

Protecting Your Practice

What the Board Record Actually Shows

A Decade of Adjudicated Cases · Ten States · One Pattern

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Disclaimer

⚠ This presentation is offered by the Mississippi State Board of Examiners for Licensed Professional Counselors for educational purposes. The analysis and recommendations represent the presenter's professional perspective as a Board member and a counselor educator. They are informational in nature and do not constitute legal advice or official Board policy.



Outline



What the Record Shows

763 adjudicated cases across 10 states. The categories that actually generate complaints.



How a Complaint Moves

From filing through Board ruling — what the process actually looks like for a licensee.



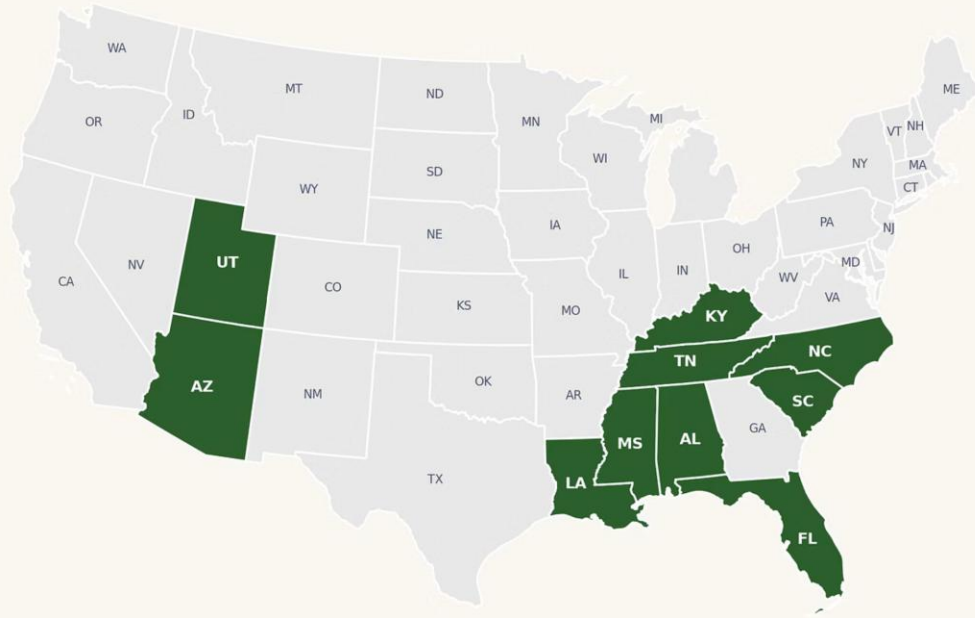
What Changes the Outcome

Four practices, anchored to the data, that interrupt the patterns the record reveals.

I serve on the LPC Board, which means I see complaints come through and have studied a decade of cases across ten states, which means I've seen the pattern those complaints are part of. This afternoon uses both.

