

Report on
Customer Service

June 2016

Texas Optometry Board

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Report on Customer Service

The Texas Optometry Board identified nine types of customers in the agency's strategies "Licensure And Enforcement" and "Peer Assistance," and surveyed the four categories listed below. The agency performed the 2016 customer service survey with these goals: the most important, to gauge current levels of customer service and to examine trends in customer service by comparing survey results obtained the previous ten years, and also to obtain customer survey information in most cost effective manner. Many of the constraints on the validity of prior survey results apply to the 2016 survey, but subject to these constraints, the steps taken to improve and maintain the agency's customer service may be evaluated.

Because of the sampling constraints, much of the survey data is not of sufficient validity to represent the entire population of each customer category. However, the data does report the opinions of those responding, and the surveys notified the customers that the agency is interested in their opinion. In addition, detailed comments were solicited and received from customers who would normally not have provided comments. Because of these comments, the agency is planning action in the following main area: improved posting of submitted continuing education hours.

Categories of Customers Surveyed

The following external customers were surveyed:

- Exam Applicants - optometrists who have applied to the agency for licensure and were licensed by the agency within the last year. Only a small number of applicants completed the survey (21 out of 175 responded).
- Complainants – persons, primarily patients of optometrists, who filed a written complaint with the agency in 2015 concerning care received at an optometrist's office. This category also includes some persons who are not patients (complaints regarding advertising violations, for example).
- Licensees - optometrists currently licensed by the agency.
- Users of the agency's website, including public and patients seeking information, licensees seeking information, and entities that request license verification information. Unfortunately none of these users submitted a survey posted on the website.

Categories of Customers Not Surveyed

The following external customers were not surveyed. Each category contains a very limited number of customers, and the agency focused limited resources on the customers above. However, some of the following customers will use the agency's Website and will have the opportunity to take the posted survey:

- other government agencies
- vendors
- list buyers
- associations and organizations
- patients of licensees that did not use website and did not file complaints

Information Gathering Methods

---Complainants

Fifty-three postcards were sent to persons randomly selected from those who had filed a complaint with the agency in 2015. The complainants were asked to complete eight survey

questions. Each question asked the respondent to answer “agree,” “disagree” or “not applicable.” Because of the small number of individuals in this category, anything less than a hundred percent return makes it difficult to project the survey results. The agency provided postage paid survey cards in order to receive as high a percentage of responses as possible, but only 15 surveys were returned (28 percent). The agency considers this to be a random sample but attaches a high error factor to a projection of the answers to the entire population of complainants because of the small response. Since the postcards were identical to those used in the past ten years, trends over a ten year period can be assessed (keeping in mind that the small number of responses in both surveys cannot be accurately projected to the customer category as a whole).

---License Applicants

License applicants surveyed in 2016 were sent an e-mail asking them to complete a survey on the agency’s website. Only 21 of 175 persons licensed in the past year responded to the survey. Additional responses would have been preferred, but this is similar to the response rate for licensees as a whole.

---Licensees

The agency first employed an e-mail survey of licensees (optometrists) in 2002 which was used between 2004 and 2010. For the 2012 and 2014 survey, an e-mail was sent to the e-mail addresses provided by licensees who renewed their license on-line. A similar approach was taken in 2016. Approximately 95 percent of licensees renewed on-line, so the sample is not representative of the entire licensee population. Even though the sample cannot be projected to all licensees with great confidence, the agency chose this method because of significant costs savings, the opportunity to publicize the availability of the agency’s website, and the opportunity to determine whether an e-mail notification system is viable at this time. The agency has 4,368 licensees.

Procedure

- An e-mail requested the licensee to go to an Internet address (a clickable link was provided) and take a survey (the survey form was not accessible to everyday users of the website). The form asked users to rate several agency activities on a score from 1 to 4. Users could also submit comments.
- Almost 4,000 e-mails sent
- A little over 400 (411) licensees completed the survey, more responses than 2014 but less than in 2012

---Users of agency Website Including License Verification Customers

The agency attempts to gather information from a survey that is available to all users of the website. Unfortunately none of these customers completed the survey in 2016. The agency is aware that the website is used to verify licenses, a service primarily performed by health insurance providers and companies contracting with insurance providers. Potential complainants frequently use the website before filing a complaint. The agency has not been successful in surveying these customers, in part because frequent users bookmark a page and spend as little time as possible accessing the information they need. In the past, a website survey had to be removed once it appeared that attempts were made to insert potentially malicious data. The replacement mail-in survey was not utilized.

