

## MEDICAL BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE REPORT ISSUED: January 21, 2014  
ATTENTION: Committee Members  
SUBJECT: Proposal to Enter Social Media via Twitter  
STAFF CONTACT: Cassandra Hockenson, Public Affairs Manager

### REQUESTED ACTION:

Review the background, analysis, and plan and approve staff to move forward in beginning a Twitter account for the Medical Board of California (Board).

### BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS:

One of the key goals that the Board is continually striving to achieve is outreach, and the ability to get information out quickly and accurately. The Board reaches out to its stakeholders and consumers to educate and protect. Although the Board's website and email blasts reach many, social media is becoming more and more the way to "get the word out" and get the attention of stakeholders. According to the PEW Research Center, nearly one-in-ten adults get news through Twitter, and Twitter users stand out as more mobile and more educated.

### Why is Twitter a Good Idea for the Board?

- It is a way to get Board news out faster.
- It is a way to ensure media attention, since the majority of reporters follow Twitter because of its immediacy regarding information.
- It is a way to correct or ensure accurate information is being presented in "real time".
- It is an easy way to engage with stakeholders through conversation.
- The conversation is out there and it is better to know about it, so issues can be addressed instead of ignored as the issues will not go away.
- The algorithms for Twitter make it easier to track the data, followers, and messages.
- It is much less time consuming than many other social media sites, requires less maintenance and upkeep, as well as provides immediate outreach to stakeholders.

### Concerns

- Negative comments will be posted.
  1. Although this can happen, the benefits far outweigh the risks. Nothing angers stakeholders more than feeling ignored or not heard. Through Twitter the Board can respond and immediately reach stakeholders.
  2. The Federation of State Medical Boards and the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) both say this is a rare occurrence, even in re-tweets. See attached list (**Attachment A**) of boards/bureaus within DCA who currently have a Twitter account and use it regularly.

- Too many staff resources will be used.
  1. Sending out a Tweet (140 characters max) takes very little time. Determining what to Tweet is where most time is spent. However a protocol can be set up regarding who manages the tweets, and who is authorized to do them.
  2. *Buffer* is a fabulous tool that is free and can assist in managing Twitter accounts. Numerous posts can be written at one time, and the Board can choose which social profile will receive them. *Buffer* will spread the Tweets throughout the day or week so that one individual does not need to physically be at the computer, in order for the Board to have a social media presence. Since *Buffer* shortens links, it is able to provide more analytics than if the Board were to post Twitter directly. For example, *Buffer* can tell the Board exactly how many individuals clicked on each link.
- Who will the Board follow?
  1. The Board should follow other professional organizations, Legislature, all media outlets, and other stakeholders.
  2. The Board should follow others because that is the purpose of “reaching out”. The Board can delete Tweets and block individuals from its account since it has administrative control.
- Who is going to be in charge and responsible for determining the Tweets?
  1. No tweet will go out without Executive Director approval.
  2. The Office of Public Affairs will manage the Twitter account.
  3. The Public Affairs Manager and one staff member, Frank Miller, will be the only two authorized to Tweet.
  4. DCA has guidelines, but no concrete policy yet. However, the Board can follow the DCA guidelines (**Attachment B**).
  5. The Board can set-up an Editorial Calendar three months in advance listing meetings, Board events, *Newsletter* tips, etc. to help manage its social media platform.
- What will the Board Tweet about?
  1. It can be used to set the record straight regarding inaccurate media reports or information.
  2. Upcoming Board events/meetings will be Tweeted.
  3. Board disciplinary actions will be posted, such as Interim Suspension Orders, Penal Code section 23 restrictions, Other Suspensions, and Revocations/Probation.
  4. News Releases will be posted.
  5. Food and Drug Administration Recalls will be posted.
  6. Anything involving the Board that would be of interest to its stakeholders will be posted.
  7. Pictures of events (specifically outreach events and speaking engagements) will be posted to encourage others to contact the Board to request Board attendance at their meetings.
  8. The Board will also post any other Board announcements, as deemed appropriate.
- What is the cost?
  1. There is no cost regarding Twitter, with the exception of minimal staff time each day, as explained above.

**When Would The Board Start?**

The Board already has an account set up and authorized as “official” so it can activate the Twitter account at any time after Board approval. A proposed start date is Monday, April 7, 2014. Once staff begins using the account, they would review information at the end of each week with the Executive Director to determine if the purpose and intent of starting the account is being met and determine if the amount of staff time is manageable.