The Dataset

Adjudicated cases across ten state counseling boards



763

ADJUDICATED CASES
Board orders and consent agreements

10

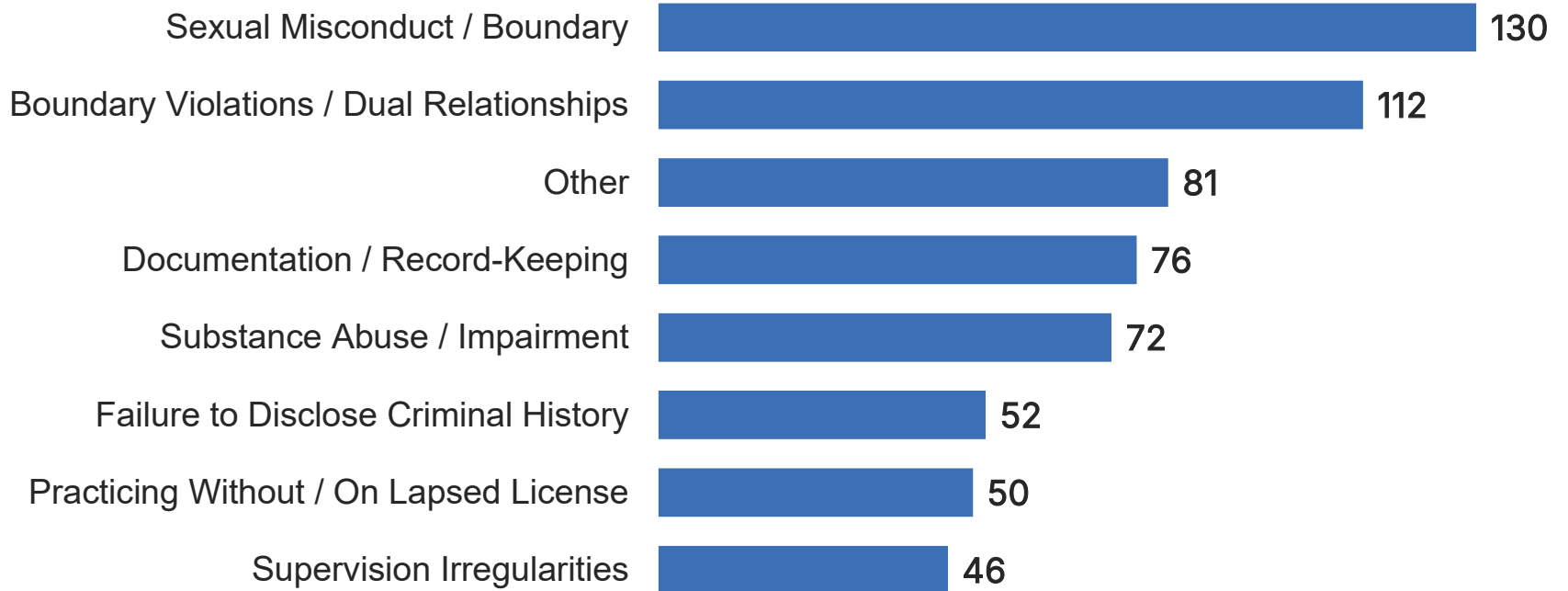
STATES
Highlighted in green on the map

~10

YEARS
Roughly a decade of records

AL · AZ · FL · KY · LA · MS · NC · SC · TN · UT | All cases sanctioned or otherwise adjudicated

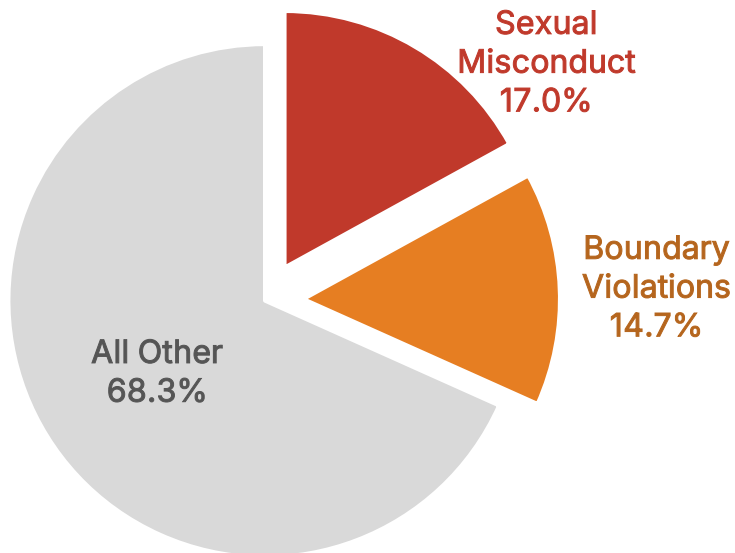
Most Frequent Violations by Category



31.7%

of all adjudicated cases involve boundary violations

— sexual and non-sexual combined —



Nearly One in Three

Of every three counselors sanctioned by a state board, one was sanctioned for a boundary violation — sexual or non-sexual.

Stable Across 10 States

This pattern holds across a decade of records and ten different state regulatory environments.

The Most Preventable Category

Boundary violations are the most predictable — and therefore the most preventable — category in the entire dataset.

Four Categories Explain the Majority

These four categories together account for roughly **57%** of all 763 adjudicated cases.



