



*Occupational Therapy:
Living Life To Its Fullest*

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Judith Pachter Schulder
Board Counsel
Pennsylvania State Board of Occupational Therapy Education and Licensure
P.O. Box 2649
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2649

Re: Proposed rule to adopt §§ 42.51-42.58 Relating to Continued Competency

Dear Ms. Schulder,

I am writing on behalf of the American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. (AOTA), which represents the professional interests of 140,000 occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants throughout the country, including more than 2,560 occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants and occupational therapy students in the state of Pennsylvania. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed continued competency rules and regulations.

AOTA applauds the Board for developing the continued competency rule for occupational therapists in Pennsylvania. We appreciate that Board members and licensees have long recognized the need for licensed occupational therapists to maintain and expand their professional knowledge and skills.

AOTA recognizes that the proposed rule offers a number of acceptable continued competency activities, including continuing education courses, academic courses, mentorship, fieldwork supervision, professional writing and editing, presentation, and instruction. AOTA encourages the Board to recognize additional activities for which hours could be awarded, and suggests that independent study, development of or participation in a research project, development of a grant proposal, and professional meetings and activities be included as types of activities for which continued competency contact hours may be awarded. These activities are also included as types of activities for which hours may be awarded in AOTA's *Model Continuing Competence Guidelines for Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants: A Resource for State Regulatory Boards*. As a reference, AOTA's model guidelines for continuing competence are attached to this letter as well as AOTA's *Standards for Continuing Competence*.

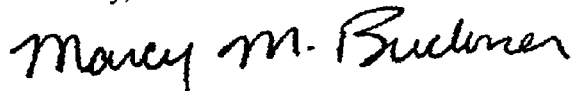
AOTA urges the Board to review § 42.53(c) of the proposed rule that requires occupational therapists seeking to reactivate a lapsed or inactive license to show compliance with the continued competency contact hour requirement during the 2-year period immediately preceding application for reactivation. This requirement does not recognize the time span for which the occupational therapist may have been out of practice, and regulates an OT who has a lapsed license of one year the same as an OT with a lapsed license of ten or more years. AOTA encourages the Board to apply tiered requirements so that practitioners who have been out of practice for several years will be required to participate in more hours of continued competency activities than a practitioner whose license has not been lapsed for a long period of time. As a reference, AOTA's *Guidelines for Re-Entry into the Field of Occupational Therapy* are attached.

These guidelines provide for tiered requirements based on the occupational therapist's absence from practice, and also include a requirement for supervised work experience. AOTA encourages the Board to include supervised work experience as a requirement for re-entry as well as tiered requirements for hours of continued competency.

Finally, we encourage the Board to support legislation to authorize the Board to establish continued competency requirements for occupational therapy assistants.

AOTA thanks you for your time and consideration regarding this matter. If we can provide further information or resources, please feel free to contact Marcy Buckner at mbuckner@aota.org or (301)-652-6611 ex. 2016.

Sincerely,



Marcy M. Buckner
State Policy Analyst

The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.

Attachments:

AOTA's Model Continuing Competence Guidelines for Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants: A Resource for State Regulatory Boards

AOTA's Standards for Continuing Competence

AOTA's Guidelines for Re-Entry into the Field of Occupational Therapy

CC: Cathy Dolhi
President, Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association

**Model Continuing Competence Guidelines for
Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants:
A Resource for State Regulatory Boards**

Purpose

The purpose of these model guidelines for continuing competence of occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants is to provide a template for use by occupational therapy regulatory boards and state agencies when drafting or amending regulations addressing participation in continuing competence activities. The model is intended to help safeguard the public health, safety and welfare by establishing minimum guidelines that are consistent with the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)'s Standards for Continuing Competence and accepted practice in the profession of occupational therapy.

Continuing education (CE) has been widely accepted as a method of maintaining and enhancing professional competence. AOTA recognizes, however, that there are multiple methods by which an individual may demonstrate pursuit of continuing competence. The following model guidelines for regulation encourage use of a variety of continuing competence activities including continuing education, academic coursework, independent study, mentorship, participation in research and other activities. Optional provisions are provided to encourage licensees to conduct a self-assessment and implement a professional development plan for continuing competence.

Chapter 01. General Regulations.

