

PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE DIVISION[645]

Notice of Intended Action

**Proposing rulemaking related to disciplinary proceedings
and providing an opportunity for public comment**

The Board of Mortuary Science hereby proposes to rescind Chapter 103, “Disciplinary Proceedings,” and Chapter 104, “Enforcement Proceedings Against Nonlicensees,” and to adopt a new Chapter 104, “Disciplinary Proceedings,” Iowa Administrative Code.

Legal Authority for Rulemaking

This rulemaking is proposed under the authority provided in Iowa Code sections 147.36, 147.76 and 156.4.

State or Federal Law Implemented

This rulemaking implements, in whole or in part, Iowa Code chapter 156 and Executive Order 10 (January 10, 2023).

Purpose and Summary

Proposed Chapter 104 provides protection to Iowans because it publicly defines required professional standards for the practice of mortuary science. This is important to both the public and to the licensee because it creates a shared understanding of what is and is not appropriate for certain types of licensed individuals in Iowa. When professional standards are not met, it can subject a licensee to discipline against their license. Iowans have the ability to submit a complaint to the Board, which can then investigate the allegation. The Board has the ability to seek discipline against the licensee for those items outlined, ensuring that the public is protected. This can include restrictions, suspension, or revocation of a license to practice. The proposed chapter also creates a process to place a licensee on probation for the purpose of protecting the public, who rely upon these licensed individuals and establishments for the performance of mortuary science services.

The 19 boards in the legacy Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Bureau of Professional Licensure have similar disciplinary standards for all professions. For this reason, one shared disciplinary chapter has been created that applies to all professions. Proposed Chapter 104 contains only those disciplinary grounds that are unique to the mortuary sciences profession and are therefore excluded from the general disciplinary chapter.

No public comments were received at the November 21, 2023, public hearing.

Fiscal Impact

This rulemaking has no fiscal impact to the State of Iowa.

Jobs Impact

After analysis and review of this rulemaking, no impact on jobs has been found.

Waivers

Any person who believes that the application of the discretionary provisions of this rulemaking would result in hardship or injustice to that person may petition the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing for a waiver of the discretionary provisions, if any, pursuant to 481—Chapter 6.

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit written or oral comments concerning this proposed rulemaking. Written or oral comments in response to this rulemaking must be received by the Department no later than 4:30 p.m. on February 14, 2024. Comments should be directed to:

Michele Royer
Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing/Bureau of Board Support
6200 Park Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50321
Phone: 515.281.5234
Email: michele.royer@iowa.gov

Public Hearing

Public hearings at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held as follows:

February 13, 2024 1:30 p.m.	6200 Park Avenue Des Moines, Iowa
February 14, 2024 1:30 p.m.	6200 Park Avenue Des Moines, Iowa

Persons who wish to make oral comments at a public hearing may be asked to state their names for the record and to confine their remarks to the subject of this proposed rulemaking.

Any persons who intend to attend a public hearing and have special requirements, such as those related to hearing or mobility impairments, should contact the Department and advise of specific needs.

Review by Administrative Rules Review Committee

The Administrative Rules Review Committee, a bipartisan legislative committee which oversees rulemaking by executive branch agencies, may, on its own motion or on written request by any individual or group, review this rulemaking at its [regular monthly meeting](#) or at a special meeting. The Committee's meetings are open to the public, and interested persons may be heard as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.8(6).

The following rulemaking action is proposed:

ITEM 1. Rescind and reserve **645—Chapter 103**.

ITEM 2. Rescind 645—Chapter 104 and adopt the following **new** chapter in lieu thereof:

CHAPTER 104
DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

645—104.1(156) Definitions.

“*Board*” means the board of mortuary science.

“*Discipline*” means any sanction the board may impose upon licensees.

“*Licensee*” means an individual licensed pursuant to Iowa Code section 156.4 to practice as a funeral director in Iowa and a person issued an establishment license pursuant to Iowa Code section 156.14 to establish, conduct, or maintain a funeral establishment or cremation establishment in Iowa.

645—104.2(17A,147,156,272C) Disciplinary authority. The board is empowered to administer Iowa Code chapters 17A, 147, 156, and 272C and related administrative rules for the protection and well-being of those persons who may rely upon licensed individuals and establishments for the performance of mortuary science services within this state or for clients in this state. To perform these functions, the board is broadly vested with authority to review and investigate alleged acts or omissions

of licensees, to determine whether disciplinary proceedings are warranted, to initiate and prosecute disciplinary proceedings, to establish standards of professional conduct, and to impose discipline pursuant to Iowa Code sections 17A.13, 147.55, 272C.3 to 272C.6 and 272C.10 and chapter 156.