31.7%

Boundary Violations

Sexual + non-sexual combined



10.0%

Documentation Failures

Records, notes, service plans



9.4%

Substance / Impairment


Fitness-to-practice concerns



6.0%

Supervision Irregularities

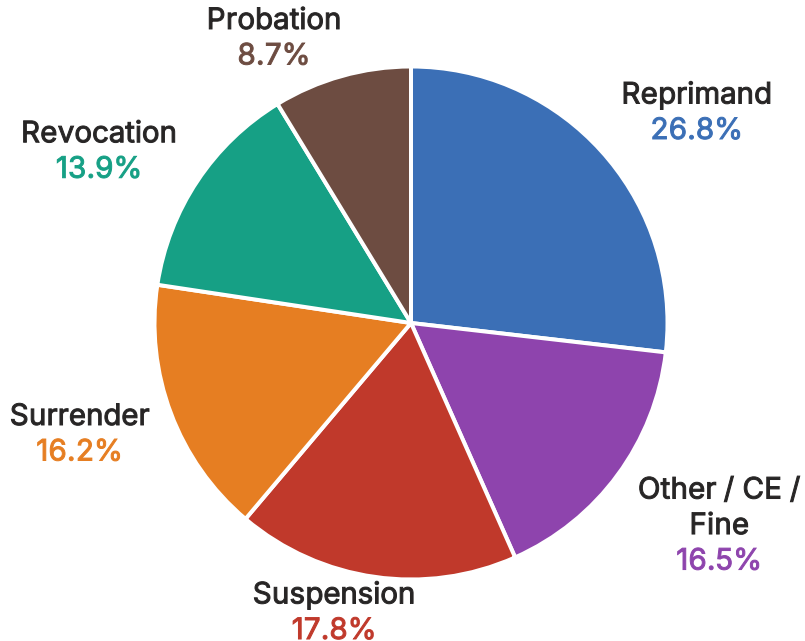
Credentialing, oversight, billing

 Approximately 57% of everything boards adjudicate sits inside these four categories. Understanding them is the foundation of practice protection.

SANCTION OUTCOMES

What Happens After

Sanction distribution across 634 adjudicated cases with sanction data



Key Takeaways

30.1% end in surrender or revocation

17.8% end in suspension

Nearly half (47.9%) of adjudicated cases end with the licensee not practicing — at least temporarily.



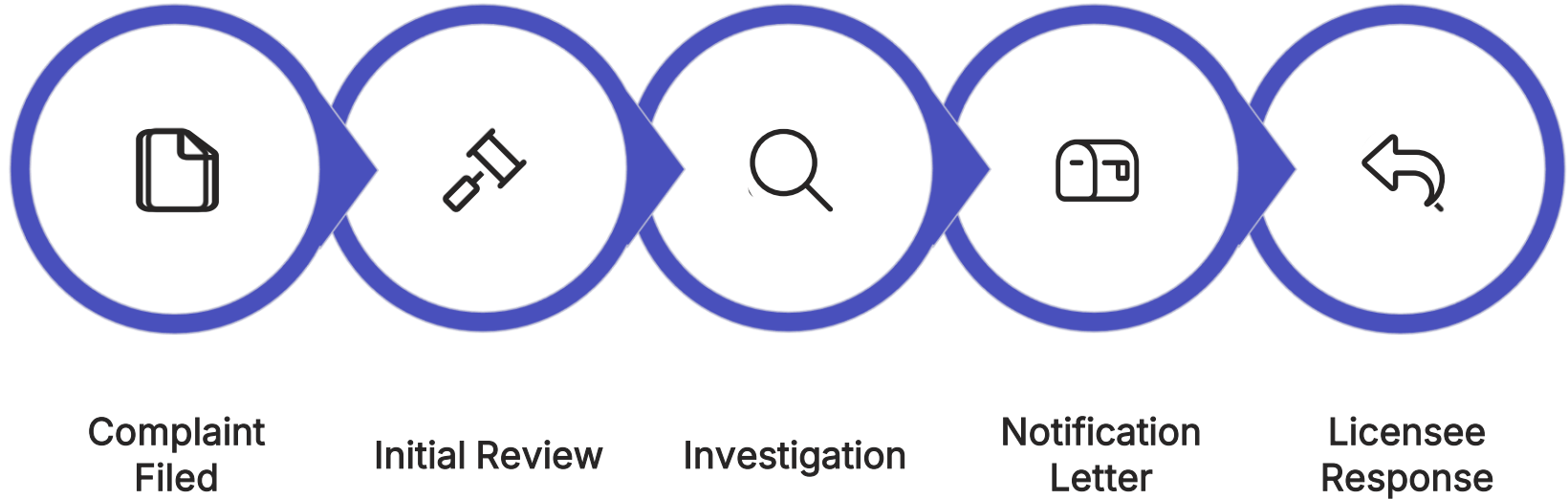
**The violations are
predictable.
Which means they are
preventable.**

The patterns are stable across 10 states, ~10 years, and four decades of national research. Stable patterns can be anticipated. Anticipated patterns can be interrupted.

