Fall 2026

KENTUCKY BOARD OF MEDICAL LICENSURE

Newsletter

HURSTBOURNE OFFICE PARK, 310 WHITTINGTON PARKWAY, SUITE 1B, LOUISVILLE, KY 40222

MICHAEL S. RODMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WILLIAM C. THORNBURY, JR., M.D.,PRESIDENT

BOARD ISSUES ADVISORY ON SAFE PRESCRIBING PRACTICES REGARDING GABAPENTIN

Background: In 2017, Gabapentin was reclassified as a Schedule V controlled substance. It was originally FDA approved for epilepsy and later for nerve pain related to shingles. The rise in Gabapentin prescribing has contributed to increased non-medical use due to its psychoactive effects, self-management of opioid withdrawal, and mental health conditions (Ellis et.al.,2022). An evaluation of Medicaid patients found that 95 percent of them received Gabapentin for off label uses not evaluated by the FDA.

This matter was recently reviewed by Kentucky's Controlled Substance Prescribing Council who noted the following:

- Gabapentin has been found in about 250 fatal drug overdoses in Kentucky.
- It is the 9th most frequently identified substance in toxicology reports.
- In Kentucky, prescription use has increased to 16 percent of all controlled substance prescriptions dispensed; the highest rates were among adults 55-64 years old.
- A recent study looking at nonmedical Gabapentin use among Rural Appalachian citizens who use drugs (Int J Drug Policy. 2025 Sep: 143:104904), indicated about 2/3 of the Gabapentin use came from unregulated sources.
- Nationally, Gabapentin was associated with up to 90 percent of opioid drug overdose deaths.

Advisory: The Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure and the Kentucky Controlled Substances Prescribing Council recognize that recent literature shows a national increase in Gabapentin prescribing and Kentucky's prescription data reflects this trend as well. With that in mind, the Board's licensees (physicians and physician assistants) are strongly encouraged to obtain education on the appropriate transition from short-acting to long-acting opioids for chronic pain conditions where opioid use is appropriately indicated for treatment.

Please note that physician assistants must comply with Kentucky statutes and regulations, and any facility or payer policies governing prescribing, including adherence to prescriptive authority limits, controlled-substance scheduling, and registration requirements.

Before prescribing Gabapentin, physicians and physician assistants should:

- Review the patient's Kentucky PDMP/KASPER; and document in the medical record the following:
- The clinical indication, noting off-label use when applicable,
- Risk/benefit discussion with the patient,
- The patient's informed consent, and the treatment and all monitoring plans.

Furthermore, the Board's licensees who prescribe controlled substances must follow the prescribing standards set forth in 201 KAR 9:260 and 201 KAR 9:270.

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Board Orders can be viewed under the Physician Profile/Verification of License link on the Board's website:

www.kbml.ky.gov

Board Action Report (actions taken since 07/01/2026)

- **Amadeo Lucas Abraham, M.D., Louisville, KY License #43520**
  Order Terminating Agreed Order issued 8/21/2026

- **Lee Barnwell, M.D., Richmond, KY License #58261**
  Order Terminating Agreed Order issued 8/24/2026

- **Nepthalie F. Catameo, M.D., Hazard, KY License #39109**
  Order Terminating Agreed Order issued 8/24/2026

- **Arvind C. Chakravarthy, M.D. Buford, GA License #C1738**
  Agreed Order entered into 7/16/2026

- **Jared C. Frattini, M.D., Paducah, KY License #60951**
  Agreed Order entered into 9/23/2026

- **Robert A. Hill, M.D., London, KY License #51101**
  Agreed Order entered into 8/03/2026

- **Alfredo Hurtado, M.D. Omaha, NE License #45569**
  Agreed Order entered into 7/06/2026

- **Shawnaree Lee D.O., Oklahoma City, OK License #C3517**
  Agreed Order of Surrender entered into 9/02/2026

- **Thomas F. Satterly, III, D.O., Martinsburg, West Virginia License #C3130 - 06457**
  Order Terminating Amended Agreed Order issued 8/06/2026

- **Whitney Shepard, M.D. Campbellsville, KY License #58480**
  Order Terminating Agreed Order issued 7/23/2026

- **Thamotharampillai Sivaraj, M.D., Miami Lakes, FL License #62632**
  Agreed Order of Fine issued 9/16/2026

- **Benjamin S. Smith, M.D. Westview, KY License #38740**
  Amended Agreed Order entered into 7/21/2026

- **Nova White, D.O. Lexington, KY License #05476**
  Agreed Order entered into 7/30/2026

Restrictions have also been placed on the following physicians' licenses pending resolution of charges brought against them.

