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I am pleased to present the 2014-2016 Strategic Plan for the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA). As we continue to face challenging fiscal and other constraints, it is more important than ever for us to take a proactive approach to fulfilling our mandate of consumer protection. DCA plays a critical role in safeguarding California’s consumers. Our updated vision, mission, and values reflect that role and ensure that consumer protection will be at the forefront of the decisions we make day to day and year to year.

Here are a few highlights of the 2014-2016 Strategic Plan:

- We take a fresh look at our internal processes with an eye toward streamlining operations and increasing efficiency. Our staff and managers are fully engaged in maintaining a culture of superior service to all our programs.

- We remain committed to transparency and accountability. This plan outlines how we will track and publicly report our performance in enforcement, licensing, and administration.

- We appreciate that a knowledgeable, dedicated workforce of skilled professionals is key to achieving our mission. Over the next three years and beyond, we plan to implement succession planning initiatives and expand employee engagement efforts, including the creation of a DCA leadership academy.

I would like to thank everyone who provided input and feedback as we crafted this plan and charted our direction for the next three years. I invite you to join us as we implement the various elements of this Plan. Your involvement and feedback will make DCA successful. Let’s work toward a great future together!

Sincerely,

Denise D. Brown
Director, Department of Consumer Affairs
THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROTECTS AND SERVES CALIFORNIA CONSUMERS WHILE ENSURING A COMPETENT AND FAIR MARKETPLACE. TO SUPPORT THIS EFFORT, DCA FOSTERS RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONSUMER AND PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS, THE BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY, LAW ENFORCEMENT, AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

DCA protects and serves consumers in many ways, including:

- Providing access to competent and ethical service providers. A person who holds a DCA-issued license has met minimum occupational qualifications and has passed a criminal background check.

- Fighting fraud and enforcing laws to protect consumers. DCA’s enforcement staff collaborates with the Attorney General’s Office and local district attorneys to take action against unqualified individuals and unlicensed practitioners.

- Verifying a provider’s license status. The license status of the more than 2.5 million professionals licensed or certified through DCA is available online or by phone.

- Supporting and advocating for consumer interests before lawmakers. DCA staff review and analyze proposed legislation and regulations to ensure that consumers are protected.

- Investigating consumer complaints. If violations are found, license holders can face discipline that includes probation, suspension or revoking of a license, fines and citations, letters of reprimand, or cease-and-desist orders.

- Resolving disputes between businesses and customers. DCA’s Complaint Resolution Program offers an alternative to costly and time-consuming court proceedings.
ISSUING LICENSES AND PERMITS

DCA issues licenses and permits in more than 100 business and 255 professional categories through 42 regulatory entities comprised of boards, bureaus, committees, programs and one commission. These 42 entities set and enforce minimum competency standards for the professions and vocations they regulate, which include nearly all of California’s healthcare fields. To enter a DCA-regulated profession, individuals must meet job-specific qualifications and pass State-approved exams. In addition, applicants must provide their fingerprints and pass a criminal background check before they can become licensed.

SUPPORTING OUR BOARDS AND BUREAUS

DCA’s 42 regulatory entities are supported by a staff of legal, technical, and administrative professionals. These professionals provide human resources, information technology, investigations, professional examinations, training, strategic planning, fiscal management, and other support services. DCA’s support system consists of 16 programs, divisions, units, and offices, all of which are committed to DCA’s consumer protection mission. The professionals in these units inform and empower consumers, promote consumer interests before lawmakers, enforce consumer protection laws, collaborate with law enforcement to fight consumer fraud, resolve disputes between consumers and businesses, and work to ensure that consumers have a voice in the California marketplace.
OUR SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

AS A PART OF STRATEGIC PLANNING, DCA EVALUATED ITS PREVIOUS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES. FOLLOWING ARE THE SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE THE 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN WAS ADOPTED.

ADOPTED NEW FLAMMABILITY STANDARD FOR UPHOLSTERED FURNITURE

One of DCA’s most important accomplishments in recent years was to help reduce the use of toxic flame retardants by adopting new flammability standards for upholstered residential furniture. In June 2012, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. directed the Bureau of Electronic and Appliance Repair, Home Furnishings and Thermal Insulation to review the State’s 40-year-old flammability standard because a growing body of evidence suggested that flame retardant chemicals harm human health and the environment. His direction was fulfilled by the Bureau in November 2013 with the formal approval of Technical Bulletin 117-2013 by the Office of Administrative Law. The new standard uses a test that makes it easier for furniture manufacturers to produce furniture free of these chemicals. The new standard will impact not just Californians, but also people in many other states and countries where the California flammability standard has been adopted as their own.

