

# Report on Customer Service 2020

Texas Optometry Board

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## Report on Customer Service

The Texas Optometry Board identified thirteen types of customers in the agency's strategies "Licensure And Enforcement" and "Peer Assistance," and surveyed the three categories listed below. The agency performed the 2020 customer service survey with these goals: the most important, to gauge current levels of customer service, and secondly to obtain customer survey information in the most cost effective manner.

In addition to survey questions, detailed comments were solicited and received from customers who would normally may not have provided comments. Because of these comments, the agency is planning action in the following main area: increased emphasis promoting newsletter and developing an efficient system to acknowledge email submissions.

### 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.
- Complainants – persons, primarily patients of optometrists, who filed a written complaint with the agency in 2019 or 2018 concerning an optometrist's office. This category may also include some persons who are not patients (complaints regarding advertising violations, for example).
- Licensees - optometrists currently licensed by the agency.

Not surveyed but previously surveyed: users of the agency's website who are not recent applicants, complainants or licensees due to very low responses to such surveys in the past. In 2018 only two users completed the survey posted for months on the website. 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, or simply do not participate in a survey.

### Categories of Customers Not Surveyed

Some external customers were not surveyed. Each category of the following contains a very small number of customers: other government agencies, vendors, list buyers, schools of optometry, optometry boards of other states, continuing education providers, and associations and organizations. Other categories not surveyed contain customers the agency is not able to identify: public who view the website or contact the agency for information via telephone or e-mail. These individuals are either not identified or their identity is not maintained, and therefore cannot be surveyed.

## Information Gathering Methods

### ---Unique Survey Period

All surveys were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, licensees were advised to postpone regular eye examinations. Thus many offices were operating at a very reduced capacity, possibly giving licensees and recent applicants more time to answer a survey from the agency.

### ---Complainants

Sixty postcards were sent to persons who had filed a complaint investigated by the agency in 2018 or 2019. The complainants were asked to complete eight survey questions. 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 for the postcards in order to receive as high a percentage of responses as possible, but only 20 surveys were returned (33 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.

### ---License Applicants

Recent license applicants were sent an e-mail asking them to complete a survey through Survey Monkey. Forty-six of 200 persons licensed in the past year responded to the survey. The number of responses is much larger than the response rate in 2018.

### ---Licensees

The agency first employed an e-mail survey of licensees (optometrists) in 2002. Previously an e-mail was sent to the e-mail addresses provided by licensees who renewed their license on-line. Two years ago SurveyMonkey was used as the platform for the survey. A similar approach was taken in 2020. Approximately 95 percent of licensees renewed on-line, so the sample is not representative of the entire licensee population. The agency chose this method because of significant costs savings and the opportunity to determine whether an e-mail notification system is viable at this time. The agency licenses approximately 4,800 optometrists.

#### Procedure

- Licensees received an e-mail requesting the licensee to go to the Internet address for SurveyMonkey to take a survey designed by the agency (a clickable link was provided). Survey takers could also submit comments.
- Survey Monkey sent e-mails to 4,586 licensees
- 1,092 licensees completed the survey, a significant increase over the 644 who completed the survey in 2018 (see “Unique Survey Period” above).

### ---Users of Agency Website Including License Verification Customers

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 but may not file 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.

## 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 Agency Staff
- CHART 4: Survey of COMPLAINANTS: Complete Survey
- CHART 5: Compact with Texas (from website)
- CHART 6: Survey of APPLICANTS: Ratings of Agency Website
- CHART 7: Survey of LICENSEES: Ratings of Agency Newsletter
- CHART 8: Survey of LICENSEES: Reasons for Contacting agency

## Cost Effectiveness

The e-mail surveys of licensees and applicants 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. The surveys were completed using a one month \$99 subscription to SurveyMonkey (plus \$20 in overage fees).

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

### --Results

Overall results in almost all categories showed a majority of survey takers were either "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" in each customer service category, with the exception of complainants (see discussion below).

