



# **Advancing Dental Team Wellbeing**

## **Lessons from Alabama**

Presentation to the National Council of Dentist Health Programs-  
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# Disclaimer

I served on the Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama 2020-2025. I just rotated off the Board of Dental Examiners on October 10, 2025. I am Past President of the Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama.

- My presentation is based on my personal experiences in organized dentistry and as board member of the Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama. The presentation represents my views and not those of the Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama. The presentation is not and should not be considered a formal Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama Opinion or Ruling. Please consult the Board at [www.dentalboard.org](http://www.dentalboard.org) for any information needed.



## Dr. Melodie A. Jones

- Past President, Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama
- President-Elect, UAB School of Dentistry Alumni Association
- Board Member, ADEX (American Board of Dental Examiners) Board of Directors
- Vice Chair, Oral Health Coalition of Alabama
- President, Alabama Academy of General Dentistry
- Past Chair, ADPH (Alabama Department of Public Health) Dental Council
- Past Member, State Committee of Public Health in Alabama





# Advancing Practitioner Wellbeing

Learning Objectives -

- **Licensure Question Reform**
- **National Wellbeing Leadership**
- **Dissemination of Wellness Resources**





# The Problem

- Stigmatizing mental health questions in licensure applications
- Created barriers to seeking care
- Fear of professional consequences
- Contributed to underreporting and untreated burnout



# Licensure Reform

## Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama

- Led reform efforts with the Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama
- Removed/revised stigmatizing mental health questions
- Shifted focus on current impairment only
- Aligned with national best practices



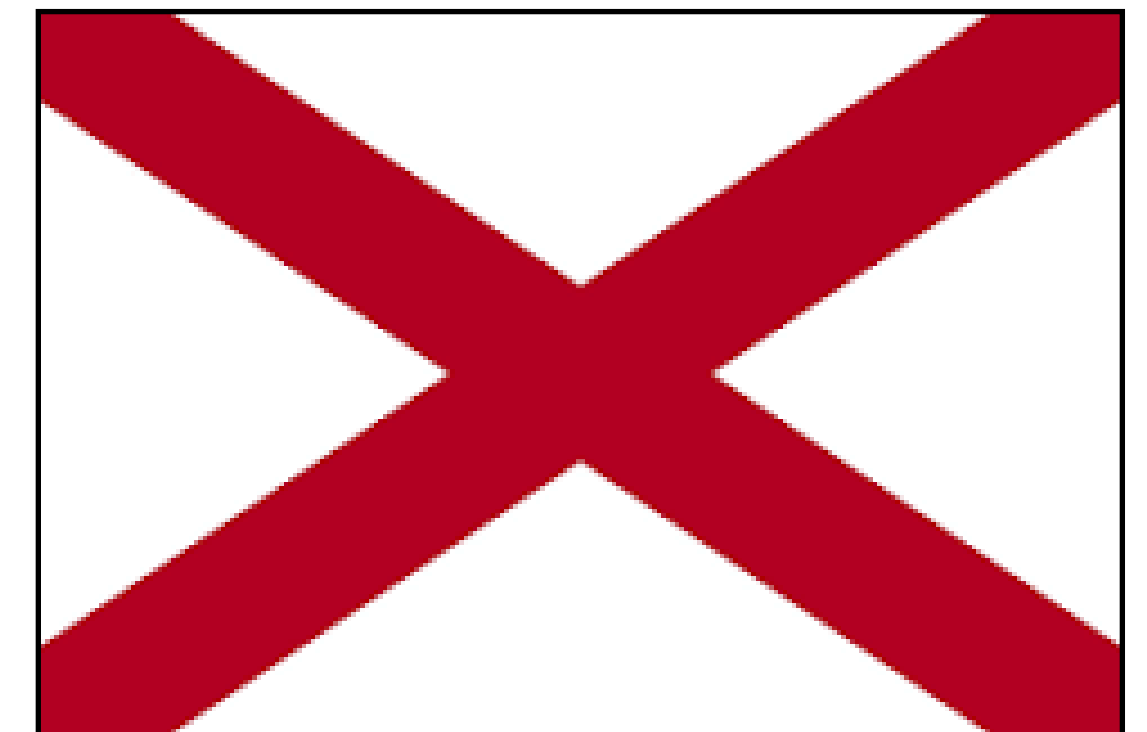
Alabama



# Impact of Reform

## Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama

- Reduced stigma in regulatory language
- Encouraged help-seeking behavior
- Increased trust in the licensure process
- Supported a culture of safety and accountability



# National Recognition



September 23, 2025 – The Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama (BDEAL) announced today that it has been recognized as a **2025 Wellbeing First Champion** by **ALL IN: Wellbeing First for Healthcare**.

As a Wellbeing First Champion, the Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama has verified that its licensure and credentialing applications are free from intrusive and stigmatizing language regarding mental health care and treatment. This means that Alabama dentists and dental hygienists can seek the care they need without fear of jeopardizing their license or professional standing.