645—104.3(17A,147,156,272C) Grounds for discipline against funeral directors. The board may initiate disciplinary action against a licensed funeral director based on Iowa Code section 156.9 and any of the following grounds:

104.3(1) Fraud in procuring a license. Fraud in procuring a license includes, but is not limited to, an intentional perversion of the truth in making application for a license to practice in this state, which includes the following:

a. False representation of a material fact, whether by word or by conduct, by false or misleading allegation, or by concealment of that which should have been disclosed when making application for a license in this state, or

b. Attempting to file or filing with the board or the department of inspections, appeals, and licensing any false or forged diploma or certificate or affidavit or identification or qualification in making an application for a license in this state.

104.3(2) Professional incompetency. Professional incompetency includes, but is not limited to:

a. A substantial lack of knowledge or ability to discharge professional obligations within the scope of practice.

b. A substantial deviation from the standards of learning or skill ordinarily possessed and applied by other practitioners in the state of Iowa acting in the same or similar circumstances.

c. A failure to exercise the degree of care which is ordinarily exercised by the average practitioner acting in the same or similar circumstances.

d. Failure to conform to the minimal standards of acceptable and prevailing practice of a funeral director in this state.

104.3(3) Deceptive practices. Deceptive practices are grounds for discipline, whether or not actual injury is established, and include:

a. Knowingly making misleading, deceptive, untrue or fraudulent representations in the practice of mortuary science.

b. Use of untruthful or improbable statements in advertisements. Use of untruthful or improbable statements in advertisements includes, but is not limited to, an action by a licensee in making information or intention known to the public which is false, deceptive, misleading or promoted through fraud or misrepresentation.

c. Acceptance of any fee by fraud or misrepresentation.

d. Falsification of business records through false or deceptive representations or omissions.

e. Submission of false or misleading reports or information to the board including information supplied in an audit of continuing education, reports submitted as a condition of probation, or any reports identified in this rule.

f. Knowingly misrepresenting any material matter to a prospective purchaser of funeral merchandise, furnishings, or services.

g. Representing oneself as a funeral director when one's license has been suspended, revoked, or surrendered, or when one's license is on inactive status.

h. Permitting another person to use the licensee's license for any purposes.

i. Misrepresenting the legal need or other requirement for embalming.

j. Fraud in representations as to skill or ability.

104.3(4) Unethical, harmful or detrimental conduct. Licensees engaging in unethical conduct or practices harmful or detrimental to the public may be disciplined whether or not injury is established. Behaviors and conduct which are unethical, harmful or detrimental to the public may include, but are not limited to, the following actions:

a. Practice outside the scope of the profession which requires licensure by a different professional licensing board.

b. Any violation of Iowa Code chapter 144.

c. Verbal or physical abuse, improper sexual contact, or making suggestive, lewd, lascivious, offensive or improper remarks or advances, if such behavior occurs within the practice of mortuary science or such behavior otherwise provides a reasonable basis for the board to conclude that such behavior would place the public at risk within the practice of mortuary science.

d. Betrayal of a professional confidence.

e. Engaging in a professional conflict of interest.

f. Failure to comply with universal precautions for preventing transmission of infectious diseases as issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

g. Embalming or attempting to embalm a deceased human body without first having obtained authorization from a family member or representative of the deceased, except where embalming is done to meet the requirements of applicable state or local law. However, a funeral director may embalm without authority when, after due diligence, no authorized person can be contacted and embalming is in accordance with legal or accepted standards in the community, or the licensee has good reason to believe that the family wishes embalming. The order of priority for those persons authorized to permit embalming is found in Iowa Code section 144C.5. If embalming is performed under these circumstances, the licensee shall not be deemed to be in violation of the prohibition in this paragraph.

h. Failure to keep and maintain records as required by Iowa Code chapter 156 and associated rules.

104.3(5) Unlicensed practice.

a. Practicing mortuary science when one's license has been suspended, revoked, or surrendered, or when one's license is on inactive status.

b. Practicing mortuary science within an unlicensed funeral or cremation establishment.

c. Permitting an unlicensed employee or other person under the licensee's control or supervision to perform activities requiring a license.

d. Knowingly aiding, assisting, procuring, advising, or allowing a person to unlawfully practice mortuary science, or aiding or abetting a licensee, license applicant or unlicensed person in committing any act or omission which is grounds for discipline under this rule or is an unlawful act by a nonlicensee under Iowa Code section 156.16.