Exceptions to a majority of "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" scores:

- **Licensees:**
  - "How satisfied are you with the agency's office building?" Forty percent answered "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" (Only 3 percent rated the building "Unsatisfied" or "Very Unsatisfied). The majority of the responses were "Not Applicable" and "Neutral)."
- **Complainants – lowest scores** (few responses, percentage of those with opinion):
  - Staff members were friendly, knowledgeable, and courteous – almost 60 percent answered "Very Unsatisfied" or "Unsatisfied"
- **Applicants:**
  - "How satisfied are you with the automated telephone distribution system and voice mail?" 36.59 percent rated this survey question "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" (29.27 percent were "Neutral")
  - "How satisfied are you with the promptness of providing information by staff?" 45.00 percent rated this survey question "Unsatisfied" or "Very Unsatisfied" (27.50 percent were "Neutral")

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, those providing a “Very Unsatisfied” or “Unsatisfied” answer to the overall satisfaction question, for the most part, provided the very same answer to every question. Thus the answers appear to be based on whether the agency’s decision regarding the validity of the complaint was the decision sought 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. The survey results appear to show more satisfaction in this area than 2018.

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: Overall impression of Board staff

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 75% | Neutral: 19% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 6%

Applicants: Overall impression of Board staff

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 56% | Neutral: 12% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 32%

Applicants: Overall experience of applying for license:

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 54% | Neutral: 22% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 24%

Complainants: Over-all experience of filing a complaint

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 32% | Neutral: 21% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 47%

--Examples of Responses Regarding Customer Service Standards\*

Licensees: Accessibility of the Board’s Office (62% Not Applicable):

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 53% | Neutral: 39% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 8%

Licensees: Knowledge of agency staff:

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 77% | Neutral: 20% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 4%

Licensees: Ease of contacting agency:

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 75% | Neutral: 15% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 10%

Applicants: Whether staff identified themselves when answering the telephone?

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 56% | Neutral: 26% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 18%

Applicants: Licensing exam schedule

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 64% | Neutral: 14% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 23%

Licensees: Time needed to locate information on website (very satisfied rating means information could be found quickly)

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 80% | Neutral: 13% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 7%

Licensees: Timeliness of the Newsletter, including information regarding new and amended rules?

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 79% | Neutral: 18% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 3%

Complainants: Easy to contact the Board and file a complaint

Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 58% | Neutral: 16% | Unsatisfied/Very Unsatisfied: 26%

\*percentages of survey takers responding other than “Not Applicable”

## 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.
- While it is not possible to determine how many licensees read the e-mails, the unique circumstances of this survey show that there is at least a significant increase in the response rate if licensees are less professionally occupied than normal.
- The agency has been using e-mails to notify licensees regarding information on the COVID-19 situation.
- 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.

## Other Information Obtained

The survey of licensees also obtained information on the number of times licensees had contacted the agency, the method(s) used to contact the agency, and the reason(s) for contacting the agency. Survey takers could also leave comments which have been provided to the Board Members. The survey of applicants obtained information on the procedure of taking the Jurisprudence Examination. Applicants could also submit comments.

## Performance Measures

### ---Outcome Measures

- Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Expressing Overall Satisfaction with Total Services Received: 76 percent

### ---Output Measures

- Total Customers Surveyed: 4,846
- Response Rate: 24 percent
- Total Customers Served by Agency: 5,500

