have committed to a regular schedule of code revisions that hopefully sets the course for the division and regulated industries for years to come. This year we began updates to two of our largest most complex codes; SPS 361-366 (Commercial Building) and SPS 380-387 (Plumbing code). Review of the codes are ahead of schedule, and we feel confident they will be adopted within our 30-month deadline. We plan to continue next year with SPS 314 Fire Prevention, SPS 316 Electrical, and SPS 320-325 Uniform Dwelling Code.

Division of Professional Credential Processing Accomplishments and Initiatives

The Division of Professional Credential Processing (DPCP) is responsible for all credential application processing, including determination of credential eligibility and renewal, for regulated professions. The division is responsible for licensure and verification of health, business, trades and manufactured homes/community credentials, operation of the department's customer service center and regulation of the state's unarmed combat sports program which includes the mixed martial arts/boxing program.

Measures of Productivity

Between July 2019 and June 2021, DPCP processed (applications received and entered into the ICE system, not licenses issued) approximately 122,974 initial applications for licensure (health, business, and trades). As of June 30, 2021, there were 418,732 active credential holders.

Health

DPCP's health team processes and issues licenses for 73 credential types, including physicians, nurses, social workers, and pharmacists.

COVID-19 Response

Emergency Order 16, Emergency Order 20, Emergency Order 2, Act 185, and Act 10 were part of the administration and Legislature's efforts to expedite expansion and enhance the efficiency of our healthcare workforce during the COVID-19 public health emergency. These simplified the healthcare license renewal process and encouraged recently retired professionals with expired licenses to re-enter the practice. These efforts also provided an avenue for licensed out-of-state practitioners to practice in Wisconsin without first requiring an in-state credential.

Licenses Issued	
Emergency Order 16	685
Emergency Order 2	1,761
Act 10	295

Average Monthly Application Counts

Before COVID-19, the health team received an average of 1,100 applications per month. Because the health professions were most directly affected by the pandemic, the health team now averages up to 2,400 applications per month.

Business and Trades

DPCP's business and trades team processes and issues 227 credential types for professions including private security, real estate appraisers and master electricians.

The trades team processes all applications, renewals, and verifications for trades professions. The trades team has a statutory guideline for all applications and renewals to be completed within 21 days and consistently stays within that guideline. Also, eSLA enables trades to be more efficient as eSLA applications are typically processed within one-to-two business days.

Renewals

DPCP Renewals receives and scans incoming mail, assists walk-in customers, processes credit card payments and processes and issues renewals for most professions.

Regular Renewals

Renewals Completed	
2019–2020 (7/1/2019–6/30/2020)	203,335
2020–2021 (7/1/2020–6/30/2021)	160,199

Over the past two years, approximately 93% of renewals were completed online.

COVID-19 Response

In response to COVID-19, DPCP renewed licenses for providers who held a Wisconsin license that expired within five years (Emergency Order Renewals), renewed temporary special permits issued during previous emergency orders (Temporary License Attestation Forms) and issued continuing education extensions.

	2020	2021	Total
Emergency Order Renewals	433	307	740
Temporary License Attestation Forms	156	9	165
Continuing Education Extensions	355	442	797

Unarmed Combat Sports

With the assistance of DHS, we created protocols for unarmed combat sports to resume with health and safety guidelines in place. These efforts restarted an industry that increases the ability for counties economies in Wisconsin to bounce back. Events resumed in summer of 2021.

Call Center

DPCP’s Customer Service Center (CSC) handles the department’s incoming calls, sorts emails sent to main inboxes, responds to emails, downloads transcripts and routes or returns voicemails received on the general line.

	Calls Received	Calls Answered/ Voicemails Returned	Weekly Average Calls
2019–2020 (7/1/2019–6/30/2020)	181,070	127,127	3,482
2020–2021 (7/1/2020–6/30/2021)	204,843	124,047	3,939

Legal

In 2020, DPCP added a legal team comprising one attorney supervisor, two attorneys and one paralegal. The legal team reviews all applications involving legal issues (conviction record, discipline, reciprocity, malpractice, termination, medical condition) and provides legal support for the division.

The legal team receives approximately 47 new files per week (over 3,600 files in the past 18 months).

