

# **NCDPI Licensure Review**

## Final Report

2017

# Purpose

Over the last few years, educators and their employers in North Carolina have raised concerns about how long it takes to issue a teaching license, citing wait time of 6 months and longer.

To begin addressing this issue, NCDPI contracted with TNTP to review its licensure process and identify opportunities for implementing current licensure law more efficiently and with greater customer satisfaction.



The licensure review gathered evidence from educators, districts, charters, and NCDPI staff and reviewed operational data related to the online system and call line.

## Data Sources

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- Survey responses from 736 educators
  - Analysis of application processing
  - Review of call log and call line data
  - Review of NCDPI licensure website
  - Interviews with 14 LEA licensure staff
  - Interviews with all Regional Alternative Licensing Centers
  - Interviews and survey of NCDPI licensure team
  - Interviews with several additional NCDPI and State Board staff
  - Interviews with leaders from several other state licensure offices
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## Highlights

- There are many positive comments about the online application system from LEAs and educators.
- There is an intentional approach to routing and processing applications.
- There are strong peer supports among the licensure team.
- Many licensure team members have deep expertise.
- Processing times during a slow season mostly met the stated 8-week processing time.

## Challenges

- There is confusion among LEA staff, educators, and licensure staff about how to implement licensure policy.
- Available reference information does not adequately prepare people to apply for and support licensure.
- Technical challenges and weak reporting capabilities of the online application system lead to inefficiency and frustration.
- NCDPI messaging around licensure policy changes quickly, often without enough communication.
- There is limited NCDPI licensure staff development and team building happening.



# We are recommending that NCDPI make improvements in four (4) areas.

## Policy development

Implement a consistent process whereby the licensure section anticipates opportunities to make state board licensure policy clearer and more useful.

## Communications with the Field

Improve online content and routinely keep customers informed of licensure status and updates.

## NCDPI Licensure Team Culture & Structure

Build and maintain a supportive and performance-oriented team culture, and ensure enough leadership time is allocated to policy, communications, and training.

## Technology and Reporting

Resolve glitches with the online system and build reporting functionality for LEAs and the licensure team.



# Recommendations for Communication with the Field

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- Develop and distribute messaging summarizing findings from the Licensure Review and communicating improvements NCDPI is making.
  - Make sure the same expected processing time of 6-8 weeks is communicated in all licensure communication channels. The team should aspire to achieve 4 week processing times in the fall and winter.
  - Update the automated confirmation email that licensure applicants receive after submitting an application. The email should include expected processing times and have a link to a website that lists documentation that is required for their specific application type. Documentation reminders are most critical for out-of-state, add experience, and add new area applications.
  - Begin providing monthly licensure updates to all individuals responsible for implementing licensure policy, including LEA licensure staff, the NCDPI licensure team, and Institutes of Higher Education. The updates should include standard departmental responses to emerging questions about licensure policy.
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# Recommendations for Communication with the Field

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- Update website content to ensure users can intuitively find answers to frequent questions, and field test content with educators and LEAs before going live.
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- With feedback from an advisory committee of LEA licensure staff, develop and maintain a separate online portal for LEA HR staff to access more in-depth resources for doing their work effectively. Leverage existing resources developed by the field (e.g. RESA), and explore the possibility of RALC directors helping to keep information current.
  - Organize a series of trainings and updates to the field to ensure understanding of policy as the high-volume season begins.
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# Polling Question #1

When you think about your challenges around licensing, recruiting, and retaining educators, what are your top two pain points or challenges?



# Recommendations for Technology and Reporting

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- Make sure duplicate accounts with the same social security number are not permitted on the online system, and ensure all log-in and data flow issues associated with this issue are resolved.
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- Improve reporting in the online system so that LEAs can easily see and export Excel files with the application status for all of their employees and affiliated applicants.
- Assess risks and benefits of shifting to a new platform that has the desired reporting and data integration capabilities, noting that the online system has favorable feedback from the field and shifting the platform may be highly disruptive.
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# More Specific Technology Recommendations

- Use Case – Only allow one online account per educator/license
- Recommendation – Restrict online user registration to a single SSN. If the SSN already exists in the system then the user should not be allowed to create another online account.
- Use Case – An educator with or without a license should be able to request to be affiliated with an LEA, a Charter, an RALC or an IHE
- Recommendation – After educator creates an online account they should be able to open a new transaction type (Request Affiliation). Those transactions should then route to the LEA, Charter, RALC and/or IHE for approval.

# More Specific Technology Recommendations

- Use Case – LEAs want to be able to see the ETS and Pearson test data that is electronically sent to DPI.
- Recommendation – Add Test Data field(s) to the Educator Details in VO. This would include the test numbers, dates, and scores (?).
- Use Case – The LEAs need to be able to see and report on the status changes in the history data. Add fields to capture the following: App Creation Date, Submitted to DPI Date, Close Date (Approved, Denied, Withdrawn, Cancelled). The LEAs want to see the date when the disposition changes to Pending DPI Review. LEAs need to see all disposition change dates.
- Recommendation – Include the status change dates in the Real-time view of Application History of VO (Add date of Pending DPI status to what is already there.)

# More Specific Technology Recommendations

- Use Case – The educators want to receive an email upon submission to DPI to provide the expected processing time.
- Recommendation – Create real-time reporting that does projections and forecasts based on real-time conditions. Create algorithms similar to Expected Wait Times used in traditional queuing environments.
- Use Case – Create reporting in the online system (VO) so that LEAs can easily see and export excel files with the application status for all of there educators that are affiliated with them.
- Recommendation – Vendor to provide reporting options

# More Specific Technology Recommendations

- Use Case – Provide reporting capability that is easily accessible to LEAs and internal DPI Licensure Staff, that does not cause performance degradation the the VR and/or VO prod environments.
- Recommendation – Set up replicated database environment for reporting that includes open source APIs

## Polling Question #2

In addition to the Licensure system enhancements that you're seeing or we have discussed today, what else would you like to see regarding changes to the online licensure system?

# Meeting early targets will build momentum and increase chances for improvement. We suggest the following, immediate next steps to determine next steps.

- ☐ Review the recommendations and determine which ones NCDPI will commit to with a timeline
- ☐ Set up meetings and prepare to communicate findings and next steps to licensure leadership and the whole licensure team
- ☐ Identify owners within licensure and set goals to project manage toward objectives for the recommended areas
- ☐ Find additional capacity and support needed for implementation
- ☐ Connect with NCDPI Communications to create plan for updating website content and other recommendations related to communication



## Polling Questions #3

Recent feedback indicates that administering and monitoring the current testing requirement (Attempt in the first year of teaching, and pass in the second year of teaching) is a large challenge for employing school systems.

Is the concern with the LEA on this or is this a concern for the educators?

Is the concern that the teachers are having trouble passing in 2 years, or is it that LEAs are having to track this on a different schedule than the actual license?

If the educators are having trouble passing it within 2 years, what is the problem and what can be done in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year that helps them pass it then, that couldn't be done to help them pass it in 2 years?





# Additional Questions



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