### ---Efficiency Measures

- Cost per Customer Surveyed: \$0.04

### ---Explanatory Measures

- Total Customers Identified: 5,503
- Total Customer Groups Inventoried: 13

Chart 1

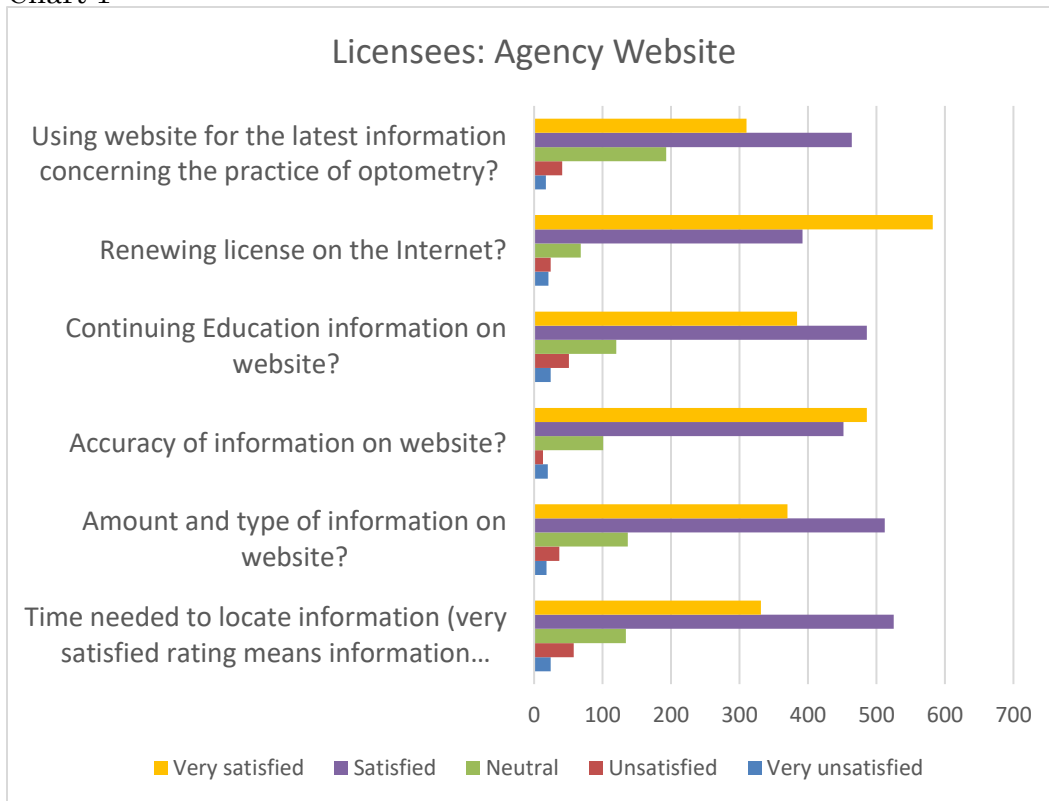


Chart 2