The legal team has implemented numerous process improvements since its inception, including obtaining increased delegated authority from the department and regulatory boards to process applications more efficiently, and capturing conviction record reviews in the department's credentialing database to prevent future duplication of efforts.

Key Initiatives

Fee Study Continues to Lower Cost for Licensees

For the second time in approximately two years the Department directed a decrease in credentialing fees. Wisconsin state statutes establish maximum fees for appraisal management companies, transportation network companies and licenses related to unarmed combat sports. Fees related to tattoo and body art are set by administrative rule. For all other licensure fees, DSPS established a maximum licensure/credential fee (initial or renewal) of \$60, which will reduce the financial impact on many credential holders. The previous maximum fee (initial or renewal) was \$75..

Interstate Compacts (Updated Information)

In 2018, the Wisconsin legislature attempted to join the Physical Therapy Compact, which would give the agency access to the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy's (FSBPT) Exam Licensure and Disciplinary Database. The legislation was introduced in 2020 and signed into law in March 2021. Access to the database will streamline the process of license verifications of physical therapy professionals from other compact states applying for Wisconsin licensure.

Wisconsin Selected for Multi-State Licensing Consortium (Updated info)

Wisconsin was among 11 original states chosen to participate in the National Occupational Licensing Learning Consortium. The consortium is a multi-year program designed to study licensing practices to identify ways to improve access to the labor market.

DSPS identified individuals to represent the state and department at consortium meetings which began in December 2017. Ultimately, 15 states joined the program and worked together to identify improvements to occupational licensing practices.

Through the consortium, participants interacted with colleagues from other states to learn about varying best practices, as well as any challenges or opportunities. Participants were also expected to engage with partners and stakeholders, including associations, license holders,

other state agencies, and citizens throughout Wisconsin to share what they learned through the work of the consortium to seek feedback and input. The consortium concluded in December, 2020 and issued its final [report](#).

The consortium was supported by the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, the Council of State Governments, and the U.S. Department of Labor.

Division of Legal Services and Compliance Accomplishments and Initiatives

The Division of Legal Services and Compliance (DLSC) is the prosecution and enforcement division of the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS). The division provides legal services to professional boards, regulated industries and the department regarding the investigation and prosecution/discipline of licensed credential holders for violations of statutes and administrative rules. DLSC is comprised of complaint intake staff, consumer protection investigators, regulatory specialists, paralegals, attorneys (prosecutors), and management staff.

The division is responsible for intake, investigation, and prosecution/discipline of complaints filed against professional licensees in Wisconsin. DLSC is tasked with monitoring compliance of disciplinary orders issued by professional boards and the department. Additionally, DLSC performs initial inspections of certain businesses and provides management and supervision of the Professional Assistance Program (PAP) which is a diversion program for impaired professionals.

Measures of Productivity

During this biennium, DLSC has improved complaint intake processing times (moving cases from complaint received to point of screening or initial triage). The DLSC Intake unit consists of four FTE staff responsible for handling all complaints received. Despite staffing shortages/challenges, the Intake unit decreased processing time frames from 75–90 days to 45–60 days (complaint received to screening).

Additionally, DLSC has increased the number of cases closed within a year in comparison to cases received in a year. Thus, DLSC has effectively reduced prior pending case backlog.

Year	Complaints Received	Cases Closed	Percent
7/1/2019 – 6/30/2020	2,769	3,495	126%
7/1/2020 – 6/30/2021	2,616	2,989	114%
7/1/2019 – 6/30/2021	5,385	6,484	120% (Average)

DLSC received 5,385 professional complaints which were processed by complaint intake staff for the period July 1, 2019–June 30, 2021. DLSC attorneys and staff closed 6,484 cases during the two-year period. Complaints/cases may be closed in the following ways:

- Closed Formally: The board/department issues a formal disciplinary order.
- Closed After Investigation (Informally): The case advisor/chief legal counsel, in conjunction with DLSC professionals, determines that the matter does not warrant professional discipline. After careful review and deliberation, the board/chief legal counsel may exercise its discretion not to prosecute based on other considerations relating to the case. In order for a case to close after investigation, action must be taken by the board/chief legal counsel.
- Closed at Screening: The prescreening attorney(s) or screening panel determines that an investigation is not warranted.