Charts & Information Attached

- CHART 1: Survey of LICENSEES: Ratings of Website
- CHART 2: Survey of LICENSEES: Ratings of Agency Staff
- CHART 3: Survey of APPLICANTS: Ratings of Interaction with agency Staff
- CHART 4: Survey of COMPLAINANTS: Complaint Process
- CHART 5: Compact with Texas (from website)
- CHART 6: Survey of LICENSEES: Ratings of Customer Service Categories
- CHART 7: Survey of COMPLAINANTS: Ratings of Customer Service Categories
- CHART 8: Survey of LICENSEES: Reasons for Contacting agency

Cost Effectiveness

The e-mail surveys of licensees, applicants, and website users were very cost effective. The agency did not expend any printing, supplies or postage costs surveying these groups. The e-mail survey, once configured, required no further staff input other than moving data from one application to another (the survey responses were stored in a format that could be imported into a spreadsheet). Regular staff performed the setup and compiling. No supply or postage costs were expended.

The complainant survey was the least cost effective. This survey required postage and envelopes outgoing and prepaid postage on the postcard incoming to encourage returning of the survey. The agency will continue to evaluate more cost effective methods, as well as more thorough methods, to survey its customers.

As additional funds become available, the agency will be able to work with professionals on construction of survey questions and analysis of results.

Analysis

---2016 Results

Overall results in all categories were favorable to extremely favorable for each customer type and each customer service category, with the exception of complainants (see discussion below). The results were very similar to scores from prior surveys. The lowest scores in each category (least satisfied customers):

- **Licensees – lowest scores:**
 - All results averaged “3” or more based on the following scale: 4 = excellent; 3 = good; 2 = fair, 1 = poor.
 - The lowest satisfaction results:
 - Frequency of newsletter publication – average score of 3.31 (also a low score 2006 - 2012)
 - Website usefulness to inform licensees of most recent information – average score of 3.38
 - Automated telephone distribution system – average score of 3.21 (lowest score)
- **Complainants – lowest scores (few responses):**
 - Staff friendly and knowledgeable – 47 percent “agreed”
 - Complaint form sent quickly – 47 percent “agreed”
 - Overall satisfactory complaint filing experience – 47 percent “agreed”
- **Applicants – lowest scores (few responses):**

- Ratings are based on the average responses to the following scale: 4 = excellent; 3 = good; 2 = fair, 1 = poor.
- Telephone distribution system – average score of 2.82
- Time to find information on website – average score of 2.82
- Overall interaction with staff – average score of 2.74

• **Users of website:**

- No responses.

A complainant’s overall satisfaction with complaint process appears to be affected by the end result of the complaint process, which is a matter that must be decided on a legal basis and thus may not satisfy the needs of the complainant. For example, the answers to the overall satisfaction question do not appear to correlate to the questions regarding staff interaction, but instead appear to be based significantly on the complainant’s determination of whether the complaint decision was that requested by the complainant. This survey should be expanded to determine whether the final decision itself is driving the responses of the complainants.

Of course the process, other than being legally sufficient, should provide the complainant with an opportunity to provide information, and additionally give the complainant an explanation of the reasons for the agency’s decision. The agency, in response to earlier surveys, has added additional information in the closing letters to more fully explain the reasons that a complaint was closed. But the survey results appear to show, at least for the few complainants who responded, that complainants found that this area needed improvement.

Acknowledging the fact that not all complaint investigations will be resolved in a manner favorable to the complainant, the agency must continue to search for methods that allow the complainant to feel that their complaint was adequately investigated and that the public puts their trust in the complaint process.

