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ADVISORY BOARD ON OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Minutes

June 10, 2025

The Advisory Board on Occupational Therapy met on Tuesday, June 10, 2025, at the Department of Health Professions, Perimeter Center, 9960 Mayland Drive, Henrico, Virginia.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Raziuddin Ali, MD
Bobby Blair, OT
Dennis Lites – Citizen Member

MEMBERS ABSENT: Leah Savelyev, OT
Caroline Barnes, OT

STAFF PRESENT: Arne Owens – Director, Department of Health Professions
William L. Harp, MD - Executive Director
Michael Sobowale, LLM - Deputy Executive Director,
Licensure
Jennifer Deschenes, JD - Deputy Executive Director, Discipline
Colanthia Opher - Deputy Executive Director, Medical
Licensure and Administration
Kathleen LaMotte, Board Administrator
Erin Barrett, JD - Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs
Barbara Hodgdon, PhD - Deputy Director, Healthcare
Workforce Data Center
Kelly Smith – DHP Director for Communications
Roslyn Nickens, Licensing Supervisor
Sonya Armstead - Licensing Specialist
Jamie Culp - Licensing Specialist
Erin Pollard - Licensing Specialist
Cherese Lampkins - Intern, Healthcare Workforce Data Center

GUESTS PRESENT: Kristin Nevilles - AOTA
Savanah Howe - VOTA
David May - VOTA

Call to Order

In the absence of a Chair, Dr. Harp called the meeting to order @ 10:06 a.m. He said that the bylaws call for the election of a Chair and Vice-Chair at the first meeting after July 1. That should occur at the next scheduled meeting in October.

Emergency Egress Procedures

Kathleen LaMotte announced the emergency egress instructions.

Roll Call

Ms. LaMotte called the roll; a quorum was declared.

Introduction of Members

Dr. Harp asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Ali moved to approve the minutes from the June 4, 2024 meeting. Mr. Blair seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Lites moved to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Dr. Ali and passed unanimously.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

Savanah Howe of VOTA spoke to concerns from their membership about the requirement of National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) certification as being prohibitive in returning to practice. Many practitioners temporarily leave the profession for caregiving, etc. She encouraged the Advisory to remove barriers to return to practice while keeping public protections intact.

Kristin Neville commented on the pending regulation related to inactive status and reactivation. Ms. Neville proposed an additional option for applicants to show continuing competence or demonstrating that they were practicing in another state while their Virginia license was lapsed. She believes this is more efficient than requiring NBCOT certification. Ms. Neville thanked Ms. Barrett for her communication.

OT/OTA Workforce Data Presentation

Dr. Harp introduced Dr. Hodgdon with laudatory comments about the Healthcare Workforce Data Center.

Dr. Hodgdon presented the results of the 2024 survey of more than 4,400 Occupational Therapists and 1,500 Occupational Therapy Assistants. Among the findings discussed were increases in the workforce over the past ten years, a reduction of the median age of OT practitioners, increased diversity although lower than the statewide diversity index, a median stable income with an increase in educational debt, a decrease in the percentage of OT practitioners in the skilled nursing facility environment, and retirement intentions shifting as OT's approach retirement age.

New Business

1. Legislative Report

2. Erin Barrett reviewed items pertaining to the Board of Medicine from the 2025 General Assembly (GA) session. This included two vetoed bills supporting unconscious bias training, a new reporting system for threats made against healthcare professionals, a study to be completed by the DHP regarding the scope of practice of physician assistants, a new license type for anesthesiologist assistants, a faster regulatory pathway to allow for licensure by endorsement for professions that do not currently have one, a recommendation for education on communication with children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder to be disseminated to DHP licensees, the elimination of the Board of Health Professions and the absorption of the Board's duties by the boards and DHP divisions.

3. **Report on Status of Regulatory /Policy Actions**

Ms. Barrett reviewed the status of the Advisory Board's regulatory actions. Two regulations impact this Board. This Board voted for periodic review changes in October of 2022 will become effective July 3 and eliminate some unnecessary requirements. There was also a change made to eliminate the active practice requirement for licensure renewal. Most boards do not require this, and it caused some difficulties for those who temporarily stepped away from active practice. This report was for informational purposes only.

4. **Recommendation of draft amendments for licensure by endorsement**

The Advisory Board was asked to review draft regulatory language for licensure by endorsement to create a separate path to licensure in Virginia when people are licensed in other states. This will allow an easier process for these applicants to begin practicing in Virginia. This Advisory's recommendation will be sent to the full Board of Medicine to consider adoption of an exempt regulatory action to establish the regulations.

Subsequent to the package being released to the Advisory Board, the language stricken in 18VAC85-80-35(4) was re-inserted. There are some professions that do not use the National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB) and the language requiring verification of no disciplinary action is re-inserted. Additionally, the words "substantially similar" were struck from section 18VAC85-80-36(1) as that language was not needed.

Ms. Barrett reported that about 40% of professions under DHP umbrella do not have licensure by endorsement. Many of those are under the Board of Medicine as allied health professions. The Secretary's office asked for a way for people to join Virginia's workforce in a quick and efficient manner. Legislation was passed that requires the adoption of an exempt action to begin the regulatory process for a licensure by endorsement pathway.

MOTION: Dr. Ali moved to recommend to the full Board of Medicine the adoption of an exempt regulatory action as amended establish regulations pursuant to SB1438. Mr. Blair seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

5. **Reinstatement fast track**

The Advisory reviewed draft changes to 18VAC85-80-80 governing reinstatement. Stakeholders raised cost issues and barrier to practice issues with the requirement to hold national certification or pass the national examination following two years or more of a lapsed license. The included changes address the stakeholder's concerns and would ensure rapid return to practice in Virginia for those holding out of state licenses. This proposed change can go to full Board in June.

Changes were made to remove "maintain hours of active practice" to align with another fast-track change which recently removed the requirement for active practice.

The Advisory discussed the need for those away from practice for a longer period of time to provide more evidence that they are fit to practice. It did show support for those with an inactive license to return to the profession.

MOTION: Mr. Blair moved to recommend this action to the Board of Medicine as a fast-track regulatory action. Dr. Ali seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

6. Orientation to the Board

Dr. Harp shared a presentation to welcome new Advisory Board members to their role and serve as a refresher for members who have served on the Board for a while. He reviewed the structure of the Department of Health Professions and how the Board of Medicine receives oversight from the Commonwealth.

Licensing Report

Jamie Culp provided the following licensing statistics for Occupational Therapists:

Total Licensee for **OT** = 5,480

Total # of licenses issued for OT from Jan 1 2025 - current is 205

Processing time is 52 days

Clearance rate is 105%

Announcements

Mr. Sobowale advised that at future meetings, there will be no paper agenda packet. Advisory members will have their items pre-loaded on a laptop. The agenda will also be projected for the public to view. Agency staff will continue to send out the notice of meetings by email ahead of time.

Next Scheduled Meeting

The next scheduled meeting is Tuesday, October 21, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

Adjournment

Dr. Harp adjourned the meeting at 12:21 p.m.

William L. Harp, MD, Executive Director

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