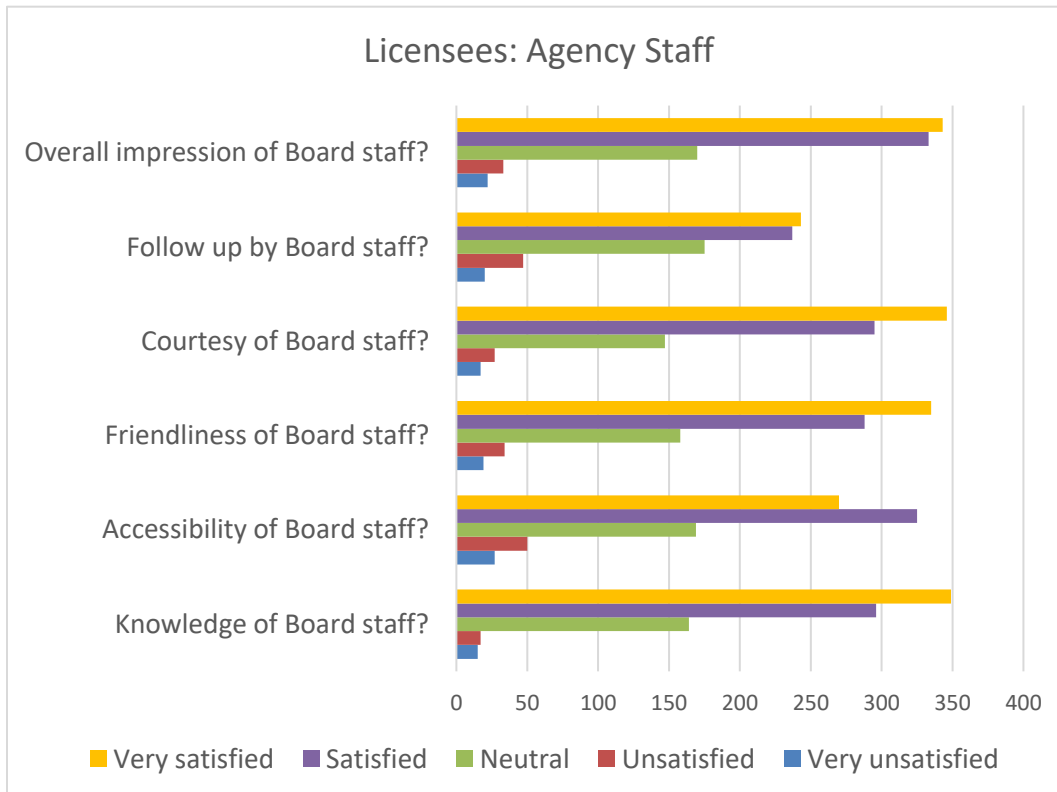




Chart 3

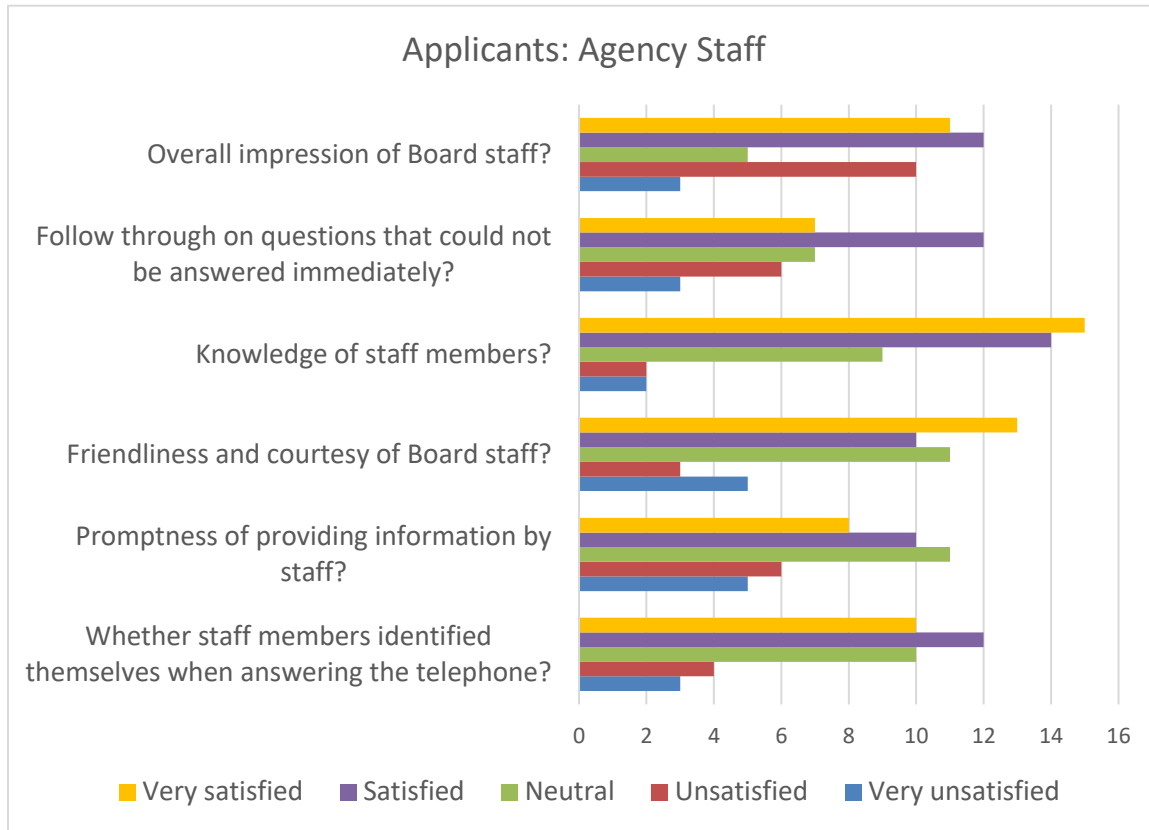
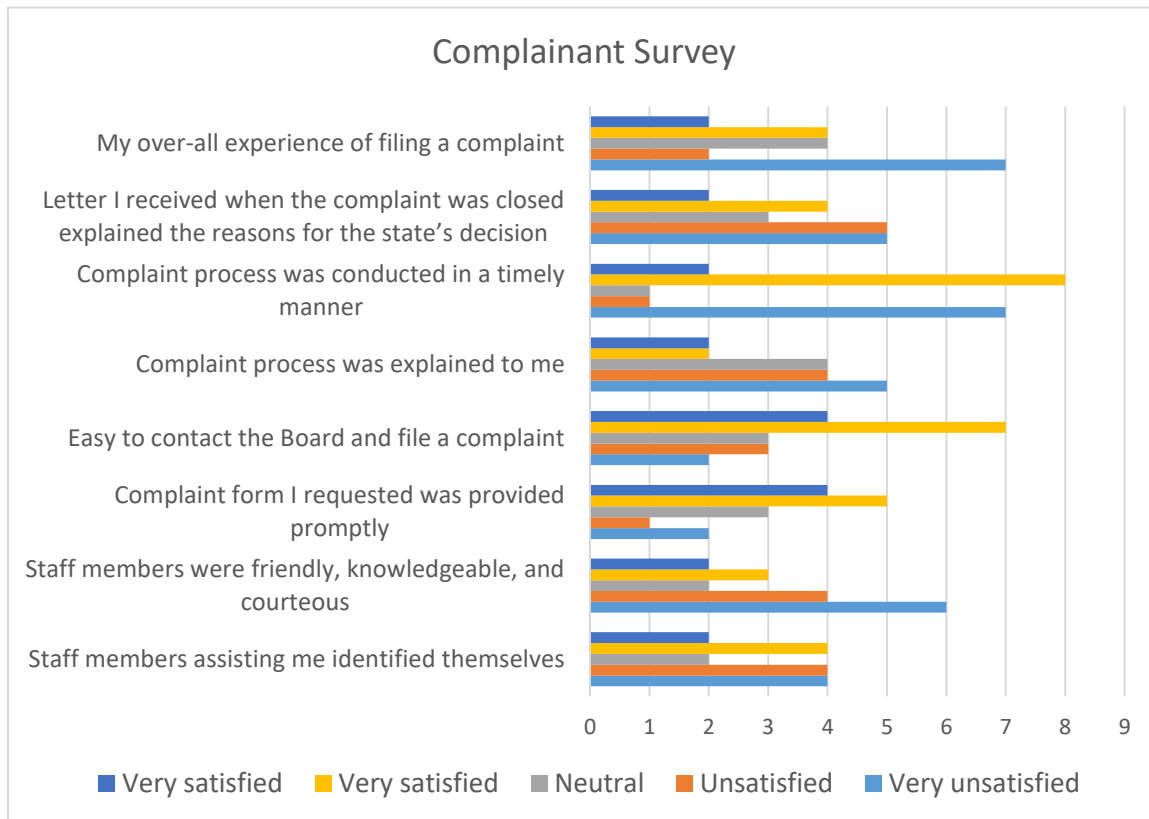