01. Definitions

- A. In this chapter, the following terms have the meanings indicated.
1. "AOTA Approved Provider Program" refers to a voluntary process of review and approval of continuing education (CE) providers by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) based on established criteria and guidelines that assess a provider's ability to develop and implement CE activities that are relevant to the practice of occupational therapy. Providers who are approved by AOTA will be authorized to offer AOTA CEUs for continuing education activities.
 2. "AOTA CEU" means a standard unit of measure for participation in an organized continuing education activity that meets the AOTA Approved Provider criteria for relevance to the foundation and/or practice of occupational therapy. One AOTA CEU is equivalent to 10 contact hours of participation in an organized CE activity, excluding meals and breaks.
 3. "Board" means the [state or jurisdiction] Occupational Therapy Regulatory Board.
 4. "Contact Hour" means a unit of measure for a continuing education

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activity. One contact hour equals 60 minutes in a learning activity, excluding meals and breaks.

5. "Continuing Competence" means a dynamic, multidimensional process in which an occupational therapist or an occupational therapy assistant develops and maintains the knowledge, performance skills, interpersonal abilities, critical reasoning skills, and ethical reasoning skills necessary to perform his or her professional responsibilities.
6. "Continuing Education" means structured educational experiences beyond entry-level academic degree work that are intended to provide advanced or enhanced knowledge in a particular area.
7. "Continuing Education Credit" means credit given for a formalized activity in the form of contact hours or continuing education units.
8. "Continuing Education Unit (CEU)" means a unit of measure for continuing education. One CEU is defined as 10 contact hours of participation in a learning activity excluding meals and breaks.
9. "Peer Reviewed" means any written work that is blind reviewed by more than one person under uniform criteria.
10. "Points" means an assigned unit of measure for each continuing competence activity as defined in Section 05.

02. Continuing Competence Requirements for Licensure

- A. Licensees applying for license renewal shall complete a minimum of ____ points of qualified activities for maintaining continuing competence during the preceding biannual renewal period. Licensees who are issued a license for a period less than 24 months shall prorate the number of points to ____ point(s) for each month licensed.
- B. Applicants for licensure who are or have previously been licensed in another state that does not have continuing education or continuing competence requirements for license renewal shall show evidence of completing ____ points of qualified activities for maintaining continuing competence within the one year of submitting the application for licensure.
- C. Applicants for licensure who were previously licensed by the Board and whose license has lapsed for ____ years or less from the time the application is filed shall obtain ____ points of qualified activities for maintaining continuing competence for each year in which the license has been in the lapsed status.
- D. Applicants for licensure who were previously licensed by the Board and whose

license has lapsed for more than ____ years shall obtain ____ points of qualified activities for maintaining continuing competence and may be required by the Board to fulfill additional requirements that show evidence of competency to practice as an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant on a case-by-case basis.

03. Exceptions to Requirements

- A. Applicants for initial licensure as an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant who apply for licensure within one year of successfully completing the entry-level certification exam are exempt from continuing competence activity requirements.
- B. Applicants for licensure by endorsement from a state or jurisdiction which has continuing education or continuing competence activity requirements for license renewal are exempt from continuing competence activity requirements.

04. Approval of Activities for Maintaining Continuing Competence

- A. Provider Pre-Approval
 - 1. Provided that the activities are consistent with the provisions of these regulations, the Board shall grant pre-approval to:
 - a. Activities sponsored or approved by the [state or jurisdiction] occupational therapy association;
 - b. Activities sponsored or approved by the American Occupational Therapy Association; and
 - c. Activities sponsored by AOTA Approved Providers.
- B. Approval of Provider Activities
 - 1. A provider who wishes to obtain Board approval of activities for maintaining continuing competence, consistent with Section 05., shall submit to the Board at least ____ days in advance of the program all required information including:
 - a. Course description;
 - b. Learning outcomes;
 - c. Target audience;
 - d. Content focus;
 - e. Detailed agenda for the activity;
 - f. Amount of credit offered;
 - g. Qualifications for the presenter(s);
 - h. Sample documentation for demonstrating satisfactory completion by course participants such as certificate of completion.
 - 2. Upon review of the completed application, the Board shall notify the provider as to whether or not the program has been approved, and, if

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approved, the number of points that will be awarded.

3. A provider of a continuing competence activity shall furnish documentation for demonstrating satisfactory completion to all participants, specifying the following information:
 - a. Name of the participant;
 - b. Name of the provider;
 - c. Dates of the activity and completion;
 - d. Title and location of the activity;
 - e. Number of points awarded by the Board; and
 - f. Signature of the provider or representative.

C. Approval of Other Activities

1. A licensee may obtain Board approval of continuing education credits for activities not already approved. Activities must be consistent with Section 05. In order to obtain Board approval, the licensee shall submit to the Board the following materials:
 - a. Course description;
 - b. Learning outcomes;
 - c. Target audience;
 - d. Content focus;
 - e. Detailed agenda for the activity;
 - f. Qualifications for the presenter(s);
 - g. Sample documentation for demonstrating satisfactory completion by course participants such as certificate of completion.
2. Upon review of the completed application, the Board shall notify the licensee as to whether or not the activity has been approved and, if approved, the number of points awarded.