DOCUMENTED ENFORCEMENT PERFORMANCE

To ensure that DCA and its stakeholders can review our progress in meeting enforcement goals and targets, we developed an easy-to-understand, transparent system of accountability. Performance measures are collected from our legacy computer systems, or from the programs directly, and reported quarterly on the DCA website. These performance measures are critical for documenting meaningful, measurable results.
OUR SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ANSWERED CONSUMERS’ CALLS

Phone agents in DCA’s Consumer Information Center handled more than one million calls in the 2012-13 fiscal year. Calls to the toll-free hotline were answered in person in less than three minutes, on average. Callers are assisted by DCA phone agents in English or Spanish, or through contract services, in more than 177 other languages. Phone agents provide information, help consumers file complaints, or refer them to the government agency or other entity best suited to address their needs.

LAUNCHED BREEZE

In October 2013, DCA successfully launched Release 1 of our new computer system to replace the long-outdated systems with a single, centralized source for managing and tracking license holders and applicants. BreEZe serves the public and licensees by improving online access to important information and simplifying tasks such as address changes, license renewals, verifying licenses, and more.

EXPANDED WEBCASTING

DCA’s Office of Public Affairs has developed a robust webcasting system that uses the Internet to broadcast board meetings, workshops, committee meetings, and other gatherings. Webcasting provides a way for the public, licensees, and stakeholders to view and listen as issues are discussed and decisions are made. Webcasts are archived on the DCA websites for later viewing. Since 2010, we have conducted more than 271 live webcasts.
**Boosted Social Media Use**

DCA and many of its entities expanded their use of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate with licensees, stakeholders, and the public. Social media sites were used extensively for Safe Sandal Season, a nail salon safety campaign launched this summer by DCA’s Office of Public Affairs and the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology. In addition to Facebook postings and Twitter messages, the campaign included a nail salon safety video, television and newspaper interviews, signature graphics for emails, a Safe Sandal Season logo, and a pedicure safety tips pamphlet.

**Earned Communications Honors**

Since 2010, the writer/editors and graphic designers in the Office of Publications, Design & Editing (PDE) have earned 25 awards from the State Information Officers Council for outstanding achievement in government communications. PDE’s quarterly magazine, *Consumer Connection*, has been a multiple winner, taking home either a gold or silver award each year in the magazine category, plus individual honors for feature articles. PDE has received awards for non-DCA projects, too, including the Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency newsletter in 2013, and a logo and promotional materials for the Governor’s Office of Economic Development in 2010.
Effective July 1, 2013, as part of the Governor’s Reorganization Plan, DCA successfully integrated four entities into the Department’s jurisdiction of professional licensing. The changes will broaden DCA’s consumer protection mandate while increasing efficiencies in personnel management, training, business services, and enforcement.

The four entities are:
- Department (now Bureau) of Real Estate
- Office (now Bureau) of Real Estate Appraisers
- Board of Chiropractic Examiners
- Structural Pest Control Board

In 2010, the Department of Personnel Administration (DPA) rescinded DCA’s delegated authority to allocate several classifications. In the two years that followed, DCA’s Office of Human Resources focused on staff training, reviewing/revising processes, and updating procedures to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and rules for recruitment, hiring, and allocating positions.

In August 2012, the Department of Human Resources (formerly DPA) restored full delegation to DCA, which means faster turnaround for clients and greater client satisfaction. Also in 2012, the State Personnel Board (SPB) began an initial compliance review cycle for all State departments to audit human resource functions related to merit issues to ensure that civil service laws and board regulations were being followed. SPB reviewed DCA’s practices in civil service examinations, recruitment, appointments, personal services contracts, reasonable accommodation, and equal employment opportunity. In October 2013, the SPB released its Compliance Review Report which found DCA in full compliance.
**OUR VISION**
To be the premier consumer protection agency.

**OUR MISSION**
To protect consumers through effective enforcement activities and oversight of California’s licensed professionals.

**OUR VALUES**

**ACCOUNTABILITY**
We operate transparently and encourage public participation in our decision-making when appropriate.

**CONSUMER PROTECTION**
We make effective and informed decisions to protect the health and safety of Californians.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE**
We acknowledge our stakeholders as customers, listen to them, and take their needs into account.

**INNOVATION**
We value creative problem-solving, responsible risk-taking, and enthusiastic pursuit of new ideas.

**INTEGRITY**
We are committed to honesty, ethical conduct, and responsibility.

**DIVERSITY**
We foster a welcoming environment of openness and appreciation for all.

**EMPLOYEES**
We recognize and value employee contributions and talent, and foster leadership development and professional growth of our workforce.

**LEADERSHIP**
We set the standard for leadership in government by holding ourselves accountable to our employees and stakeholders.
OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

1. ENFORCEMENT

Prevent, reduce, or eliminate unlicensed activity and harmful conduct by licensed professionals that pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of Californians.

2. LICENSING

Ensure that all applicants and licensees are qualified to provide professional services and are able to expeditiously enter California’s workforce.

3. LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Ensure that statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures strengthen and support DCA’s mandate and mission.

4. COMMUNICATION

Provide relevant, timely, and accurate information to internal and external stakeholders.

5. ADMINISTRATION

Enhance organizational effectiveness and efficiency and improve the quality of customer service in all DCA programs.

6. TECHNOLOGY

Leverage and support technologies to better serve clients and stakeholders.
OBJECTIVES IN EACH GOAL ARE LISTED IN ORDER OF PRIORITY.
GOAL 1: ENFORCEMENT

PREVENT, REDUCE, OR ELIMINATE UNLICENSED ACTIVITY AND HARMFUL CONDUCT BY LICENSED PROFESSIONALS THAT POSE A THREAT TO THE HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF CALIFORNIANS.

1.1 Jointly work with DCA’s Boards and Bureaus to develop and implement enforcement best practice standards to improve investigative cycle times.

1.2 Collaborate with the Department’s enforcement partners to find ways to more quickly take actions against a licensee in response to egregious conduct.

1.3 Facilitate a data exchange procedure with the Attorney General’s Office to streamline the formal investigation and discipline process.

1.4 Improve working partnerships between DCA’s Division of Investigation and California’s law enforcement community and other stakeholders.

1.5 Establish an enforcement managers’ consortium to provide training, enhance collaboration, and encourage resource sharing among enforcement programs.

1.6 Explore means of collecting unpaid citation penalties, fines, and investigative costs.
GOAL 2: LICENSING

ENSURE THAT ALL APPLICANTS AND LICENSEES ARE QUALIFIED TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AND ARE ABLE TO EXPEDITIOUSLY ENTER CALIFORNIA’S WORKFORCE.

2.1 Define Department-wide metrics and targets for licensing processes and begin tracking program performance.

2.2 Launch an outreach campaign to educate license applicants and existing licensees about the Department’s online services.

2.3 Establish a licensing managers’ consortium to provide training, enhance collaboration and encourage resource sharing among licensing programs.

2.4 Create a support program to assist programs in their outreach to license applicants by providing video production services and other technical assistance.
GOAL 3: LEGISLATION AND POLICY

ENSURE THAT STATUTES, REGULATIONS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT DCA’S MANDATE AND MISSION.

3.1 Assist Boards and Bureaus with implementing Department-wide legislation.

3.2 Develop and deliver a legislative process overview training course for legislative liaisons, board members, and executive officers throughout the Department.

3.3 Provide educational opportunities and create resources for executive officers and bureau chiefs that provide guidance on effective board and bureau management.

GOAL 4: COMMUNICATION

provide relevant, timely, and accurate information to internal and external stakeholders.

4.1 Develop formal Department-wide internal and external communication plans.

4.2 Research and evaluate the feasibility of implementing an enterprise-wide telecommunication solution to improve service to consumers, licensees, and license applicants.

4.3 Create guidelines for Department branding.

4.4 Update the Department’s communication policy to include guidelines on the use of social media.

4.5 Partner with professional associations to disseminate consumer protection information to their members.
GOAL 5: ADMINISTRATION

ENHANCE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY, AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CUSTOMER SERVICE IN ALL DCA PROGRAMS.

5.1 Work collaboratively with Fi$Cal to transition to the new statewide financial management system.

5.2 Develop a comprehensive onboarding program for new employees to effectively introduce them to the Department.

5.3 Establish a training audit and tracking process at the executive level to ensure board member compliance with mandatory training requirements.

5.4 Create and implement a Department-wide workforce and succession plan to guide the Department’s preparedness in workforce and leadership continuity, especially in the areas of enforcement and information technology.

5.5 Create and implement a leadership academy to ensure successful succession planning throughout the Department.
GOAL 5: ADMINISTRATION

5.6 Evaluate processes within the Office of Administrative Services and implement improvements to increase efficiency and improve client services.

5.7 Develop and launch an interactive online sexual harassment prevention training tutorial that is easily accessible to all employees and board members and meets the requirements of the California Code of Regulations, section 7288.0.

5.8 Re-establish quarterly manager roundtable meetings to facilitate communication and networking among the DCA management team.

5.9 Conduct an annual electronic internal client satisfaction survey to ensure DCA’s divisions are providing good client service.

5.10 Hold biannual executive town hall meetings for all DCA employees to ensure information is shared accurately throughout the organization.

5.11 Re-establish a Department-wide mentoring program to encourage professional growth within the DCA workforce.
GOAL 6: TECHNOLOGY

LEVERAGE AND SUPPORT TECHNOLOGIES TO BETTER SERVE CLIENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS.

6.1 Implement Release 2 and 3 of BreEZe.

6.2 Create a governance structure within the Office of Information Services to manage information technology changes.

6.3 Implement a self-service, client-accessible, service desk ticketing system.

6.4 Evaluate the information technology procurement process and implement improvements to increase efficiency.