---Overall Satisfaction Scores

Licensees expressing overall satisfaction w/ services received from staff.....	3.48*
Number of licenses selecting “poor” overall satisfaction w/ staff.....	12
(out of 411 responses)	
Exam applicants expressing overall satisfaction w/ staff	2.94*
Number of applicants selecting “poor” overall satisfaction w/ procedure	1
(out of 16 responses)	
Complainants expressing overall satisfaction w/ complaint process.....	47%

*Average score of respondents: 4 = excellent; 3 = good; 2 = fair; 1 = poor

---Examples of Responses Regarding Customer Service Standards

Licensees rating of phone service timely.....	3.47*
Licensees rating of e-mail service timely	3.48*
Licensees rating of publication of newsletter timely	3.53*
Licensees rating staff friendly	3.50*
Exam applicants rating that information was provided quickly by staff.....	3.29*
Complainants stating that complaint form was sent quickly.....	47%**

*Average score of respondents: 4 = excellent; 3 = good; 2 = fair; 1 = poor

**form is also on the agency’s website

---Comparison with Previous Years

----Licensees

Results were similar to the 2014 and earlier surveys. For customer service categories, there was a slight decrease in satisfaction with some of the categories.

-----Complainants

The 2016 results of the complainant survey had such a low number of respondents that results may not be dispositive. However, the overall satisfaction score is too low, and the agency will continue working to increase this score.

Category	2012*	2014*	2016*
Complaint process resolved in timely manner	73%	67%	53%
Reasons for agency's decision adequately explained	42%	44%	53%
Overall satisfactory complaint filing experience	58%	44%	47%

*percent responding "agree"

----Applicants

Only 21 license applicants responded to the 2016 survey. The results, compared to 2014, show a decreased satisfaction in some areas, with some increased satisfaction in other ratings. Some ratings were slightly below a good average score (4 = excellent; 3 = good; 2 = fair; 1 = poor). Four applicants left comments that could be used to examine the application process, which has strict statutory requirements.

Use of E-Mail as a Notification System

As in years past, the agency has used the survey process as a test for using e-mail as the prime notification method to contact licensees. Again, the survey has raised issues regarding this notification method:

- The agency has obtained almost 95 percent of the licensees' e-mail addresses. This means that 5 percent of e-mail addresses may not be available for communication with licensees.
- Fewer e-mail addresses this year were undeliverable than in past years.
- About ten percent of those sent an e-mail responded (slightly lower than 2014). This does not mean that only ten percent saw and/or read the notice (there are many reasons for not completing a survey). However, the figure does raise issues regarding the effectiveness of e-mail notifications
- Significant time and cost savings are available if the agency could use an e-mail notification system

The results from the survey are more support for an e-mail notification system than at any other time in the past. Although e-mail has its advantages, the proliferation of spam and other useless messages makes it difficult for important e-mails to stand out from the crowd, and recipients are becoming more suspect of the veracity of e-mail notices. However, the advantages are attractive, and the agency will continue to evaluate this method of communication.

Performance Measures

---Outcome Measures

- Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Expressing Overall Satisfaction with Services Received: Licensees: 56% excellent or good
- Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Identifying Ways to Improve Service Delivery: Licensees: 10%

---Output Measures

- Total Customers Surveyed: 447 submitted survey
- Total Customers Contacted (plus unknown number looking at website): 4,212

---Efficiency Measures

- Cost per Customer Surveyed: Applicants and Licenses: a few hours of staff time. Complainants: cost of envelopes, letters, postcards, postage, and return postcard postage

---Explanatory Measures

- Total Customers Identified: Nine Groups
- Total Customer Groups Inventoried: Four

