



BUSINESS, CONSUMER SERVICES, AND HOUSING AGENCY • GOVERNOR EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
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DATE: October 24, 2016

TO: Board Members

  
FROM: Kameka Brown, PhD, MBA, NP  
Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Licensing Division Report – Update on Discontinuing Pocket Card License

## Introduction

Business and Professions Code, Division 2, Chapter 6.5, Section 2857, requires the Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians (Board) to issue a license designated as Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) license. The Board currently issues a plastic pocket/wallet license as proof of licensure to approximately 140,000 licensees (includes initial and renewal pocket/wallet licenses).

## Background

Paper pocket/wallet licenses were previously issued by the Board. These licenses at that time, were produced by the Department of Consumer Affairs, Office of Information Services. The Board received numerous complaints about the paper/wallet licenses, which resulted in replacing defective paper licenses due to the ink distorting the license after being placed in a plastic card holder when carried in a wallet. The paper/pocket license was also vulnerable to tampering issues, since the date of expiration or name could be changed and duplicated on the paper card license.

On July 1, 2000, the Board received budget authority to contract for credit-card style plastic pocket/wallet licenses. The intent of the plastic licenses was to provide enhanced security against forgery and eliminate problems of torn or damaged paper pocket licenses produced with substandard printing. Conversion to these new plastic card-type licenses began in mid-December 2000.

Beginning March 2009, the licenses were printed on white cards instead of the old blue card. The white cards include the Florence Nightingale lamp hologram on the vocational nurse (VN) cards as the new, updated, and more secure hologram. The hologram is unique to the profession of nursing for enhanced security. It is not possible to duplicate a hologram with a scanner or color photocopy machine, nor fabricate through standard printing processes. Employers have come to recognize these plastic card licenses as valid forms of identification for licensure and certification. The license cards include the licensee's name, license number, and a license expiration date. The cards do not have a photograph of the licensee.

**Contracted Vendor:**

Vendor	Term	Cost of License Per Card
SoftFile	September 15, 2-13 – September 14, 2016	\$0.45/card + \$0.48/postage

Expenditures: In fiscal year (FY) 2014/15, the Board spent a total amount of \$55,642 for both the VN and Psychiatric Technician (PT) programs, including postage; \$50,619 for VN license cards and \$5,023 for PT license cards.

In FY 2015/16, the Board spent a total amount of \$42,881.42 for both the VN and PT programs; \$39,092.56 for VN and \$3,788.86 for PT.

Number of License Cards Issued in FY 2014/15	
VN	PT
51,292	5,135

Additional Staff Handling Expenses: Of the total number of license cards issued, approximately 480 (425 VN and 55 PT) undeliverable license were destroyed in 2014. Approximately 140 cards were re-mailed back with valid addresses. Resulting in additional staff handling, letters, paper, envelopes, and postage for initial and renewal VN and PT lost license cards.

**Problem:**

The plastic pocket/wallet license cards issued indicates a license expiration date. The card carries an assumption that the holder's license status is current as indicated by the license expiration date on the card. In reality, the information on the cards is only as current as the date it was printed. It should not be considered proof of active licensure. License could be suspended, revoked or have other discipline imposed upon it that the license card does not reveal. There is an inherent problem with issuing a pocket license that has the potential to put the public at risk. National Boards are currently moving to on-line verification exclusively due to real-time updates.

**Solution:**

Discontinue issuing the plastic card-type pocket/wallet licenses and direct employers and licensees to rely upon the Board's on-line system, BreEZe, as the system for accurate real-time information.

Advantages to eliminating the issuance of pocket license cards:

- a) *Public Safety* - Compels employers to use the Board's on-line BreEZe system for accurate information and minimizes the possibility of fraud.
- b) *Cost Savings* – Using technology keeps costs down. Real savings on postage, paper, envelopes and staff handling that could be redirected toward other activities that protect the public.
- c) *Going Green* – Using less plastic and paper resources.
- d) *Lost or Stolen Licenses* – There is no longer the risk of losing a license due to theft, misplacement or accidental destruction, and identify theft is minimized.

Alternative Option: Issue a one-time pocket card license with the licensee name, license number, and original license issue date only. On the card, give directions to use BreEZe for license verification purposes as it should not be considered a proof of current licensure. No added value has been found with having a pocket license, other than the obtainment of an original license at some point, carrying the prestige of having a card, or, perhaps a consumer discount value.

***Conclusion:***

Public protection is the Board's highest priority in exercising its licensing, regulatory, and disciplinary functions for LVNs and PTs.

It is the responsibility of the employer to verify real-time status of an employee's license. It serves to protect the public and protects the employer from liability. It is also the licensee's responsibility to ensure that their license status is current. The employer, licensee, or anyone can verify real-time license status on-line using the BreEZe License Verification System or by calling the Board at (916) 263-7800. The BreEZe on-line system gives a snapshot of the license status and notes any disciplinary actions taken.

The Board will discontinue issuing pocket card licenses effective Fall 2016.