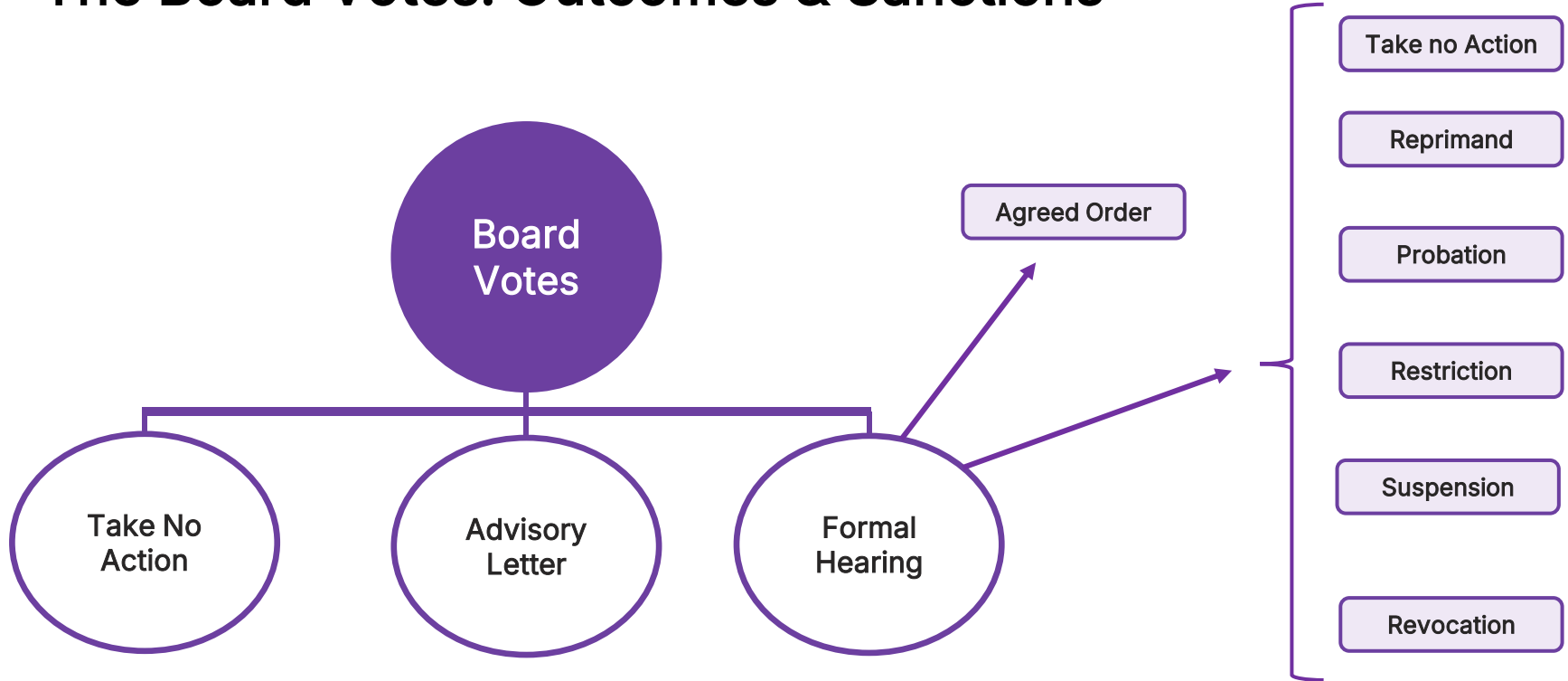
PROCESS OVERVIEW

How a Complaint Moves Through the Board

The general flow — every state varies in detail, but the structure is consistent.



The Board Votes: Outcomes & Sanctions



What This Means for You



The Response Window Is Short

Ten days from notification — extendable to thirty by request. This is a tight clinical and administrative timeline. **Plan now** for who you would call, what records you would gather, and where they are kept.

Your Documentation Is Your Defense

The Board evaluates evidence. It does not reconstruct the therapeutic relationship from memory or testimony alone. **The chart is what defends you** — and the chart that defends you has to exist before the complaint arrives.

Four Practices That Change the Outcome

Each practice maps to a specific pattern in the 763-case record.



1. Ethical Decision-Making Model

A structured pause-point against the boundary cascade.



2. Expand the Circle

Isolation is the condition violations incubate in.



3. Know Your Precursors

The conditions that precede violations are normal. The response determines the outcome.



4. Treat the First Exception as the Emergency

The moment that responds to intervention.

Ethical Decision-Making Model

The logo for the 2014 ACA Code of Ethics features a central white circle containing the text '2014 ACA Code of Ethics' in blue. The background is a vibrant, abstract design of overlapping circles in shades of orange, red, and teal. Below the main text, it says 'As approved by the ACA Governing Council' in a smaller blue font.