Charts

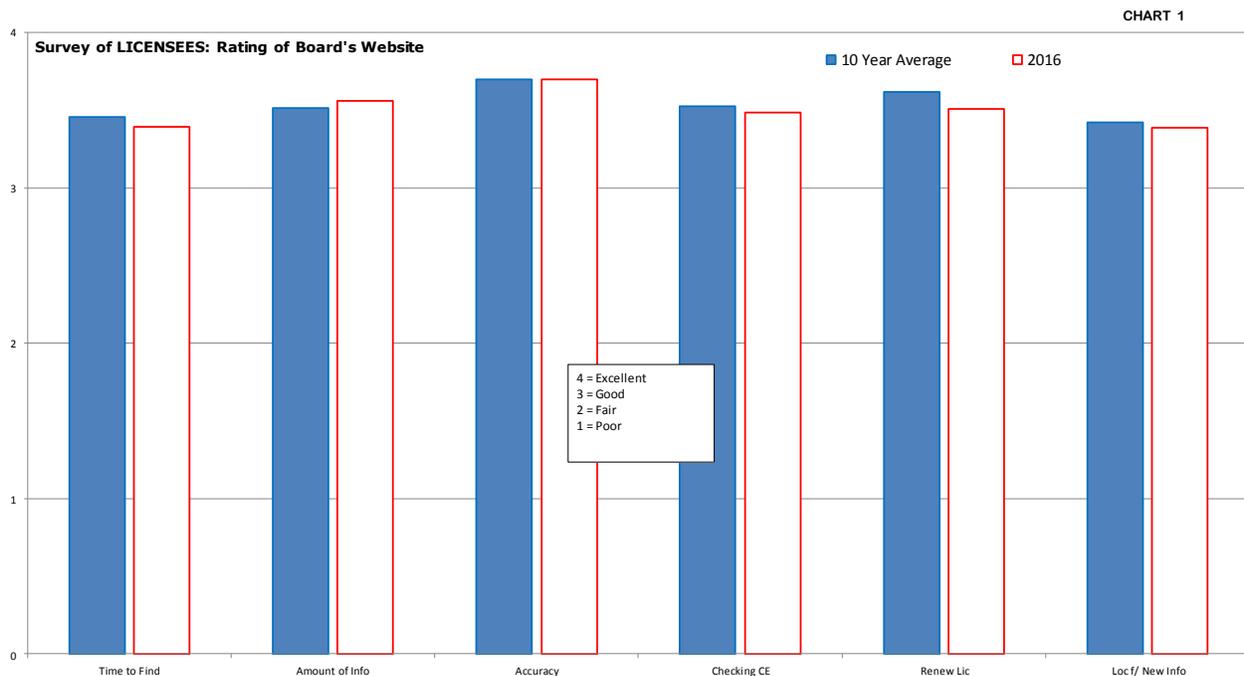


CHART 2

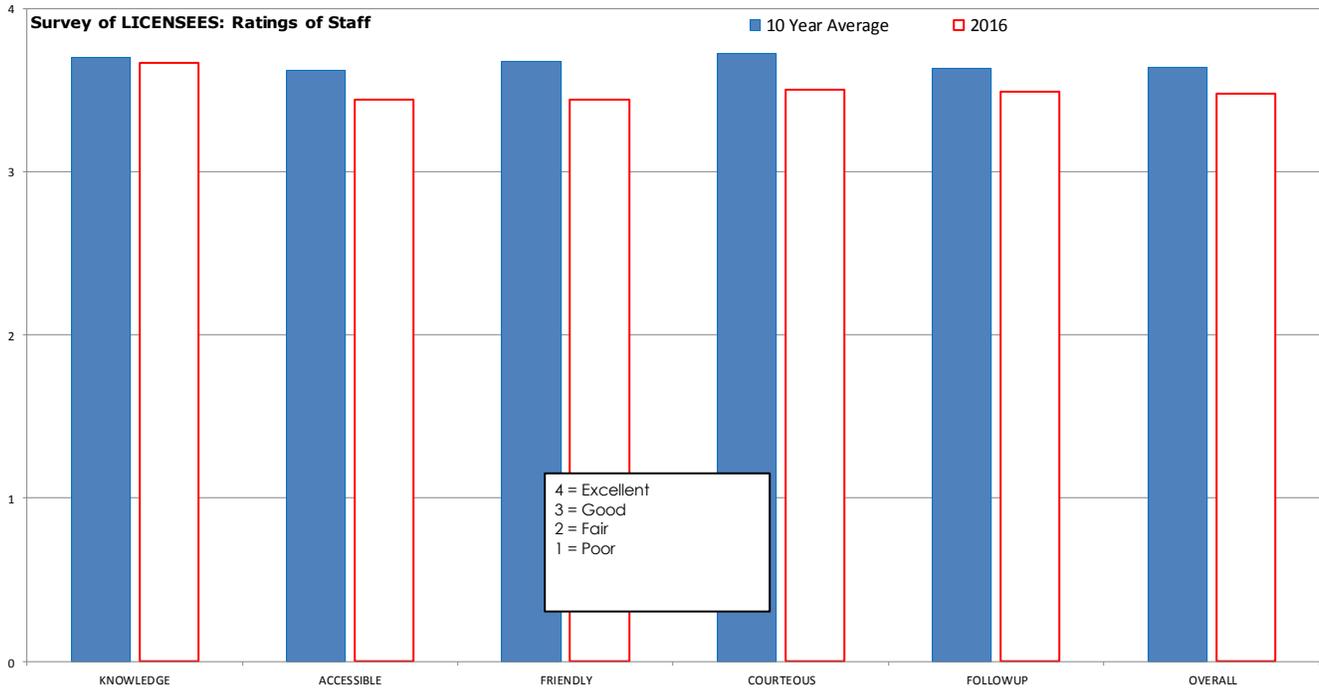
