

ALD Task Force Meeting in Nashville

Dan Sweetwood and Joe Cote gathered the ALD Task Force to a workshop in Nashville in August. He charged the Task Force to discuss specific issues and recommend solutions that will set the course for the ALD. Also, Dan lead the group with a vision for a Best Practices Guidelines and checklist created to inform state boards of the workings of the ALD.

Information in the ALD

The group was presented a spreadsheet displaying a list of the data fields transmitted to the ALD by each participating state. Each area of data was discussed relative to its importance and value. There was a consensus that all of the data listed would be nice to have; however, all agreed that information relating to disciplinary action is very helpful for enforcement. After reviewing the information already contained in the system, the group brainstormed about new links and tools that could be added to the ALD that would improve the efficiency in state board processes. Several ideas emerged and were noted for further consideration.

Terminology

With mobility and reciprocity, there are at least two pieces of information that are critical - license status and incidents of disciplinary action in all states where



Left to right - Joy Conkwright, Sandra Davidson, Joe Cote, Lisa Zolman, Dan Sweetwood, Mike Semich, Viki Windfeldt, Dan Dustin, Mark Crocker, Edith Steele, Kenny Denny.

licensed. Quick and easy access to this information is very valuable. In the state's system, these data fields are often one-word codes and vary widely by state in meaning. It was decided that having additional state-specific descriptive information in the ALD would be most helpful.

Supporting Mobility

With mobility becoming prevalent, a new issue has emerged - the need to share information on the ALD regarding persons not licensed in "my"

state. Often the board has little identifying information on the person but has important information about activities relating to the person in question. The ALD is based on a person being licensed. There is a need to expand the ALD to allow for entering information on an unlicensed person having activities in a reporting state. An idea was born to create a new area that would primarily contain disciplinary information for non-licensed persons.

Use of ALD Security

One step in the process of getting set up to participate in the ALD is to satisfy the state's concern related to system security. This article highlights some of the areas discussed recently as we worked with Nebraska Board of Public Accountancy staff and consultants to evaluate NASBA's security measures. Early on it was determined that using the social security number as a personal identifier for the ALD was not acceptable. Using a one-way hashing algorithm that uses the date of birth and the last four digits of the SSN a unique identifier is generated at the state board office and then transmitted to the ALD database. This eliminates the need to store SSN in the ALD database.

NASBA has begun implementing controls based on industry standards including, but not limited to, the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA) and the Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP). Although no security system can ever be guaranteed to be completely secure or prevent all intrusions, these standards help provide a minimum level of security and quality for our operations and to help achieve compliance with various privacy and operational regulations, including state-based privacy laws.

Security measures have been integrated into the design, implementation, and day-to-day practices of NASBA's operating environment as a part of our continuing commitment to risk management. These measures are designed and intended to prevent corruption of data, block unknown or unauthorized access to our systems and information. We strive to maintain a consistent level of standards and will provide leadership to stakeholders and state boards when necessary to help meet those aspirations.

As part of this effort, customer information and account data is protected by multiple security protocols: firewalls, data encryption, secure file transfers, and a unique ID and password requirement for system access. NASBA provides end-to-end encryption to help secure transactions while in transit. Encryption technology transmits information sent over the Internet by encoding the transmitted data. Secure File Transfer Protocol (sFTP) and Secure Socket Layer (SSL) are employed in order to protect information exchanged between NASBA and its stakeholders. Additionally, NASBA utilizes firewall technology in order to protect information stored in our computer systems from unauthorized access from external entities. NASBA's security standards require that all NASBA servers that employ SSL utilize 128-bit encryption.

NASBA continues to research and learn about emerging technologies and standards in our efforts to help keep our systems secure. NASBA staff recently participated in the Black Hat Conference, a premier technical security conference. As we worked with the Nebraska team, we shared ideas that resulted in making changes that strengthened access controls. We look forward to working with your state at any time to review NASBA's approach to ALD's system security.

The ALD Task Force is Coming to Phoenix

The ALD Task Force will have a strong presence at NASBA's 102nd Annual Meeting, November 1-4, in Phoenix, Arizona. In addition to this year's Annual agenda, the Task Force will host its next quarterly meeting while in Phoenix. Agenda topics include a discussion on the progress of the Task Force during 2009 and what the ALD roadmap will entail for 2010.

In addition, ALD Administrator, Kenny Denny, will be on-site throughout the Annual conducting live ALD demos and answering questions regarding the ALD and other related issues. Kenny is always willing to "shine some light" on the ALD subject for anyone expressing an interest.

Just In . . .

The total number of states now participating in the ALD is 21. The following three states began contributing to the ALD in the last quarter: New York, New Hampshire and South Dakota. Our team is actively working with Alabama, California, Maryland, Nebraska and Ohio to bring them on to the ALD in 2009. We continue to contact other boards on a regular basis while working closely with the Mobility Task Force as another avenue to further promote the adoption of ALD.

CONTACT US

The ALD News is the premeir source for news and information regarding the Accountancy Licensee Database. For questions or comments, contact:

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