Chart 4



## Chart 5

### Compact with Texans

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 6

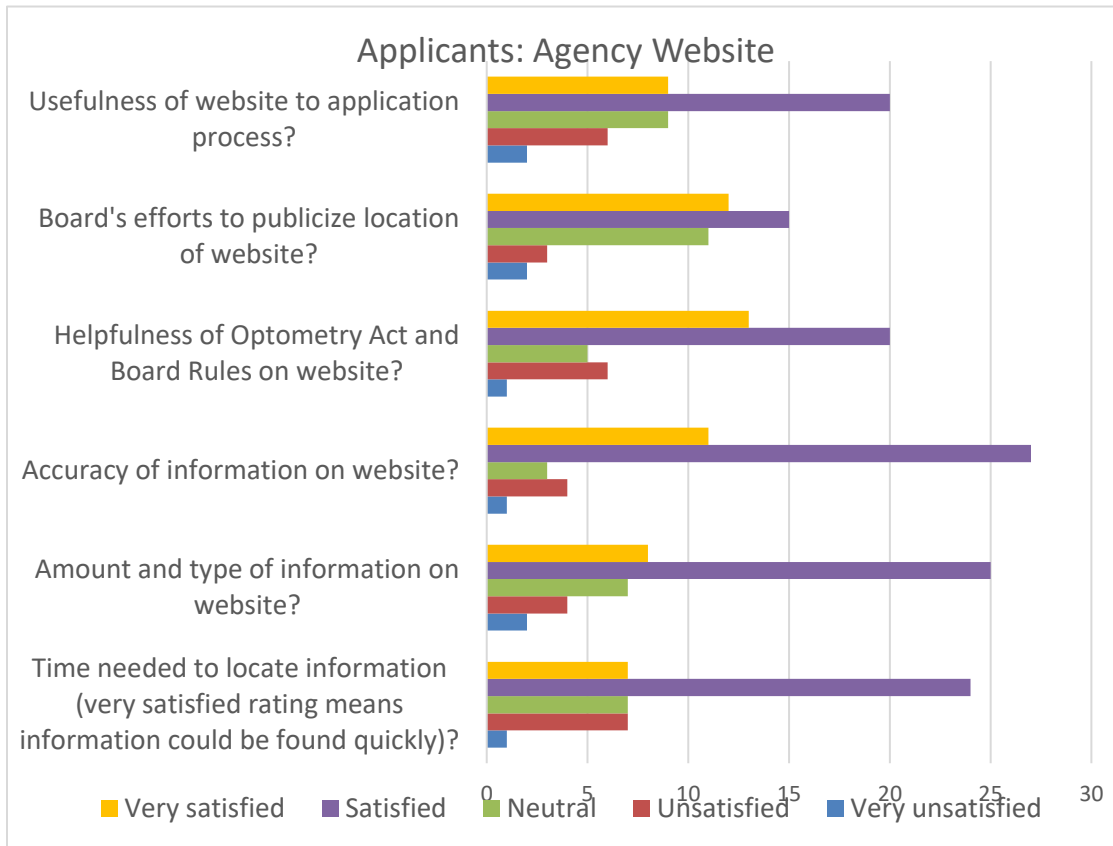