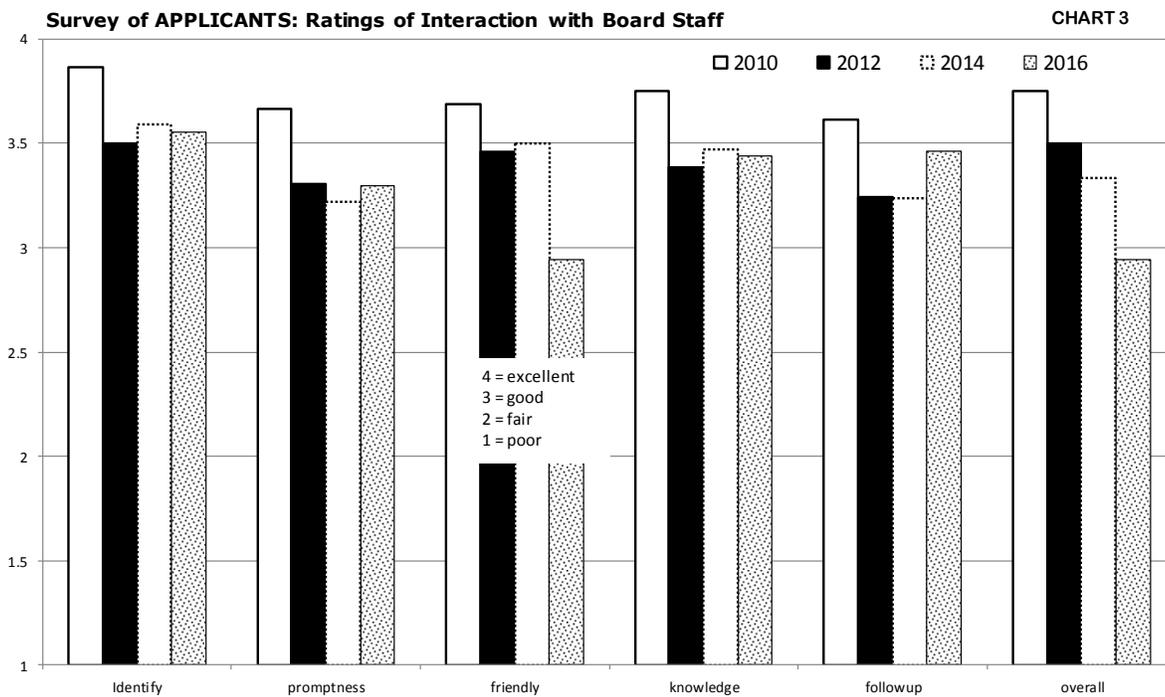
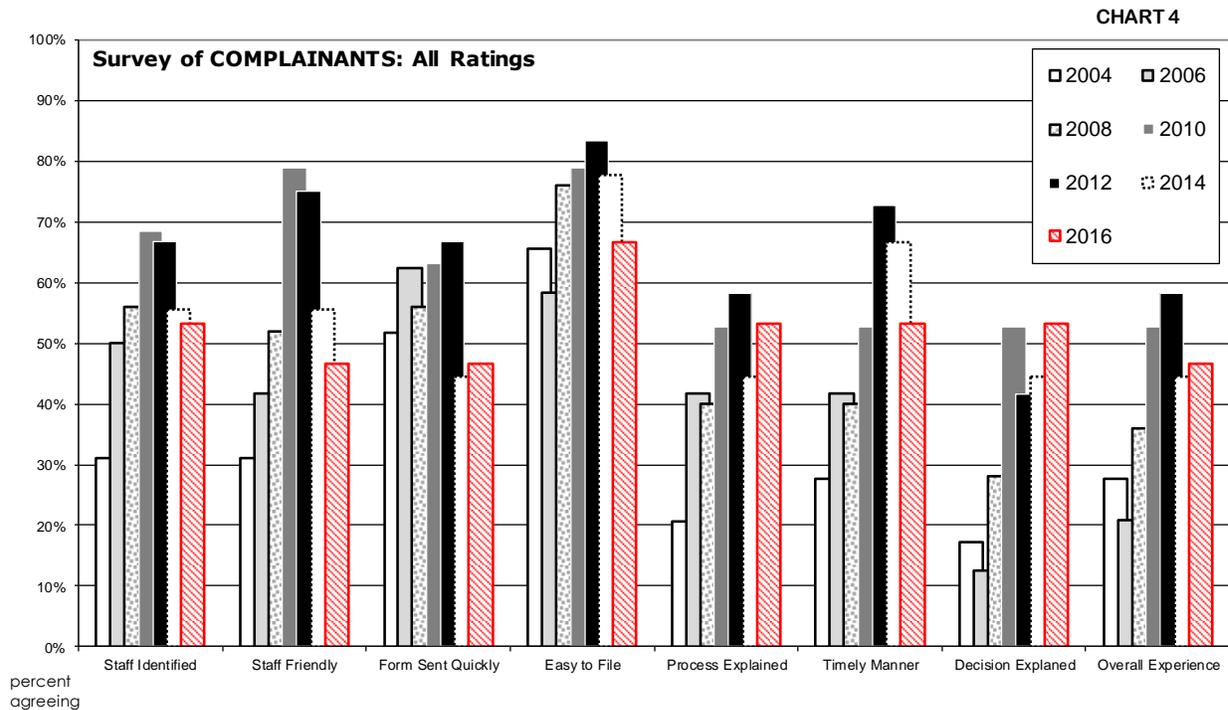