- **John M. Busclas, M.D., Metropolis, IL License #59921**
  Complaint issued 8/21/2026 & Emergency Order of Suspension issued 8/06/2026

- **Jason S. Finkelstein, M.D., Fort Worth, TX License #C0662**
  Complaint & Emergency Order of Suspension issued 8/21/2026

- **Alireza Ghasemzadeh, M.D. Maysville, KY License #38551**
  Emergency Order of Suspension issued 7/31/2026

- **Michael B. Humble, M.D., Russellville, KY License #42900**
  Complaint & Emergency Order of Restriction issued 8/03/2026

- **Ikenna U. Onwumere, M.D., Bowling Green, KY License #43138**
  Complaint & Emergency Order of Suspension issued 8/21/2026

- **Paul S. Sarai, M.D., Newport Beach, CA License #40792**
  Emergency Order of Suspension issued 9/18/2026

- **Le Thu, M.D., Boston, MA License #39145**
  Complaint & Emergency Order of Suspension issued 8/21/2026

Board Election of Officers

During the proceedings of the Board's September 17, 2026, meeting, members of Board held its annual election for leadership for the upcoming year. As a result, the Board selected William C. Thornbury, M.D., of Glasgow, to serve as Board President. Waqar Saleem, M.D., of Louisville, was elected as Vice President and serves as Chair of the Board's Inquiry/Hearing Panel A. Dale Toney, M.D., of Lexington, was elected to serve as Secretary and will serve as the Chair of the Board's Inquiry/Hearing Panel B.

In addition to the election of officers, the Board noted the re-appointments of Dr. Thornbury, Aneeta Bhatia, M.D., of Louisville, and Tamella B. Cassis, M.D., of Louisville, made by Governor Andy Beshear.

Update on Implementation of SB 116

The Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure and the Physician Assistant Advisory Committee would like to provide all physician assistants and supervising physicians with an update on the implementation of SB 116, which went into effect back in July. The Physician Assistant Advisory Committee has completed its work on updating the supervising physician application and drafting the standardized supervision agreement. These documents were presented and approved by the Board on September 17th and can be found on the Board's website at the following link: Physician Assistant - Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure

In addition, the Physician Assistant Advisory Committee has also developed a FAQ page to assist physician assistants with some commonly asked questions on the recent changes and other topics as well. It can be found here: FAQ PA final.pdf

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to reach out to the Board's physician assistant coordinator, Andrea Brown, at (502) 764-2601 or by email andrea.brown@ky.gov.

KASPER Issues Announcement on Enhancement to System Security

The Commonwealth has introduced new security measures that require regular and ongoing account login activity. KASPER accounts will now be terminated after **15 months of inactivity** by the Master Account Holder.

To avoid any interruption with the new **Automated Provider Authorization** feature and updated **KYID security protocols**, please ensure that you:

- Log into your KASPER account at least once each year.
- Verify that your licensure information is current and accurate.
- Verify that your DEA credentials are current and accurate, including all active DEA registrations.
- Verify delegate information, edit as appropriate
- You can verify your account here: https://kyid.ky.gov

Account termination will impact integrated access to KASPER, and may affect compliance with KRS 218A, the Controlled Substance Act. An active account with the Kentucky All Schedule Prescription Electronic Reporting (KASPER) system, is required per KRS 218A.202 (3)(a).

Failure to maintain an active account within the allotted timeframe will result in account termination and a referral to the licensure board per KRS 218A.202 (3)(k).

Please access your account through https://kyid.ky.gov to ensure that your account remains current and active, and that you continue to meet these requirements.

If you have previously had a KASPER account, **please DO NOT submit a new account application.** Instead, contact the Helpdesk at (502) 564-2703 or ekasperhelp@ky.gov, to verify your existing account and reset your password, if needed.