05. Scope of Qualified Activities for Maintaining Continuing Competence

- A. To be accepted by the Board, activities must be related to a licensee's current or anticipated roles and responsibilities in occupational therapy and must directly or indirectly serve to protect the public by enhancing the licensee's continuing competence.
- B. Subject matter for qualified activities include research; theoretical or practical content related to the practice of occupational therapy; or the development, administration, supervision, and teaching of clinical practice or service delivery programs by occupational therapists or occupational therapy assistants.

06. Qualified Activities for Maintaining Continuing Competence

- A. Continuing Education Courses

1. Includes attendance and participation as required at a live presentation such as a workshop, seminar, conference, or in-service educational program. May also include participation in other continuing education activities that require a formal assessment of learning. Examples include electronic or Web-based courses, AOTA Self-Paced Clinical Courses or other formalized self study courses, AOTA Continuing Education Articles, etc.
2. A licensee may earn ____ point(s) for each contact hour or equivalent unit that is awarded by the provider.
3. Documentation shall include a certificate of completion or similar documentation including name of course, date, author/instructor, sponsoring organization, location, and number of hours attended and amount of continuing education credit earned.

B. Academic Coursework

1. Includes participation in on-site or distance learning academic courses from a university, college, or vocational technical adult education course related to the practice of occupational therapy.
2. A licensee may earn ____ point(s) per credit hour.
3. Documentation shall include an original official transcript indicating successful completion of the course, date, and a description of the course from the school catalogue or course syllabus.

C. Independent Study

1. Includes reading books, journal articles, reviewing videos, etc.
2. A licensee may earn ____ point(s) for ____ hour(s) spent in an independent study activity.
3. Documentation shall include title, author, publisher, time spent, and date of completion. Licensee must include a statement that describes how the activity relates to a licensee's current or anticipated roles and responsibilities.

D. Mentorship

1. Participation as Mentee
 - a. Participation in a formalized mentorship agreement with a mentor as defined by a signed contract between the mentor and mentee that outlines specific goals and objectives and designates the plan of activities that are to be met by the mentee.
 - b. A licensee may earn ____ point(s) for ____ hour(s) spent in activities directly related to achievement of goals and objectives.

The Board may accept formalized mentorship programs for the amount of credit recommended by the mentor or as deemed appropriate by the Board.

- c. Documentation shall include name of mentor and mentee, copy of signed contract, dates, hours spent and focus of mentorship activities, and outcomes of mentorship agreement.

2. Participation as Mentor

- a. Participation in a formalized mentorship agreement with a mentee as defined by a signed contract that designates the responsibilities of the mentor and specific goals and objectives that are to be met by the mentee.
- b. A licensee may earn ____ point(s) for each ____ hour(s) spent in mentorship activities as a mentor.
- c. Documentation shall include name of mentor and mentee, copy of signed contract, dates, hours spent and focus of mentorship activities, and outcomes of mentorship agreement.

E. Fieldwork Supervision

- 1. Participation as the primary clinical fieldwork educator for Level II OT or OTA fieldwork students.
- 2. A licensee may earn ____ point(s) for supervision of a fieldwork student. Documentation shall include verification provided by the school to the fieldwork educator with the name of student, school, and dates of fieldwork or the signature page of the completed student evaluation form. Evaluation scores and comments should be deleted or blocked out.

F. Professional Writing

- 1. Publication of a peer-reviewed or non peer-reviewed book, chapter, or article.
- 2. A licensee may earn:
 - a. ____ point(s) as an author of a book,
 - b. ____ point(s) as author of a chapter,
 - c. ____ point(s) as author peer-reviewed article, and
 - d. ____ point(s) as author of a non peer-reviewed article.
 - e. ____ point(s) as an editor of a book.
- 3. Documentation shall consist of full reference for publication including, title, author, editor, and date of publication; or copy of acceptance letter if not yet published.

G. Presentation and Instruction

- 1. First time or significantly revised presentation of an academic course or

peer-reviewed or non peer-reviewed workshop, seminar, in-service, electronic or Web-based course, etc.

2. A licensee may earn ____ point(s) for each hour of credit that is awarded for an activity.
3. Documentation shall include a copy of official program/schedule/syllabus including presentation title, date, hours of presentation, and type of audience or verification of such signed by the sponsor.