CHART 3





Compact with Texans

Chart 5

The Texas Optometry Board is a state regulatory agency, charged with implementing and administering the Texas Optometry Act (Chapter 351, Texas Occupations Code). The Act not only provides for the regulation of optometrists, but also contains provisions regarding ophthalmic dispensing.

Mission

The mission of the Texas Optometry Board is to promote, preserve, and protect the health, safety and economic welfare of the people of Texas through the regulation of the practice of optometry.

Services Provided By The Agency

- Review applications for licensure, administer licensure examinations, and subsequently license doctors of optometry
- Monitor continuing education of licensed doctors of optometry on an annual basis
- Monitor activities of licensed doctors of optometry for compliance with the Act, including disciplinary measures for violations of the Act
- Handle consumer complaints within the jurisdiction of the Act
- Provide information to the public including licensee verifications and general optometric information.

Service Principles Regarding License Holders

The licensing and license renewal functions are of paramount concern to the agency and the citizens of Texas. It is the goal of the agency to ensure that all legal requirements for licensure are met by each applicant and renewing license holders. The agency will continue to provide prompt and accurate responses to questions from applicants and license holders. The agency will also continue to conduct regular reviews of the application and renewal process to make it as easy and efficient as possible while maintaining a high level of accuracy regarding compliance with the Texas Optometry Act.

