

What does the Executive Director of the OTLB do?

The Oregon Occupational Therapy Licensing Board is one of the smallest State Agencies, but must follow procedures and laws like all state agencies. The office has one Director and one part-time (2 hours a day) office specialist. The agency must prepare the agency budget reports, policies decreed by the Governor's Department of Administrative Service, and Office of the Progress Board. The OTLB must follow state rules for purchasing, budgeting, personnel and contracting. These are often not geared for a small agency, but the regulations must be followed. The Director and Board also follow rules on public board meetings, public minutes, and public records.

As a state agency the board is accountable to the legislature. The required forms and meetings dealing with state rules and regulations, and the Agency budget using new computer systems must be prepared. As a state Agency, the Director, along with Board member testify before the Ways and Means committee to get the budget passed. The OTLB budget, though small and funded by "other funds" (i.e. license fees) is scrutinized closely. The mandate given to the Board is "protecting the public by supervising occupational therapy practice and ensuring safe and ethical delivery of occupational therapy services".

Any changes in OT laws must go through the legislature. When the law was changed last session to allow for two-year licensing, the Board worked with the Director to adopt the necessary administrative rules. Specific procedures must be followed to accomplish changes in rules. No fee or law can be changed without legislative authorization. During the session the Director must follow legislation that might affect occupational therapists. This may include changes in the PT laws, changes in hospital regulations, or changes in administrative rules about hearings officers.

Under Oregon law and administrative rules, the OTLB must do what the law specifically tells the Board to do, and can do what the law allows us to do. The Director works with board members and ad hoc committees, composed of "stakeholders" and licensees, to periodically updates laws, rules, regulations and procedures. The Director also follows through on any directive given by the Board, and follows through on actions taken by the Board at their meetings which are held quarterly.

Please see the Board's recent Four Year Strategic Plan (found on the web site www.otlb.state.or.us under "About the Board". Currently the Board is considering changes in rules for Reentry into practice, changes in CE for new grads or licensees from other states; changes in the OT definition; and changes in rules regarding use of Aides. The Director helps the Board with these proposals.

How do the Board and Director spend your license fees? The biggest expenditure is for the 1.25 FTE, one Director and .25 office staff to provide the mandatory services and the equipment the Board staff need to do the job. We have a small office in the Portland State Office Building, near Lloyd Center and a computer, data base and filing system to keep required records. We send out renewal notices and follow procedures to keep OT and OT Assistants licensed. This is the priority since Occupational Therapists cannot work in Oregon without being licensed. We must issue licenses and then renew the

licenses by May 31 of every even year. The Board's goal for new applications is to have them issued within three days of receipt of required documentation. We also issue limited permits for new graduates who are waiting for final result of their NBCOT examination.

The Director is exploring how to issues licenses and renewals online. This is a big undertaking and takes planning. It is not just the OTLB agency that is involved but the state system must be geared to receiving payment by credit card and a new licensing program must be purchased. As a small agency we must work with other agencies to share this cost.

The Board and director also monitor Continuing Education (CE) and audit 5%+ of licensees. We may also audit other licensees, for example those who had complaints filed against them, or received a CE waiver. The Board is considering auditing all licensees in the future as it has done in the past. The Director is looking at how to make this record keeping easier. Can we start doing it online?

The Director answers questions from the public, health professionals or agencies and occupational therapists to provide answers such as how to become licensed, what is within their scope of practice, what CE is needed, and other issues. The Director keeps the web site current, an important task since many people look there first for answers.

Another important part of the job is to investigate complaints and determine whether violations of Oregon law and administrative rules have occurred. In the past there were relatively few complaints. Now the director spends more time dealing with these issues. In **2000** there were **0** complaints, in **2001** there were **6**; in **2002** there were **2**; in **2003** there was **1**; and in **2004** there were **8** (of which one is still pending in February 2005). In 2005, by March, there are two new complaints.

The Director works with the Board, with the Board's investigator and with the Asst Attorney General assigned to the Board to monitor, investigate, and hold meetings to determine outcomes of investigations. Most often complaints have been resolved through the use of a Consent Order. This legal Order becomes the public record of the action taken by the Board and might be a Public Reprimand, a Suspension or a Probation with conditions. Part of your license fees pay to keep you licensed so that you can work in your profession. The Director helps work to protect the standards of the Occupational Therapy profession. Your license as a health care professional assures the public, your peers and your co-workers that you and your peers meet standards of personal and professional competence. The state licensing Board members and Director speak on your behalf to protect the health and safety of Oregonians.

Finally, the Director works with the Board to coordinate with other agencies on such issues as competence, improvement in licensing and administrative practices, and board development. The Director ensures that state agency functions are properly carried out. We may be a small state agency, but we strive to provide high customer satisfaction and to keep improving the procedures of the Occupational Therapy Licensing Board.

If you have any questions or wish to contact the Executive Director, Felicia Holgate, you can call 503-731-4048 or e-mail: Felicia.M.Holgate@state.or.us