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Licensure Portability Resource Guide

This article is taken from the Licensure Portability Resource Guide, which is available on the FSBPT website at [Licensure Portability Resource Guide](#).

Introduction

In the current healthcare environment, portability of licensed individuals has been identified by many as a critical issue. The federal government has communicated concern about the current portability barriers and several bills have been submitted to Congress in attempts to address this issue (military spouses, dual licensure system, etc.).

The ability of a clinician to practice across jurisdictional boundaries with minimal barriers is an issue coming to the forefront because of the changing healthcare system, the evolution of physical therapy education, mobile communications between patient and client, mobility of patients accessing care, large healthcare corporations / insurance companies, and the advent of new ways in which to deliver care, such as telemedicine.

State boundaries and differences in licensure and practice requirements are barriers to access to healthcare. Acknowledging that some regulatory requirements are completely appropriate, the significant issue regarding licensure portability is overcoming unnecessary licensure barriers. The FSBPT definition of licensure portability is, "the ability to obtain licensure or recognition with minimal regulatory barriers to practice in multiple jurisdictions."

Even small changes to improve licensure portability positively impacts public protection. Patient access to qualified providers could potentially increase. Continuity of care for patients as they relocate or vacation could improve. And, disciplinary data and notifications could be enhanced, as could information-sharing between jurisdictions.

In 2012, the Delegate Assembly passed a motion requesting the Board of Directors bring back portability tools to the 2013 Delegate Assembly. This guide is one resource jurisdictions may consult for suggestions to improve licensure portability.

Getting Started

Jurisdictions that would like to make improvements in the portability of licenses and the mobility of physical therapists should review the following list of potential ways to do so. Many of the items can be acted on by an individual jurisdiction, independent of any other jurisdiction's actions, yet still have an impact.

1. Licensure Process and Application Requirements

Review and evaluate licensure requirements for unnecessary regulatory barriers. There may be processes that increase licensure processing time, which served a purpose at one time, but may no longer be necessary. (Examples: personal interviews, Board approval of routine applications rather than the staff licensing processing, and granting the license for those with a clean application.) Removing unnecessary barriers that have no impact on public protection increases the efficiency of licensure and licensure portability.

2. Licensure Exemptions

Jurisdictions should review and evaluate licensure exemptions currently in the jurisdiction's Practice Act. The use of licensure exemptions should be judicious because the motivation for regulating a profession is protecting the public from incompetent providers. These exemptions play an important role in allowing licensed physical therapists to move freely and carry out their professional responsibilities for a limited time in a jurisdiction where they are not licensed. However, the small number of persons who fit into these limited categories, combined with the time constraints (60 days), results in little overall impact on the mobility of the profession as a whole. Some of the more common exemptions and a partial list of those found in the [Model Practice Act](#) are listed below (see MPA for all exemptions):

- A person in an entry-level professional education program approved by the Board, who is satisfying clinical education requirements related to the person's physical therapist (PT) education while under onsite supervision of a PT.
- A PT who is practicing in the U. S. Armed Services, U.S. Public Health Service, or Veterans Administration pursuant to federal regulations for jurisdiction licensure of healthcare providers.
- A PT who is licensed in another jurisdiction of the United States or credentialed to practice PT in another country, if that person is teaching, demonstrating, or providing PT services in connection with teaching, or participating in an educational seminar, of no more than 60 days in a calendar year.
- A PT who is licensed in another jurisdiction of the United States if that person is providing consultation by telehealth, as defined in _____, to a PT licensed under this act.
- A PT who is licensed in a jurisdiction of the United States or credentialed in another country, if that person by contract or employment is providing PT to patients / clients affiliated with or employed by established athletic teams, athletic organizations, or performing arts companies temporarily practicing, competing, or performing in the jurisdiction for no more than 60 days in a calendar year.