The agency works diligently to process all applications for licensure within 45 days of submission and to license individuals within two weeks following completion of all test requirements. For those individuals renewing a license, a renewal certificate is normally mailed within seven working days from receipt of the completed renewal form.

Complaints Concerning the Services of an Optometrist

Complaint forms are provided to consumers and patients upon request. The agency addresses each and every written complaint and notifies the complainant as the complaint process progresses. The average time for complaint resolution is 77 calendar days. Consumer information pamphlets detailing the process for filing a complaint are available to the general public and to the optometric offices. The agency also requires each optometric office to display a consumer complaint sign or pamphlet with the address and phone number of the Texas Optometry Board.

General Service Principles

- Conduct the activities of the Texas Optometry Board in a legal, open, professional, efficient, timely, and courteous manner
- Perform the mission of the agency with the best interests of Texas citizens and consumers in mind, including the efficient use of state financial resources
- Provide and maintain an internet site address that contains information regarding the agency and its activities, including the complaint process
- Respond to requests for written information within five working days
- Return telephone calls as soon as possible within one working day
- Provide and maintain publications and pamphlets on agency activities
- Maintain a well-trained, conscientious and courteous staff.

Accessibility

It is the goal of the agency to be not only accessible to the profession it licenses but to the general public via email, telephone, or written communication and to provide customer service in a friendly and useful manner. Foremost in its customer service is a complete and timely response to all questions and concerns about the Board and optometric practice and consumer interest questions. The Board encourages and welcomes suggestions, requests and feedback from all citizens. All communications and any concerns should be submitted in writing and the communications will be acknowledged within five working days.

Website

In addition to providing information by correspondence and telephone, the agency maintains a web page that contains information on how to file a complaint with the Texas Optometry Board as well as how to become licensed. Optometry Board Website. Or you may access the website through the Official State of Texas Site.