The following is a representation of how complaints/cases were closed. It is important to note that cases closed from July 1, 2019–June 30, 2021, may have been received in previous years.

Closed Method	Number of Complaints / Cases Resolved
Closed at Screening	3,408
Closed after Investigation (Informally)	2,014
Closed Formally	1,062
Total	6,484

During the two-year period, DLSC took formal legal action (Final Decisions and Orders, Notice of Violations and Orders, Initial Regulated Objects Orders) against 1,451 licensees which resulted in 379 Administrative Warnings issued and 1,072 Final Decisions and Orders issued by professional boards and the department. DLSC provided monitoring services to ensure compliance with disciplinary orders issued on an average of 877 licensees during the two-year period. DLSC also monitored for compliance on an average – 57 professionals in the PAP for substance abuse issues.

In addition to legal action and monitoring of disciplinary orders, DLSC was also responsible for completing 134 required initial inspections of business establishments including, funeral homes, pharmacies, and wholesale drug manufacturers and distributors.

Key Initiatives

During the two-year period, DLSC has implemented initiatives to improve the complaint and disciplinary process. These initiatives benefited not only the public but also licensees as well. Reallocation of resources during the pandemic resulted in greater efficiency in the monitoring and complaint processes. DLSC staff has adapted to COVID-19 related limitations on the investigation process and successfully limited the impact on the complaint process and monitoring.

Productivity Improvements During COVID-19

Beginning March 2020, DLSC responded to the need for staff to transition to work from home due to Emergency COVID orders. Implementation of paperless case processing for all units was initiated, creating a seamless transition to working from home. The Intake Unit had fully transitioned to a paperless system prior to COVID changes, which enhanced the ability for all units to streamline systems in a paperless environment.

Virtual pharmacy inspections were created and implemented to continue to meet the inspection requirements while ensuring safety of staff and the public. Development of a paperless documentation system for pharmacy inspections further created efficiencies in costs and access to inspection results.

3PL Licensure

With the implementation of the third-party logistics provider licensure program, parties may now contract with prescription drug manufacturers to provide or coordinate warehousing, distribution, or other services on behalf of the manufacturer. This new licensure enabled Pfizer to provide COVID-19 vaccine, vaccination materials, and solutions nationwide.

Continuous Improvement Project – Paperless/Electronic Complaint/Case File Environment

As of January 1, 2021, DLSC completed the last phase of implementing a paperless/electronic complaint/case file environment. The phases consisted of the following:

1. A paperless/electronic screening panel* process whereby board members and DLSC review documents securely, efficiently, and at a low cost to the department.
2. A paperless/electronic intake process (from receipt of the complaint through closed at screening).
3. A paperless complaint/case file process (complaints opened for investigation after screening).

The implementation of the paperless/electronic complaint/case file initiative has resulted in improved collaboration and service, increased productivity, reduction/reduced costs, document organization, and secure/preserved files and documents.

* A screening panel consists of board members as well as a DLSC prosecuting attorney. The screening panel confers and determines, based on information provided, whether violations may have occurred.

DLSC Prosecution Expansion and Further Enhanced Protection of the Public

The work of the DLSC prosecution team during the past biennium continued to focus on protection of the public and prosecuting violations involving professional and trade rules and regulatory standards. However, the work of the team expanded during this biennium to address various COVID cases, such as the mishandling of vaccinations. Opioid and drug diversion, stem-cell cases, and fraud cases were also prosecuted. The team also handled novel marketplace issues involving short-term lodging home rentals/hotel alternatives and various building code violations throughout the state.

Monitoring Case Management System

The DLSC Monitoring unit assists licensees in meeting the conditions of orders against active licenses. Impairment orders require drug testing as a condition of the order. In 2021, a request for bids was finalized, and a contract was signed with First Source Solutions to be the sole Drug Monitoring program utilized by DLSC. This contract allows for consistency in drug testing and allows for a single point of contact for monitoring staff and licensees. This increases efficiencies as well as allowing monitoring staff to be able to develop improved communication with First Source Solutions, increasing the efficacy of the program.