3. Licensure Verification from Other Jurisdictions

The processes and processing times for jurisdictions to complete verification of licensure for other jurisdictions vary greatly. Jurisdictions should consider furnishing and allowing electronic verifications to speed up the licensing process. Rules requiring paper verifications are antiquated and should be considered for updating. At least one jurisdiction is operating paperless verifications. Thus, other states have already had to make allowances for the licensees from that state. Additionally, jurisdictions may choose to utilize the public records access available on board websites to verify licenses quickly and efficiently.

4. National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) Score Minimums Pre-dating Universal Pass Rate
In 1996, all member jurisdictions adopted the uniform passing score for the NPTE, which is criterion-referenced and is widely accepted as the methodology for establishing performance standards for high-stakes examinations. This was a huge step forward in allowing greater mobility of PTs and physical therapy assistants (PTA) throughout the U.S. However, some states still have requirements that vary for those who tested prior to the universal pass rate.

At this time, PTs and PTAs who tested prior to 1996 have more than 15 years of experience and a license history. When PTs who tested before 1996 attempt to move and do not meet the jurisdiction's test score requirement, they are unable to become licensed without re-testing. The PT's continuing education, experience, etc., are not taken into account for licensure and the jurisdiction may lose a qualified licensee and potential taxpayer. Jurisdictions should consider changing any language that has a specific score requirement prior to 1996 to more general language, such as Oregon and Texas did.

5. Examination, Licensure & Disciplinary Database (ELDD) Participation

If every jurisdiction reported their licensure and disciplinary information – complete with Social Security number and date of birth – to the FSBPT ELDD, there would be greater assurance that a new applicant's full licensure history would be provided to the state. The report with the NPTE score transfer would include any disciplinary actions lodged against the applicant. Jurisdictions would not have to rely on self-reporting for this information. Jurisdictions could easily find out in which states licenses have been held. With such robust information, the need for verification is no longer necessary, eliminating this sometimes time-consuming step. Additionally, full ELDD participation generally creates improved information sharing, better research capability, and improved public protection by identifying those applicants with disciplinary histories.

6. aPTitude

aPTitude is the free online service that allows licensees to log and track continuing competence (CC) activities and compare them to the requirements for their license(s). It is imperative that each state verify their model with FSBPT to ensure correct information for the licensee. Additionally, if jurisdictions were willing to accept aPTitude reports to substantiate CC activity, a licensee would only have to go to one place to understand all of the CC requirements, fill out one log, print one report, and submit it to as many states as necessary.

7. ProCert

ProCert is FSBPT's continuing competence activities certification program. When jurisdictions have rules, regulations, or policies in place to accept ProCert certification, a more consistent standard is applied regarding CC education and conferences. If every jurisdiction accepted ProCert, a licensee would be assured that a ProCert-certified activity will be accepted for credit in any jurisdiction in which they would like to become licensed. A licensee will not have to worry whether or not those courses or conferences they attended prior to licensing in the new state would apply towards the CC requirements there.

8. Future: Support a Common Licensure Application Service (CLAS)

CLAS would provide a single application recognized from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, which could have a state-specific addendum if required.

This would be a web-based, online application system that is designed, developed, maintained, and administered by FSBPT. This online application service would be for all licensees and jurisdictions to use for initial, renewal, and endorsement applications. Jurisdictions will be able to access through a single interface.

The online application service would encompass all of the common needs of the jurisdiction. Jurisdictions could submit an addendum, which would be linked to the Common Application as needed and be accessible to that jurisdiction specifically.

9. Future: Support a Credentials Verification Service

Credentials verification would be a service provided by the Federation to licensees for a fee. All documents core to professional licensure could be digitized and retained from entry into the profession to retirement. FSBPT would develop, implement, and maintain a service for applicants to send documents for verification, authentication, digitization, storage, and retrieval. In the future, jurisdictions could arrange to digitize their current hard copy files.

Conclusion

While we can never predict the future, it is clear license portability will be an issue for years to come. With the increased pressure from multiple sources to improve licensure portability and remove unnecessary barriers, changes to current licensure models seem inevitable. PT regulators have the opportunity to be on the cusp of the change and be driving the changes rather than having the changes dictated to them.