



State Board for Occupational Therapy
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BOARD MEETING NOTES

Date: Friday, June 27, 2025
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Location: New York City, Albany, Syracuse Offices and via WebEx

In Attendance:

Rebecka Cox, Chair
Jaime Spencer-Edelmann
Janet Falk-Kessler
Richard Sabel
Kelly Van Auken
Christina Amato, Staff

Eric Andrus, Staff
Kellie Murphy, Executive Secretary

Jeff Tomlinson, NYSOTA
Michele Scanlon, NYSOTA

Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 10:00am.

Meeting minutes were approved with a minor alteration requested from chair Cox.

Murphy provided board office updates which included updates on license statistics and education programs reiterating the decline in new licensees from 2023 to 2024. New education programs are mainly those New York State institutions which are moving from a Masters degree in OT to an OTD. There are three pending applications with our program review office and the proposal for RIT to offer the OTD degree has recently been approved. There are 10 OTA programs currently in New York State, one, Bryant & Stratton in Syracuse has become inactive. Tomlinson reported that Villa Maria in Buffalo also intends to close its program. There are no pending applications for OTA programs.

Murphy shared frequent questions and inquiries continue to remain around continuing education, specifically the need for live online or in person learning. The Board discussed an inquiry that was received regarding whether a business that wished to test and train children in connection with eye-movement and vision training improvement utilizing eye-tracking software would infringe on the scope of practice of OTs. The board questioned the validity of such practice, the purpose, and on whether this may infringe on other professional scopes. The board felt they may need further information but agreed more information would be needed including if this was evaluation activities for daily living.

Murphy reiterated the conflict of interest policy for the board members and cited a portion of the new board member handbook for clarification. Should any board member wish to support a given piece of legislation or raise awareness, this should be done through the Executive Secretary to ensure we follow the appropriate procedure.

The board discussed the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Chat GPT within Occupational Therapy practice. Board Members shared their experiences within the new technology and shared information learned in professional presentations. Discussions and concerns were shared regarding potential plagiarism, ethical and legal ramifications, confidentiality, accuracy, and over-reliance on the technology for clinical reasoning. The use of AI in education and how it may impact program outcomes. It was shared that they are beginning to develop software which can detect when AI is used for school assignments although it is not perfect. The consensus within the board was that AI has most likely not reached its limitations on ability and this may be an ongoing discussion. There is a lot of confusion in the field and the Board agreed that a statement should be developed for the website which highlights the correct uses of AI, and it should be used as a tool for professionals rather than replacing professional judgement. Murphy will follow-up with a proposed statement to be worked on prior to the next meeting.

The Board had a discussion on workforce challenges and the professional outlook for the OT and OTA profession. Murphy shared a document which showed a decrease in graduates within OT and OTA programs throughout New York State and the decline in new licenses issued in the state last year. The Board shared that there is often a negative opinion online and in discussion forums regarding the OT profession. Other concerns shared were issues of low return on investment, lack of prestige, high burnout, and workplace violence. The Board agreed that the OT professions would need to improve their public image and increase awareness of the profession. Ideas included: reaching out to high school initiatives such as P-Tech and Smart Scholars, diversifying how to teach the profession to increase the diversity within the profession, possible development of lesson plans to introduce the profession early.

Murphy shared that those OTA programs which were on probation, typically were cited with low pass rates. The Board requested that we convene the OTA program directors to see how we may best support their compliance with accreditation standards and potential growth.

Tomlinson provided legislative updates and potential bills that are introduced for the 2025-2026 legislative session. A handout was provided to board members highlighting any movements on items which may impact Occupational Therapy practice. Items which were discussed included loan repayment initiatives, Occupational Therapy in State Facilities and Mental Health, School-Based OT Practice support for a school credential, and Aging and Elder Services.

The meeting adjourned and next meeting will be September 25, 2025.