

Benefis Issues with State Board of Medicine Processing Time.

Since the installation of the new computer system at the Montana State Board of Medicine, Benefis has noted a marked increase in the time frame required for applicants to receive licensure. This is having a number of effects:

1. Like many hospitals in Montana, Benefis finds it necessary to occasionally utilize locum tenens to meet community medical needs due to specialty shortage, physician retirement or illness. In many specialties, there are very few locum tenens physicians that carry Montana licenses. When an acute need arises, it is very difficult to schedule the locum tenens within 4 months of their completed application being sent with the State Board as there are unpredictable delays in processing. This has resulted in occasional lack of specialty coverage.
2. The delays in license processing causes difficulties in establishing accurate start dates for newly recruited physicians to Benefis. In some cases providers have moved to the community only to have their start date delayed while waiting on licensing. Often, the Benefis medical staff office has completed processing the full application of a provider and has completed all of the necessary source verification months prior to the State Board acting on an applicant.
3. CMS and the private payers require a Montana license to be in place prior to them ~~payer~~ credentialing a provider. Depending on the carrier this credentialing often takes at least an additional 60 days. This means that the new physician to the community is unable to submit bills during that time period and while Medicare will allow back billing, the private insurers will not. This is accentuated by the delays in licensing results in provider obtaining a license too close to their anticipated start date and the resultant lack of payer credentialing causes the private practice provider or the employing institution financial difficulty. In some cases the provider is forced to seek temporary employment in the state in which they are already licensed.