104.3(6) Lack of proper qualifications.

a. Continuing to practice as a funeral director without satisfying the continuing education mandated by 645—Chapter 102.

b. Acting as a preceptor or continuing education provider without proper board approval or qualification.

c. Habitual intoxication or addiction to the use of drugs, or impairment which adversely affects the licensee's ability to practice in a safe and competent manner.

d. Any act, conduct, or condition, including lack of education or experience and careless or intentional acts or omissions, that demonstrates a lack of qualifications which are necessary to ensure a high standard of professional care as provided in Iowa Code section 272C.3(2) "b."

104.3(7) Negligence by the licensee in the practice of the profession. Negligence by the licensee in the practice of the profession includes:

a. A failure to exercise due care including negligent delegation of duties or supervision of employees or other individuals, whether or not injury results.

b. Any conduct, practice or condition which impairs a licensee's ability to safely and skillfully practice the profession.

104.3(8) Professional misconduct.

a. Obtaining, possessing, attempting to obtain or possess, or administering controlled substances without lawful authority.

b. Violation of a regulation or law of this state, another state, or the United States, which relates to the practice of mortuary science, including, but not limited to, Iowa Code chapters 272C, 144, 147, 156, 523A, 523I, 566, and 566A; board rules, including rules of professional conduct set forth in 645—Chapter 100; and regulations promulgated by the Federal Trade Commission relating to funeral services or merchandise, or funeral or cremation establishments, as applicable to the profession. Any

violation involving deception, dishonesty or moral turpitude shall be deemed related to the practice of mortuary science.

c. Engaging in any conduct that subverts or attempts to subvert a board investigation, or failure to fully cooperate with a licensee disciplinary investigation or investigation against a nonlicensee, including failure to comply with a subpoena issued by the board or to respond to a board inquiry within 30 calendar days of the date of mailing by certified mail of a written communication directed to the licensee's last address on file at the board office.

d. Revocation, suspension, or other disciplinary action taken by a licensing authority of this state, another state, territory, or country. A stay by an appellate court shall not negate this requirement; however, if such disciplinary action is overturned or reversed by a court of last resort, discipline by the board based solely on such action shall be vacated.

104.3(9) Willful or repeated violations. The willful or repeated violation of any provision of Iowa Code chapter 147, 156, or 272C.

104.3(10) Failure to report.

a. Failure by a licensee or an applicant for licensure to report in writing to the board any revocation, suspension, or other disciplinary action taken by a licensing authority within 30 days of the final action.

b. Failure of a licensee or an applicant for licensure to report, within 30 days of the action, any voluntary surrender of a professional license to resolve a pending disciplinary investigation or action.

c. Failure to notify the board of a criminal conviction within 30 days of the action, regardless of the jurisdiction where it occurred.

d. Failure to notify the board within 30 days after occurrence of any judgment or settlement of malpractice claim or action.

e. Failure to report another licensee to the board for any violations listed in these rules, pursuant to Iowa Code section 272C.9.

f. Failure to report a change of name or address within 30 days after it occurs.

104.3(11) Failure to comply with board order.

a. Failure to comply with the terms of a board order or the terms of a settlement agreement or consent order, or other decision of the board imposing discipline.

b. Failure to pay costs assessed in any disciplinary action.

104.3(12) Being convicted of an offense that directly relates to the duties and responsibilities of the profession. A conviction includes a guilty plea, including Alford and nolo contendere pleas, or a finding or verdict of guilt, even if the adjudication of guilt is deferred, withheld, or not entered. A copy of the guilty plea or order of conviction constitutes conclusive evidence of conviction. An offense directly relates to the duties and responsibilities of the profession if the actions taken in furtherance of the offense are actions customarily performed within the scope of practice of the profession or the circumstances under which the offense was committed are circumstances customary to the profession.

104.3(13) Violation of the terms of an initial agreement with the impaired practitioner review committee or violation of the terms of an impaired practitioner recovery contract with the impaired practitioner review committee.

104.3(14) Failure to comply with conditions of Iowa Code sections 142C.10 and 142C.10A.

645—104.4(17A,147,156,272C) Grounds for discipline against funeral establishments and cremation establishments. The board may initiate disciplinary action against a funeral establishment or cremation establishment, at time of license application or thereafter, based on all grounds set forth in Iowa Code section 156.15, summarized as follows:

104.4(1) The licensee or applicant has been convicted of a felony or any crime related to the practice of mortuary science or implicating the establishment's ability to safely perform mortuary science services, or if the applicant is an association, joint stock company, partnership, or corporation, the managing officer or owner has been convicted of such a crime under the laws of this state, another state, or the United States.