H. Research

1. Development of or participation in a research project.
2. A licensee may earn ____ point(s) for each ____ hour(s) spent working on a research project.
3. Documentation includes verification from the primary investigator indicating the name of research project, dates of participation, major hypotheses or objectives of the project, and licensee's role in the project.

I. Grants

1. Development of a grant proposal.
2. A licensee may earn ____ point(s) for each ____ hour(s) spent working on a grant proposal.
3. Documentation includes name of grant proposal, name of grant source, purpose and objectives of the project, and verification from the grant author regarding licensee's role in the development of the grant if not the author.

J. Professional Meetings & Activities

1. Consistent with Section 05., participation in board or committee work with agencies or organizations in professionally related areas to promote and enhance the practice of occupational therapy.
2. A licensee may earn ____ point(s) for participation on a committee or board for one year or a minimum of ____ hours.
3. Documentation includes name of committee or board, name of agency or organization, purpose of service, and description of licensee's role. Participation must be validated by an officer or representative of the organization or committee.

07. Waiver of requirements

- A. Under extenuating circumstances, the Board may waive all or part of the continuing competence activity requirements of these regulations if an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant submits written request for a waiver and provides evidence to the satisfaction of the Board of an illness, injury, financial hardship, family hardship, or other similar extenuating circumstance which precluded the individual's completion of the requirements on a case-by-case basis.

08. Documentation/Reporting Procedures

- A. Licensees shall maintain the required proof of completion for each continuing competence activity as specified in these regulations. The required documentation shall be retained by the licensee for a minimum of two years following the last day of the license renewal period for which the continuing competence activities were earned.
- B. Licensees should not send their continuing competence activity documentation to the Board unless audited or otherwise requested by the Board.

09. Audit of Continuing Competence Activities

- A. The Board shall perform a random audit or full review of licensees' continuing competence activity requirements at least once during each licensing period.
- B. A licensee who is audited shall complete the requirements of the audit by the deadline specified by the board.
- C. A licensee who fails to comply with the continuing competence activity requirements of these regulations may be subject to disciplinary action that may include suspension or revocation of license.

10. Other Provisions

- A. Licensees may not carry over continuing competence activity points from one licensure period to the next.
- B. Licensees may not receive credit for the same continuing competence activity more than once.

Chapter 02. Optional Provisions

01. Definitions.

- A. In this chapter, the following terms have the meanings indicated.

1. "AOTA Continuing Competence Plan for Professional Development" means AOTA's self-initiated plan to assist occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants in addressing competence in their various responsibilities and career stages. It encourages occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants to examine each area of responsibility relative to their practice and perform a self-assessment of professional development strengths and needs in order to develop and implement an effective continuing competence plan for professional development.
2. "AOTA's Professional Development Tool" refers to an AOTA resource that facilitates the process of assessing individual learning needs and interests, creating a professional development plan, and documenting professional development activities.
3. "AOTA Standards for Continuing Competence" means standards adopted for the profession by the AOTA Representative Assembly that establish the principal criteria by which individual occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants can examine their own competence. The Standards for Continuing Competence address knowledge, critical reasoning, interpersonal abilities, performance skills, and ethical reasoning.
4. "Portfolio" means an organized system for gathering a record of work history, professional accomplishments, and professional and learning activities, as well as documentation of the activities identified to meet individual professional development needs.
5. "Professional Development" means the ongoing process by an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant to actively engage in activities that improve skills necessary for meeting the behaviors or tasks inherent in each of his or her professional responsibilities.
6. "Self-assessment" means the process of reflecting on one's professional responsibilities in relationship to the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes already acquired and those needed in order to demonstrate competence in the individual's areas of responsibility.

02. Continuing Competence Plan for Professional Development

- A. It is the responsibility of each licensee to design and implement his or her own strategy for developing and demonstrating continuing competence. Each licensee has current and/or anticipated roles and responsibilities that require specific knowledge, attitude, abilities, and skills. It is incumbent upon each licensee to examine his or her unique responsibilities, assess his or her continuing competence needs related to these responsibilities, and develop and implement a plan to meet those needs.
- B. The Board recognizes the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)

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as the standard setting body for the profession of occupational therapy, and endorses the use of AOTA's voluntary Professional Development Tool.

