



Let's Have a Chat about Continuing Competence

This article is based on a presentation by Heidi Herbst Paakkonen, FSBPT Continuing Competence Product Manager; Tina Kelley, Board Administrator, New Hampshire Physical Therapy Governing Board; Adrienne Price, Executive Director, Georgia State Board of Physical Therapy; Jeffrey M. Rosa, FSBPT Managing Director of Continuing Competence; and Beth Sarfaty, PT, MBA, VP of Clinical Services and Quality Management, Select Medical, at the 2016 FSBPT Annual Meeting.

In this moderated session, representatives from Georgia, New Jersey, and New Hampshire shared their continuing competence stories. These conversations highlighted their experiences and explored how they worked through their challenges to come out on top. They explored three FSBPT products and their experiences with them: ProCert, Jurisprudence Assessment Module (JAM), and aPTitude.

ProCert

The New Jersey Board of Physical Therapy used to have the Board certify continuing education activities. Now they outsource it, which leads to delays in approval and educational vendors wondering what to do a week before courses are set to begin. It's not the best program because it's costly and inefficient.

ProCert is a comprehensive continuing competence activity certification program developed by FSBPT. FSBPT uses the Standards for Continuing Competence Activities to evaluate the content of continuing competence activities for purposes of awarding certification through ProCert. To use it in New Jersey, however, it would have to go through the legislature to change the regulations. The Board has been trying for more than four years to have ProCert approved and currently has ProCert language in the body of a rule draft, but it hasn't gone anywhere. In the meantime, the Board's hands are tied.

The Board does have a good organization that helps it to evaluate whether or not potential continuing education courses are meaningful and deserve credits. ProCert would be most beneficial in that it would take the burden off not only the states, but the vendors and the licensees. New Jersey is a mid-Atlantic state, so licensees can take courses in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and several other states within driving distance. One of the barriers now is if a vendor is approved in Pennsylvania but not in New Jersey, a New Jersey licensee cannot receive credit for taking the course. ProCert obviously would benefit licensees and vendors. But it also benefits boards because of the consistency by which courses are evaluated.

New Jersey criteria for approving continuing education programs include an extensive bibliography with at least five peer-reviewed articles published within the past five years, a current CV, the objectives, and a comprehensive timed agenda. The courses need to be identified as basic, intermediate, or advanced.

There is also a benefit to judging competence beyond continuing education hours, and ProCert provides that.

JAM

The Jurisprudence Assessment Module (JAM) is another product offered by FSBPT. JAM is a state-specific, convenient, easy-to-use learning opportunity for applicants for PT licensure, and for PTs and PTAs renewing their licenses, to meet certain jurisdiction-specific requirements.

New Hampshire decided some time ago to administer a jurisprudence exam. It came about when PT practitioners would say, “We have rules?” At the time, there were no options but for the New Hampshire Board of Physical Therapy to administer it itself.

Board members took sections of the rules and wrote questions. They came together, looked at the questions as a group and made some tweaks and changes. The Board then gave the questions to the administrator and said to devise 10 tests for the PTs and 10 for PTAs with this number of questions for each section. The tests were then coded so they had answer keys for each one. They then were sent out to licensees with the instructions to complete it or, if they were not to complete it, to return the blank exam. Many were lost or just ignored.

When the Board changed the rules, which occurred at least once a year, the administrator had to go through all the tests and change all the questions pertaining to the new rules. Those changes also often fell to the wayside.

Once New Hampshire learned about JAM, an online exam that licensees could do at any time, New Hampshire immediately jumped on it. Aside from New Hampshire and New Jersey, it's available in Georgia, Hawaii, and Oregon.

Bonus: it's a free service to the jurisdictions. To implement JAM in New Hampshire, the Board only had to tweak the rules a bit. All initial applicants for licensure, anyone reinstating their license, and all licensees in the years ending in zero or five are required to take it.

Licensees may not know all the rules since JAM was implemented, but they now are familiar with the sections and know where to look up a particular rule. When a licensee answers a question wrong, a popup tells them what section the answer is in and they have a second chance to answer the question. Once the exam is completed, the Federation sends the Board a notification of who has taken the exam and their score.

While free to the jurisdictions, a \$45 fee is charged to the licensee to take the exam.