Chart 7

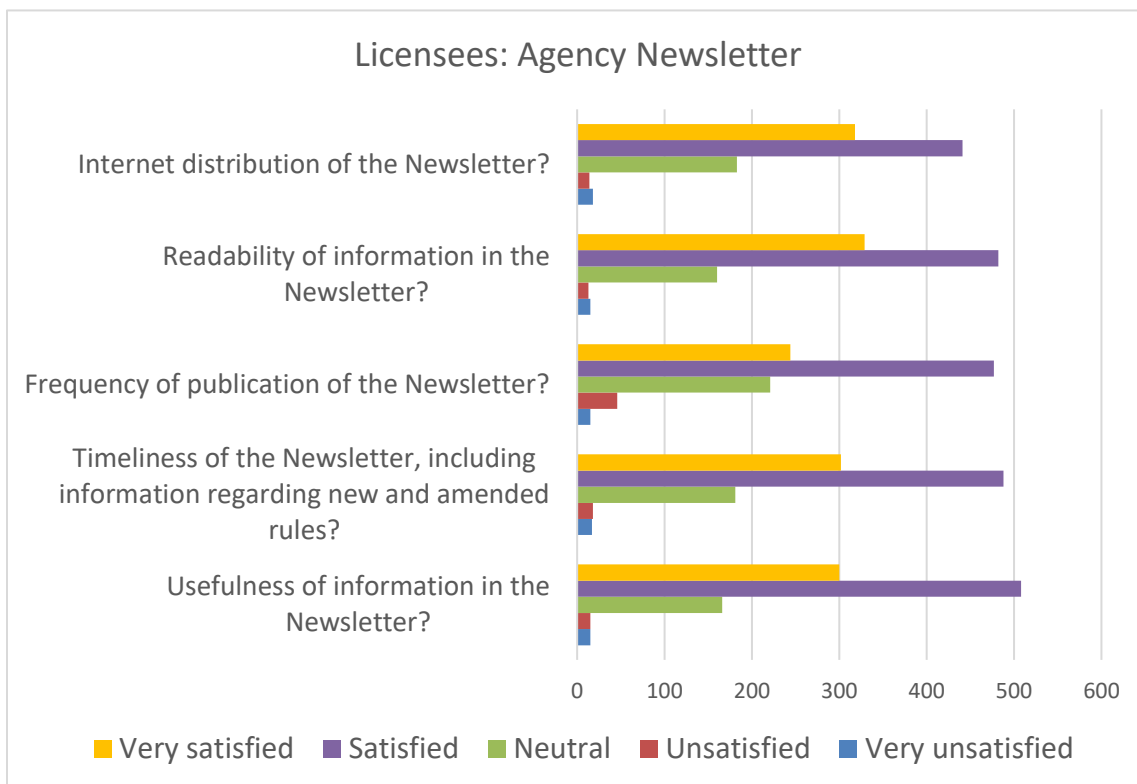
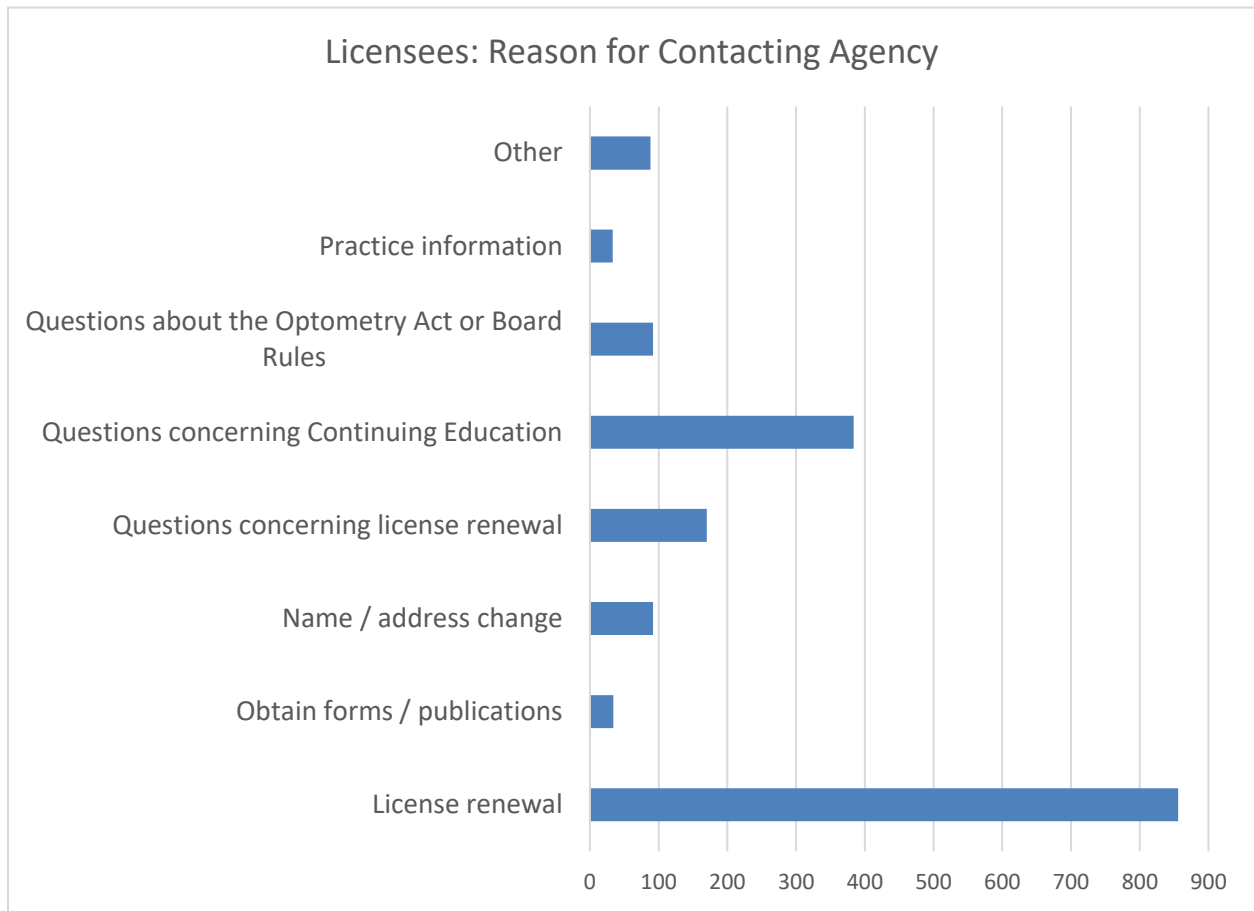


Chart 8



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