Division of Management Services Accomplishments and Initiatives

The Division of Management Services (DMS) provides administrative services to the Office of the Secretary and all divisions within the department. These services include planning, budget, accounting, technology, safety, fleet management and facilities management. Fiscal staff members develop, monitor, and administer the agency's biennial and operating budgets, and they oversee the development and operation of financial management systems. Technology staff members, in partnership with the Division of Enterprise Technology, assist with information technology programs, information systems development, and help desk operations for the department. DMS manages personnel services, training, safety, and emergency management.

In 2019, DMS helped to assess the agency's technological, and facility needs. Division staff gathered input from employees and visited all agency offices as part of this process. The assessment resulted in several recommendations that DMS implemented to improve customer service outcomes and increase efficiencies across divisions. Measures taken include IT equipment and software upgrades, field staff work environment improvements, and process improvements.

DSPS was awarded a \$2,500 ETF Wellness Grant in 2021. The grant was used to purchase items for wellness gift bags that welcomed staff back as they returned to the office in July. The bags included items to support a healthy lifestyle—a cooling towel, scalp massager, exercise band, lip balm and a stress ball.

Field Offices Work Environment Improvements

Installed New VOIP System

The agency's four field offices were converted from PTSN (AT&T and Lumen (Century Link) telephony to DOA Teams VoIP telephony, bringing them in line with the enterprise-wide standard and substantially improving the quality of communication.

Process Improvements

Emergency Coordination

An assessment of the agency's emergency evacuation plans discovered confusing protocols and a lack of roles and responsibilities. In an emergency, this may lead to injury, chaos, or even loss of life. DMS leadership and staff have created a clear and concise plan that has assigned roles and responsibilities and easy-to-follow instructions.

Onboarding/Offboarding

Over the past year, DMS reviewed the process for onboarding and offboarding staff. Previously the process was inconsistent and many of the major components were omitted when employees transitioned in or out of the department. To increase consistency, DMS, has created forms that clearly lay out roles, responsibilities, and tasks. In addition, DMS created an onboarding orientation for new employees to complement the human resources Region 1 orientation increasing new employees' awareness of DSPS and Wisconsin state government.

Update/Overhaul of ConnectUs

DMS launched the new intranet site on SharePoint in May 2020. The new site provides for a comprehensive platform for sharing of agency information.

Since the launch, staff requests for information or resources have drastically declined.

Supervisors Tool Kit

A toolkit and training module for new supervisors were created by DMS staff to summarize information needed to successfully provide supervision of their teams. The training covers subjects such as on- and off-boarding processes, requests for equipment, and codes for time entry.

New IT Equipment Request Procedure

The agency centralized the request for new IT equipment to bring consistency to the process. DMS now can track equipment maintained by the agency.

IT Equipment/Software Upgrades

Windows 10 Deployment

In January 2020, Microsoft ended the lifecycle of Windows 7 and discontinued all support and security updates. DMS has been ensuring that all deployed desktops and laptops have been upgraded to Windows 10. As of June 30, 2021, DMS has deployed Windows 10 on 83% of inventoried desktops and laptops. Deployment completion is scheduled for December 2021.

Upgrades to all Computers/Monitors Older than 2006

In 2019, DMS launched an effort to improve desktop and laptop processing times and to mitigate other inefficiencies. The plan includes replacement of all equipment by December 2021. To date, 90% of laptops, desktops and monitors have been replaced with new/newer equipment. DMS will complete the project and replace all remaining legacy equipment in December 2021.

Information Technology Modernization

Electronic Safety and Licensing Application (eSLA)

In April 2018, the Joint Committee on Finance approved \$4.4 million in one-time funding during the 2017-2019 biennium for DSFS to modernize its information technology system through legacy system replacement and upgrades. This included funding for the electronic Safety and Licensing Application, or eSLA, which allows customers to complete all applications, submissions, renewals, and payments related to credentials, permits, or plan reviews online. The first phase of eSLA was implemented in three launches, beginning with an initial launch in October of 2018, a second launch that occurred in June of 2019, and a third launch in July 2021.

Flex-time and Alternative Work Schedule

Section 230.215 Wis. Stats., allows for the development and creation of alternative work schedules (i.e., staggered hours, flextime, deviated workweeks) provided they meet the needs of state service. The Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) has in place an Alternative Work Schedule policy that was issued on February 1, 2016. The policy applies to all non-shift permanent, project, and probationary employees. It is intended to establish uniform procedures and standards for reviewing and approving alternative work schedules.