104.4(2) The licensee or applicant, or any owner or employee of the establishment has violated Iowa Code chapter 156, rule 645—104.3(17A,147,156,272C), or any other rule promulgated by the board.

104.4(3) The licensee or applicant knowingly aided, assisted, procured, or allowed a person to unlawfully practice mortuary science.

104.4(4) The licensee or applicant failed to engage in or ceased to engage in the business described in the application for licensure.

104.4(5) The licensee or applicant failed to keep and maintain records as required by Iowa Code chapter 156 or rules promulgated by the board.

104.4(6) The licensee or owner of the establishment has violated the smokefree air Act, Iowa Code chapter 142D.

645—104.5(17A,147,156,272C) Method of discipline. The board has the authority to impose the following disciplinary sanctions:

1. Revoke a license.
2. Suspend a license until further order of the board or for a specific period.
3. Prohibit permanently, until further order of the board, or for a specific period, the licensee's engaging in specified procedures, methods, or acts.
4. Place a licensee on probation and impose such conditions as the board may reasonably impose including, but not limited to, requiring periodic reporting to the board designated features of the licensee's practice of mortuary science.
5. Require additional education or training. The board may specify that a designated amount of continuing education be taken in specific subjects and may specify the time period for completing these courses. The board may also specify whether that continuing education be in addition to the continuing education routinely required for license renewal. The board may also specify that additional continuing education be a condition for the termination of any suspension or reinstatement of a license.
6. Require a reexamination.
7. Order a physical or mental evaluation, or order alcohol and drug screening within a time specified by the board.
8. Impose civil penalties not to exceed \$1,000 against an individual licensed as a funeral director, or not to exceed \$10,000 against a licensed funeral establishment or cremation establishment. Civil penalties may be imposed for any of the disciplinary violations specified in rules 645—104.3(17A,147,156,272C) and 645—104.4(17A,147,156,272C), as applicable.
9. Issue a citation and warning, or reprimand.
10. Refuse to issue or renew a license.
11. Such other sanctions allowed by law as may be appropriate.

645—104.6(17A,147,156,272C) Board discretion in imposing disciplinary sanctions. Factors the board will consider when determining the nature and severity of the disciplinary sanction to be imposed, including whether to assess and the amount of civil penalties, include:

1. The relative serious nature of the violation as it relates to ensuring a high standard of professional care to the citizens of this state.
2. Whether the amount of a civil penalty will be a substantial deterrent to the violation.
3. The circumstances leading to the violation.
4. The risk of harm to the public.
5. The economic benefits gained by the licensee as a result of the violation.
6. The interest of the public.
7. Evidence of reform or remedial action.
8. Time lapsed since the violation occurred.
9. Whether the violation is a repeat offense following a prior cautionary letter, disciplinary order, or other notice of the nature of the infraction.
10. The clarity of the issues involved.
11. Whether the violation was willful and intentional.
12. Whether the nonlicensee acted in bad faith.
13. The extent to which the licensee cooperated with the board.

14. Whether a licensee holding an inactive, suspended, restricted or revoked license engaged in practices which require licensure.

15. Any extenuating factors or other countervailing considerations.

16. Number and seriousness of prior violations or complaints.

17. Such other factors as may reflect upon the competency, ethical standards, and professional conduct of the licensee.

645—104.7 Reserved.

645—104.8(17A,147,156,272C) Informal discussion. If the board considers it advisable, or if requested by the affected licensee, the board may grant the licensee an opportunity to appear before the board or a committee of the board for a voluntary informal discussion of the facts and circumstances of an alleged violation. The licensee may be represented by legal counsel at the informal discussion. The licensee is not required to attend the informal discussion. By electing to attend, the licensee waives the right to seek disqualification, based upon personal investigation of a board or staff member, from participating in making a contested case decision or acting as a presiding officer in a later contested case proceeding. Because an informal discussion constitutes a part of the board's investigation of a pending disciplinary case, the facts discussed at the informal discussion may be considered by the board in the event the matter proceeds to a contested case hearing and those facts are independently introduced into evidence. The board may seek a consent order at the time of the informal discussion. If the parties agree to a consent order, a statement of charges shall be filed simultaneously with the consent order.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code chapters 17A, 147, 156, and 272C.