The FSBPT provides nine experienced item writers and an item writer coordinator to develop a state JAM. The jurisdiction provides a person — a board member or administrator — who is knowledgeable about the state's laws and rules and how the board

applies the laws and rules. The test undergoes all the psychometric review that is done for the NPTE to ensure the test is psychometrically sound.

When the board changes the rules, they are now sent to FSBPT, which updates the questions to ensure they are always current.

aPTitude

aPTitude is a free continuing competence resource also developed by FSBPT. It is used by PT and PTA licensees; providers of continuing competence and continuing education (CC/CE) activities; and jurisdiction licensing boards.

Georgia previously randomly selected 2% of its licensees for a continuing competence audit. Georgia has one person to audit for 8,000 licensees in the state and 2% was all that could be handled. If a licensee renewing online was randomly selected, a notification would pop up and they would have to mail in their documentation. The documentation was often lost in the mail or internally. The documentation that made it through had to be reviewed to ensure the licensee complied with Georgia rules and regulations, then the individual was notified they passed or failed the audit.

PTs and PTAs suffer from the consistent human trait of waiting for the last minute to renew, so often licenses lapsed during the audit. Legislators and licensees flooded the Georgia State Board of Physical Therapy because the audit was not done to the licensees' convenience.

Of the other 98% not audited, it has been found that a good many of them are not completing their continuing education requirements. That was discovered when Georgia implemented aPTitude. With aPTitude, Georgia was able to audit 100% of its licensees in real time. Licensees upload the documentation for completed courses in aPTitude and then no longer have to worry about lost or misplaced paperwork. But when the initial upload was completed of the 8,000 licensees, the Board found more than 1,500 PTs and more than 500 PTAs had not been completing their coursework.

It wasn't difficult to implement aPTitude in Georgia. The Board and association were both on board on getting a continuing education tracking system. FSBPT helped spread the word and the model was built to match Georgia's rules. The Board did need to make rule changes to implement it, but with no opposition, it sailed through.

Education for the members began a year before the next renewal season. While educating the membership was done primarily through repeated mass emails, the Board worked with FSBPT to ensure the model was functioning correctly. It also worked simultaneously to change the rule so when the rule went into effect, aPTitude was ready to go.

FSBPT staff was ready to help Georgia deal with the deluge of phone calls from licensees once the system launched. Licensees who have not joined the digital age are referred to their local library, Kinkos, UPS, or their grandchildren for help to upload their documents.

Georgia was under time constraints, but some other jurisdictions have been able to determine they were going to establish requirements for a future licensure cycle and a future date. That gave them a ramp-up opportunity to allow licensees to test out aPTitude

before it was launched.



Heidi Herbst Paakkonen, MPA joined FSBPT as its Continuing Competence Product Manager in 2011. She previously served for eight years as the Executive Director of the Arizona Board of Physical Therapy, and two years as the Executive Director of the Arizona Physical Therapy Association. Her 15 years of physical therapy regulatory and public policy experience includes writing and implementing requirements; program development; enforcement and auditing; volunteer development and support; promoting awareness; and quality assessment. Ms. Paakkonen earned her Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Wyoming.



Tina M. Kelley has been the administrator for the New Hampshire Office of Licensed Allied Health Professionals since 2007, where she is responsible for licensing six different professions. Prior to that, she worked in the Health Facilities Administration and as administrator for the New Hampshire Board of Dental Examiners. Ms. Kelley has been an active FSBPT member, participating on the FSBPT Finance Committee, Education Committee, Nominating Committee, Council of Board Administrators (CBA) Nominating Committee, and serving as Vice Chair of the CBA.



Adrienne Price, Executive Director, Georgia State Board of Physical Therapy



Jeffrey M. Rosa joined the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy as one of its Managing Directors in August 2015. He previously served for 12 years as the Executive Director of the Ohio Physical Therapy Licensing Board. Prior to joining the Ohio PT Board, Mr. Rosa worked for the Ohio Board of Nursing and as a budget analyst with the Ohio Legislative Service Commission. Mr. Rosa holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from Yale University and a Master of Public Policy from the Gerald Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan.



Beth Sarfaty, PT, MBA is vice president of Clinical Services and Quality Management, Select Medical. She is a graduate of Northeastern University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Therapy, and was awarded her MBA with a concentration in Healthcare Management from Regis University. She was appointed to the New Jersey State Board of Physical Therapy Examiners in January of 2012.