With the initial issuance of Governor Evers “Safer-at-Home” orders in March 2020, except for those employees considered “essential” to the continuance of office operations, all state employees were ordered to work 100% remotely. With the continued extension of the order, which lasted approximately 16 months, we found that work could be successfully performed from home for 90% of all positions.

As the world returned to some modicum of normalcy, it became clear that the way we have historically worked can and should include more flexibility.

After much reflection, DSPS Secretary Dawn Crim, along with other agency leadership, rolled out a new hybrid work schedule that allowed eligible employees to work remotely three days a week and in-office two.

2021–2023 Biennial Budget (2021 Wisconsin Act 58)

The Department of Safety and Professional Services and board operations are funded through application, renewal and examination fees, and fees associated with required reviews of building plans and other items regulated under the law. A fee schedule for the application and renewal of professional credentials is set by the department with legislative oversight. Examination and other department fees are set by statute and administrative rule.

The 2021–2023 budget contains funding for routine operations, ongoing improvements, and several projects that will benefit the people of Wisconsin.

The department is self-sustaining through the fees it generates and also directs some of its fee revenue annually to the general fund.

The 2021–2023 budget contains funding for routine operations, ongoing improvements, and several projects that will benefit the people of Wisconsin.

Highlights

eSLA: Continued support by both the governor and the Legislature for the Department of Safety and Professional Services' electronic Safety and Licensing Application (eSLA). eSLA will modernize the department's information technology system through legacy system replacement and upgrades.

Information Technology Enhancements: Support received to replace aging technology and replacement of call center software.

PDMP: The governor and Legislature provided \$250,000 in each year of the biennium to make technological changes to the prescription drug monitoring program.

Youth Volunteer Firefighting Training Grants: Provision of \$50,000 each year in one-time funding for the development and implementation of a youth volunteer firefighter training program.

Military Training for Civilian Careers: Provision of \$50,000 each year in one-time funding for developing a program by which military training and credentials may be creditable or transferrable to credentials for certain civilian jobs.

Program Goals and Objectives

Program 1: Professional Regulation and Administrative Services

Goal: The credentialing authorities will set appropriate eligibility, education, examination, and experience requirements, and make this information readily available to users of services.

Objective/Activity: Provide ongoing assessment, consultation, and assistance to the credentialing authorities to ensure there is transparency, consistency, and effectiveness in the eligibility process and continuing education process where applicable.

Objective/Activity: Promote the department's web site and electronic business services to focus the department's resources on priority needs and more direct consumer protection.

Objective/Activity: Represent Wisconsin's interests to national regulatory service agencies by participating in forums and conferences and responding to issue surveys.

Objective/Activity: Create valid and reliable jurisprudence examinations for new professions.

Objective/Activity: Evaluate, administer, and manage examination services from outside vendors and conduct on-site performance audits.

Goal: The credentialing authorities will set and maintain practice standards essential to provide safe and effective services for consumers while weighing the effectiveness and need for changes in the profession brought about by new technology.

Objective/Activity: Provide training to credentialing authorities relative to their role.

Objective/Activity: Ensure that regulatory information is accessible through the department's web site, press releases and other department communications.

Objective/Activity: Keep credentialing authorities informed of current developments, data, trends, legal opinions, and issues related to their responsibilities.

Goal: The credentialing authorities will appropriately resolve complaints and discipline credential holders who violate professional standards.

Objective/Activity: Provide and manage a confidential program for impaired professionals – Professional Assistance Procedure.

Objective/Activity: Conduct reviews to screen, investigate, and take legal action with respect to complaints to ensure compliance with policies of the credentialing authority.

Objective/Activity: Perform inspections and audits of business establishments and entities to ensure compliance with applicable laws and rules.

Program 2: Regulation of Industry, Safety and Buildings

Goal: The department will promote safety in amusement venues and swimming pools as well as constructed public and private buildings in Wisconsin.

Objective/Activity: Develop and implement regulations, and provide services (e.g., plan review and inspection) and education which promote the construction of pools, public and private buildings, and operation of amusement venues according to code.