2014 ACA Code of Ethics

As approved by the ACA Governing Council

The Pattern in the Record

31.7% of cases involve boundary violations. The cascade develops because there is **no structured pause-point**. Relying on intuition alone is a documented risk factor in the board record.

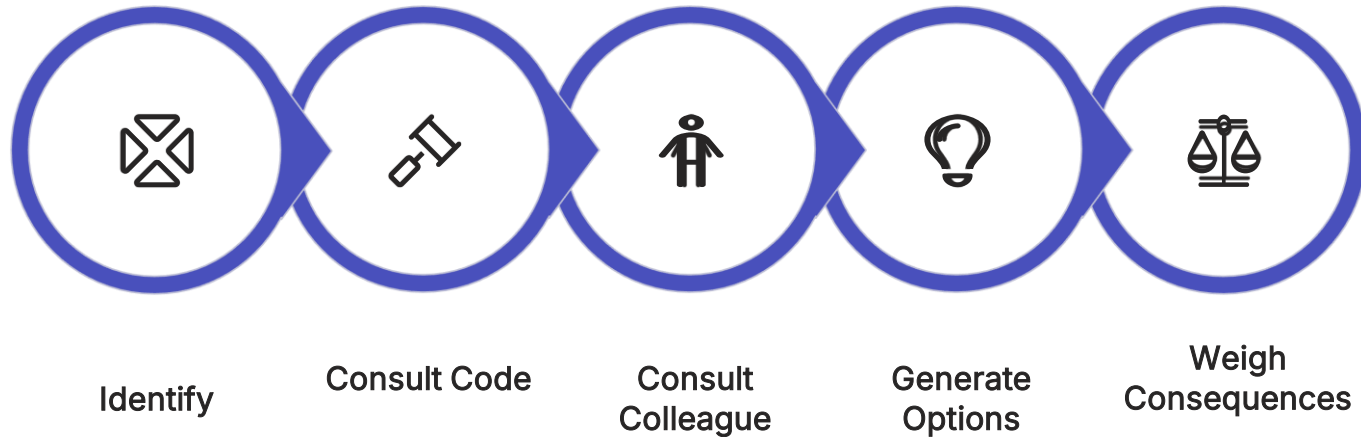
The Model as a Pause-Point

A structured model creates a defensible, repeatable process — one that produces both better decisions and the documentation that defends them.

The model is not a substitute for clinical judgment. It is the structure that **protects** clinical judgment.

The Model Itself

When a complaint arrives and the investigator asks how you arrived at the decision, the **documented model is your answer.**



"I followed an ethical decision-making process, consulted with a colleague on this date, and the reasoning is in the record" — is a fundamentally different response than "It felt right at the time."

Expand the Circle

The Pattern in the Record

Isolation is the condition violations incubate in. Supervision irregularities, boundary cascades, and documentation drift all show the same underlying pattern — a practitioner working **without an interruption point**.

"The license removes the requirement. It does not remove the need."

The United States Exception

The United States is the only country where licensed counselors are **not required** to maintain ongoing supervision after licensure.

One trusted colleague — someone you can call before making a decision — is the difference between an interruption point and isolated drift.



Build that relationship now — when nothing is wrong.



Know Your Precursors



1. Attraction to a Client

The presence is human. The response is what matters.



2. Financial Pressure

Appears in the record before billing and documentation violations.



3. Compassion Fatigue

Reduces the cognitive resources judgment depends on.



4. Life Crisis

Death, divorce, illness, job change — the high-vulnerability windows.



5. Boundary Confusion

The rules feel less clear. Exceptions feel more justified.

Treat the First Exception as the Emergency

1

Stage 01 — The First Exception

The first extended session, the first skipped note, the first “this case is different.” **This is the moment that responds to intervention.**

2

Stage 02 — The Cascade Builds

Each subsequent step feels more justified because the previous one was not interrupted.

3

Stage 03 — The Point of No Return

External intervention becomes the only path back.

4

Stage 04 — The Board Gets Involved

Not the moment that responds to intervention — the moment that follows from not intervening earlier.

⊗ Stage 1 is where this gets solved. Every stage after costs more.

BEFORE YOU LOG OFF

One Commitment

What is one thing you will do differently this week?

- One ethical decision documented this week.
- One phone number you can call before the next hard decision.
- One precursor named honestly.
- One small exception interrupted before it becomes the next.



Thank You

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A Few Reminders

- Statutes, rules, and Board contact information are at **lpc.ms.gov**
- Today's presentation is informational only — not legal advice