- C. A licensee may seek recognition by the Board for an alternative professional development plan for maintaining continuing competence provided that the proposed plan is consistent with the provisions of these regulations and includes:
 - 1. The completion of a formal self-assessment process;
 - 2. The establishment of professional development goals and objectives; and
 - 3. A portfolio approach to organize and document continuing competence activities related to the licensee's plan.
- D. Licensees who voluntarily implement a plan for continuing competence during the current license period can receive credit toward their continuing competence activity requirements.
 - 1. A licensee may earn ____ point(s) for completion of activities related to the development and implementation of a continuing competence plan for professional development.
 - 2. Documentation shall include a signed document by the licensee attesting to the fact that he or she has used AOTA's Professional Development Tool consistent with the provisions of these regulations.

03. Board Certification and Specialty Certification

- A. The Board shall recognize completion of activities that result in board certification or specialty certification by AOTA during the current licensure period.
- B. A licensee may seek prior approval by the Board for recognition of an alternative board or specialty certification.
- C. A licensee may earn up to ____ point(s) for each board certification or specialty certification credential earned or re-certified during the current licensure period.
- D. Documentation includes certificate of completion or other documentation from the recognized certifying body that identifies satisfactory completion of requirements for obtaining board certification or specialty certification.

STANDARDS FOR CONTINUING COMPETENCE

AOTA's Standards for Continuing Competence

Continuing competence is a process involving the examination of current competence and the development of capacity for the future. It is a component of ongoing professional development and lifelong learning. Continuing competence is a dynamic, multidimensional process in which the occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistant develop and maintain the knowledge, performance skills, interpersonal abilities, critical reasoning, and ethical reasoning skills necessary to perform current and future roles and responsibilities within the profession.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants use these standards to assess, maintain, and document continuing competence. Basic to these standards is the belief that all occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants share core values and knowledge guiding actions within their roles and responsibilities. The core of occupational therapy involves an understanding of occupation and purposeful activities and their influence on human performance. Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants have unique skills in activity analysis and activity synthesis, and in critical and ethical reasoning. The profession is based on the values of client-centered holistic intervention and the right of an individual to be self-determining.

Standard 1. Knowledge

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants shall demonstrate understanding and comprehension of the information required for the multiple roles and responsibilities they assume. The individual must demonstrate

- mastery of the core of occupational therapy as it is applied in the multiple responsibilities assumed;
- expertise associated with primary responsibilities;
- integration of relevant evidence, literature, and epidemiological data related to primary responsibilities and to the consumer population(s) served; and
- integration of current Association documents and legislative, legal, and regulatory issues into practice.

Standard 2. Critical Reasoning

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants shall employ reasoning processes to make sound judgments and decisions. The individual must demonstrate

- deductive and inductive reasoning in making decisions specific to roles and responsibilities;
- problem-solving skills necessary to carry out responsibilities;
- the ability to analyze occupational performance as influenced by environmental factors;
- the ability to reflect on one's own practice;
- management and synthesis of information from a variety of sources in support of making decisions; and
- application of evidence, research findings, and outcome data in making decisions.

Standard 3. Interpersonal Abilities

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants shall develop and maintain their professional relationships with others within the context of their roles and responsibilities. The individual must demonstrate

- use of effective communication methods that match the abilities, personal factors, learning styles, and therapeutic needs of consumers and others;

- effective interaction with people from diverse backgrounds;
- use of feedback from consumers, families, supervisors, and colleagues to modify one's professional behavior;
- collaboration with consumers, families, and professionals to attain optimal consumer outcomes; and
- the ability to develop and sustain team relationships to meet identified outcomes.

Standard 4. Performance Skills

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants shall demonstrate the expertise, aptitudes, proficiencies, and abilities to competently fulfill their roles and responsibilities. The individual must demonstrate expertise in

- practice grounded in the core of occupational therapy;
- the therapeutic use of self, the therapeutic use of occupations and activities, the consultation process, and the education process to bring about change;
- integrating current practice techniques and technologies;
- updating performance based on current research and literature; and
- quality improvement processes that prevent practice error and maximize client outcomes.

Standard 5. Ethical Reasoning

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants shall identify, analyze, and clarify ethical issues or dilemmas to make responsible decisions within the changing context of their roles and responsibilities. The individual must demonstrate

- understanding and adherence to the profession's Code of Ethics, other relevant codes of ethics, and applicable laws and regulations;
- the use of ethical principles and the profession's core values to understand complex situations; and
- the integrity to make and defend decisions based on ethical reasoning.

Authors

The Commission on Continuing Competence and Professional Development:

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The Commission on Continuing Competence and Professional Development

Penelope Moyers, EdD, OTR/L, FAOTA, Chairperson

Adopted by the Representative Assembly 2005C243

This document replaces the 1999 document *Standards for Continuing Competence (American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 53, 559-560)*.

To be published and copyrighted in 2005 by the American Occupational Therapy Association in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 59* (November/December).