Renewal of Physician Licenses for 2027

In late December, physicians holding an active license will receive a notice by mail with instructions to renew his or her license. Physicians holding a traditional license will be able to renew their license online at www.kbml.ky.gov. To complete the renewal, physicians will be required to verify and update their unique licensure information. The fee to renew online will be $150.00. Physicians who renew by paper will be assessed an additional $10.00 fee. Please note that physicians holding a compact license will be required to renew his or her license on the IMLCC site. Specific instructions for this process will be sent to compact licensed physicians in late December. The link to renew a license on the Board's website will not be available until the first week of January 2027. As a reminder, the Board no longer mails wallet cards upon completion of renewal. A license verification can be obtained online at no charge at www.kbml.ky.gov.

Reminder on Physician Self-Treatment or Treatment of Immediate Family Members

One of the common mistakes the members of the Board review on a regular basis center on its licensees and their self-treatment or treatment of immediate family members. Due to this fact, the Board would like to remind all physicians and physician assistants that according to the American Medical Association's Code of Medical Ethics, physicians generally should not treat themselves or members of their immediate families. Professional objectivity may be compromised when an immediate family member or the physician is a patient; the physician's personal feelings may unduly influence his/her medical judgment, interfering with the care provided. When treating them-selves or immediate family members, physicians may be inclined to treat problems that are beyond their expertise.

In emergency or isolated settings where there is no other qualified physician available, physicians should not hesitate to treat themselves or family members until another physician becomes available. However, it is important to note that it is not appropriate for physicians to write prescriptions for controlled substances for themselves or immediate family members.

Unfortunately, the Board has recently reviewed several cases involving allegations that physicians were self-prescribing a controlled substance, for themselves or an immediate family member, which resulted in disciplinary action. Physicians and physician assistants are strongly encouraged to become familiar with drugs that may be scheduled as controlled substances in Kentucky.

The Board routinely enforces principles of the AMA Code of Medical Ethics discouraging physicians and physician assistants from treating themselves or members of their "immediate family." The Board, at its June 2024 meeting, amended its definition to the following: "Immediate Family" is defined as "husband or wife; natural or adoptive parent; child, or sibling; stepparent, stepchild, stepbrother, or stepsister; father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law; grandparent or grandchild; spouse of a grandparent or grandchild; and any person residing in the same residence as the licensee."

Warning – Scammers are Still Attempting to Impersonate Board and Government Officials

Please be aware the Board is still receiving numerous reports of a widespread fraud scheme in which telephone scammers are impersonating Board representatives to extort money or steal personal information. Over the past few years, the Board has even noted the scammers are employing more sophisticated tactics and have spoofed the Board main phone number in attempt to convince their target that the call is legitimate and occasionally will send documents on fake KBML letterhead and forged signature of the Board's Executive Director.

Often, they will utilize an urgent and aggressive tone, refusing to speak or leave a message with anyone other than the physician and threaten some kind of Board action or action against the physician's DEA unless thousands of dollars are transferred or sent via untraceable gift card numbers or bitcoin. There have even been reports that these scammers are informing physicians that involving their attorneys will only make things worse, which certainly should raise a red flag.

Our office has also received reports that individuals are receiving phishing calls from the DEA "Inspections Department" regarding thousands of pills found in a rental car on the Texas border and the scammers claim they have a case and demand to speak with the medical professional about it. The DEA has advised that if you receive such a call, to not to call the number back or give them any information. If you receive one of these phone messages, you contact one of the DEA supervisor, Luis Altamirano at 859-621-7480.

With these reports in mind, the Board would like to remind you that our office does not operate in this manner and any correspondence from the Board would appear on formal Board letterhead or from an email address ending with ky.gov. For instance, our general email is kbml@ky.gov. It is important to note that physicians throughout the state have received these phone calls. While the appropriate authorities have been made aware of these fraudulent attempts, the Board encourages all its licensees to be on alert and are encouraged to contact our office at (502) 429-7150 in the event you want to verify official board communications.

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS NOTICE

All information provided below is used to update the licensee's profile on the Board's website www.kbml.ky.gov.

You may also change your address online by clicking here.

Date: _____

License Number: _____

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

_____

Practice Address: _____

_____

Practice County: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

*The Board does not publish your email address.