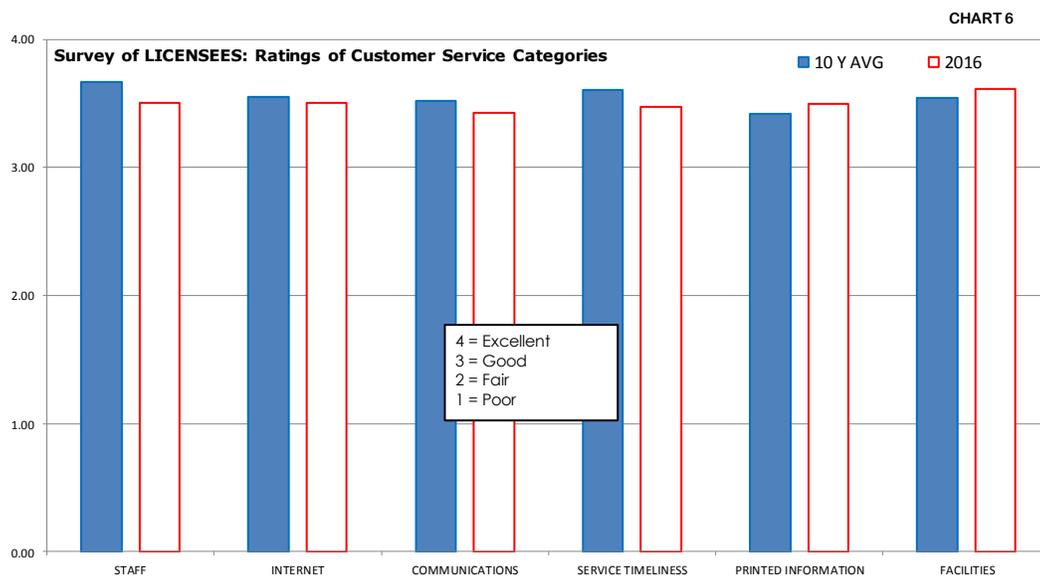


CHART 7

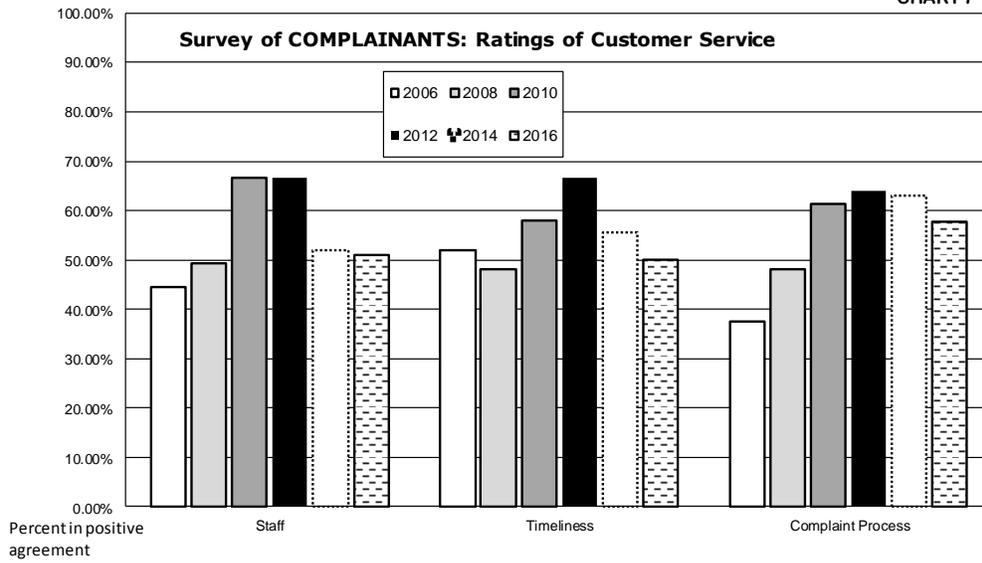
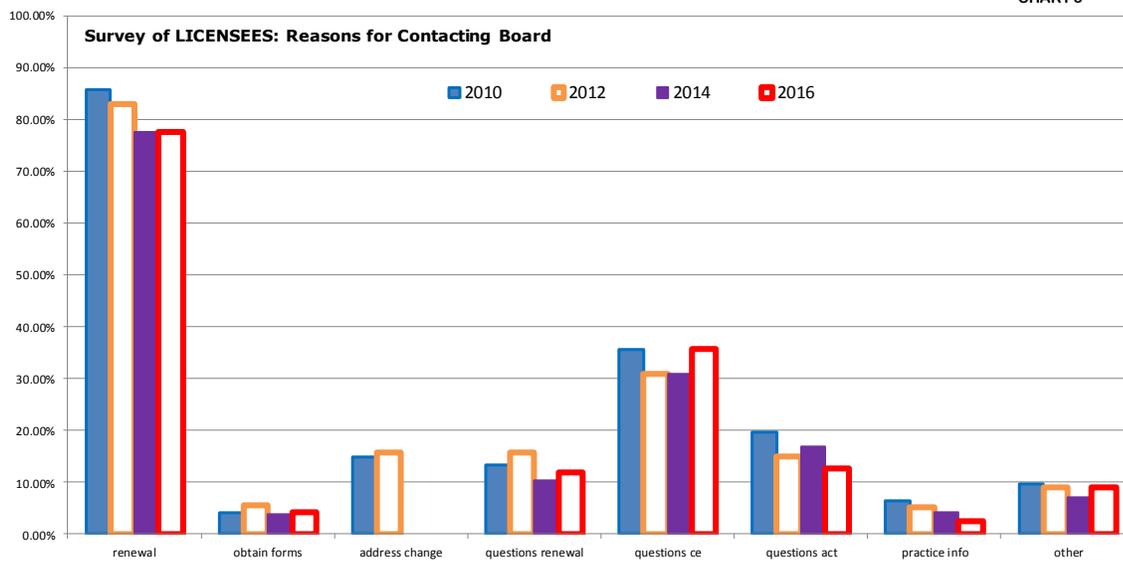


CHART 8



Customer Service Representative
 Chris Kloeris, Executive Director
 512-305-8500