*“The Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama is committed to protecting both the public and the professionals we regulate,” said Melodie Jones, DMD, President of the Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama. “By removing stigmatizing language from our applications, we are affirming our support for Alabama’s dental workforce and ensuring they can pursue mental health care without unnecessary barriers.”*



# Practitioner Well-Being

## Alabama

- Burnout and stress are rising
- Supporting mental health and wellness is essential
- ADA Wellness resources



# Shared Wellness Resources from the American Dental Association

- UAB School of Dentistry- students and faculty
- All licensees in Alabama
- Alabama Academy of General Dentistry
- Alabama Dental Association
- Specialty Groups
- BDEAL Wellness Committee



Find programs and resources to support your mental, emotional and physical well-being at [ADA.org/Wellness](https://ada.org/Wellness). All resources are free for all to use – dentists, dental team members, dental students, specialists – unless marked with an asterisk.



|                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Well-Being Index (WBI)</b><br><a href="https://ada.org/WellBeingIndex">ADA.org/WellBeingIndex</a>                                                | Your health matters. The ADA offers access to the Dental Well-Being Index (WBI), a validated, anonymous risk assessment tool invented and provided by the Mayo Clinic. Scan the QR code to set up your WBI account using the code: <b>ADA Wellness</b> . In just one minute, you'll have access to a personalized dashboard and resources, allowing you to track your well-being over time.                                                                              |    |
| <b>Dental Sound Bites™</b><br><a href="https://ada.org/DSB">ADA.org/DSB</a>                                                                         | Dental Sound Bites is an ADA podcast created for dentists, by dentists. Explore the show's episodes focused on addressing the mental health issues that may arise in dentistry. Hear expert insights and real experiences designed to give you practical strategies to support your well-being over time.                                                                                                                                                                |    |
| <b>Putting Your Oxygen Mask on First</b><br><a href="https://ada.org/WellbeingCE">ADA.org/WellbeingCE</a>                                           | This new CE course explores current data on dental professionals' wellness and dives into how dentistry impacts mental and physical well-being. Learn practical and actionable self-care strategies and discover ADA initiatives and resources that support mental health, reduce burnout, and promote resilience in practice. (1 CE credit).                                                                                                                            |   |
| <b>State Well-Being Programs Directory</b><br><i>(updated in 2026)</i><br><a href="https://ada.org/WellnessDirectory">ADA.org/WellnessDirectory</a> | Looking for help and guidance? Support may be closer than you think. This directory links you to local resources, state dental society contacts, ADA Wellness Ambassadors and the 28 Federation of State Physician Health Programs that provide a therapeutic alternative to discipline for dentists, connecting you to assistance closer to home.                                                                                                                       |  |
| <b>ADA Ergonomic Stretches*</b><br><a href="https://ada.org/Stretch">ADA.org/Stretch</a>                                                            | Better ergonomics, stretching, and exercise can help dental teams build long, healthy careers. Download the ADA Ergonomic Stretches infographic with 25 quick stretches or access the ADA Member app for more resources to keep you and your dental team healthy. <i>The ADA Member App is available to ADA members and ASDA/ADA student members.</i>                                                                                                                    |  |
| <b>After a Suicide Postvention Toolkit</b><br><a href="https://ada.org/Postvention">ADA.org/Postvention</a>                                         | Developed in 2023 by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and the ADA, the <i>After a Suicide Postvention Toolkit</i> provides guidance for those responding to a suicide death for professional dental settings.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |  |
| <b>988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline</b>                                                                                                              | If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts or a crisis, please text or dial 988 to be connected to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. This service is free and confidential and is provided by a national network of more than 200 crisis centers supported by local and state sources as well as the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). For a medical emergency dial 911. |                                                                                       |



# Strategy

## Approach

- Board Communication
- Regulatory Messaging
- Mental Health Conversations
- Accessibility and Visibility





# Key Lessons Learned



## Well-Being

- **Language matters** - words can reduce or reinforce stigma
- **Leadership matters** - change requires courage
- **Partnership matters** - alignment strengthens impact
- **Visibility matters** - resources must be seen to be used





# Why This Matters

## Wellbeing

- Dentist Wellbeing impacts patient safety
- Burnout affects workforce sustainability
- Regulatory environments influence behavior
- Supporting clinicians strengthen the profession





# Wellness helps Dentistry!

- Regulatory bodies play a critical role in wellbeing
- Modernizing licensure removes barriers to care
- Awareness + access = meaningful change
- Dental Boards partnering with organized dentistry is the most effective way to begin change



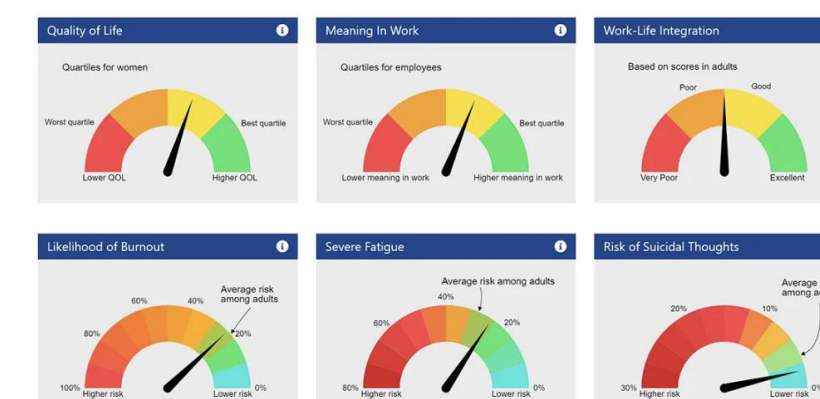


“When you focus on your mental health you can deliver the best dental health for your patients.”

### Wellness Resources Available to the Dental Team

Last year, the ADA Council on Dental Practice made the Well-Being Index available to every dentist, specialist, dental team member, and student for free.

**ADA Membership is not required to use this tool.** Other wellness resources are available and are summarized in [this flyer](#).



Assess Your Well-Being

Download Wellness Resources Flyer

American Dental Association, Well-Being Index



# Thank you!

Melodie Jones, DMD



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