



**Oregon Health Licensing Agency
Advisory Council on Hearing Aids
Education/Examination Committee Meeting**

Date: Tuesday, October 26 2010

Committee Members: Don Cloutier, Facilitator
C. Scot Frink
Martha Kocer
Chris Gustafson, Invited Subject Matter Expert
David Montross, Invited Subject Matter Expert
Rosalind Sinclair-Sjue, Invited Subject Matter Expert

Staff: Cerynthia Murphy, Qualification Analyst
Sinnamon Harris, Board Specialist

Public Attendees: Duane Davis Bob Williams
D. Wayne Seely Doug Gardner
Pat DeLapp David Kellogg
James LeCouix Grace LeCouix
Duane Smelser Cornel Saftencu
Bruce Melendy Peter Succo
Paul Willoughby

Don Cloutier, committee facilitator, called the Advisory Council on Hearing Aids Education/Examination meeting to order at 10 am, October 26, 2010, in the Rhoades Conference Room of the Oregon Health Licensing Agency at 700 Summer St NE, Salem, Oregon to continue to review and discuss the practical examination. Chris Gustafson, Rosalind Sinclair-Sjue, and David Montross were seated at the board table as a subject matter expert invited by the committee to use as a resource.

Cerynthia Murphy, Qualification Analyst, asked the three subject matter experts Rosalind Sinclair-Sjue, David Montross, and Chris Gustafson to introduce themselves. Sinclair-Sjue stated that the three of them are currently proctors for the hearing aid specialist practicum and could offer ideas on what would help to update the current examination. Montross offered that he had 22 years of experience as a dispenser and has been proctoring for approximately six years. Gustafson stated he had served on the Advisory Council on Hearing Aids for 13 years. He had worked with the education, training and licensure requirements as well as serving as a proctor for the past 15 years.

Murphy presented the meeting agenda, which included the September 23, Advisory Council on Hearing Aids Education/Examination Committee report. Murphy stated the committee will go into executive session under item number three in order to review the practical examination and under number four to review the Oregon Laws and Rules Examination. The October 26, 2010, agenda included:

1. September 23, 2010 Education Committee Report Review
2. Hearing Aid Specialist Training Program
 - a. Training Packet

- b. Hour Recommendations
3. Practical Examination Review
 - a. Examination Statistics
 - b. P1 A&B Audiometric Testing and Masking
 - c. P2 Ear Mold Impressions
 - d. P3 Fitting and Selection of Hearing Aids
 1. Audiograms
 2. Ear Molds
 3. Ansi Strips
4. Oregon Laws and Rules Examination Review

September 23, 2010 Education Committee Report Review

Murphy provided committee members with copies of the September 23, 2010, Education/Examination Committee report and summarized the report including the changes she had made to the forms and cover letter from recommendations made at that meeting. Murphy commented that today the committee would continue to explore the hour requirement and that practical hour recommendations by email from council member Fred Peters and Scot Frink would be considered as well as recommendations from public member Cornel Saftencu.

Murphy stated the committee had performed a preliminary review of sections P1 and P2 and the committee is still in the process of working on the examination but nothing at this point will be recommended to the council.

Hearing Aid Specialist Training Program

Murphy presented the committee with the updated draft cover letter entitled Hearing Aid Specialist Training Program for the packet. Murphy noted changes will be recommended concerning "direct supervision" that are used in this letter by the Education and Examination Committee to the Legislation and Rules Committee. Once all approved changes are in rule it will be reflected in the letter.

Murphy pointed out the modifications for the Certification of Training and the Hearing Aid Specialist Practical Training Tracking Form. The training tracking form now has a place for the trainee to track each week's total hours and add them to the prior week's total.

Hours Discussion and Proposed Recommendations

Murphy summarized an email received by the agency for the Education and Examination Committee from council public member Fred Peters. In the email, Peters expressed concerns over reducing the hour requirements for licensure and requested the committee to reconsider. Peters' concern stemmed from the increased complexity of newer instruments and public safety. He advocated for nothing less than a two-year associate degree as initially discussed by the full council. (Note: the complete email from Fred Peters was read out loud for the public attendees and was added to the meeting materials). Murphy reminded committee members that the full council had since voted not in favor of an associate degree at this time and that is why the committee is having the discussion today. Frink clarified the council had voted for the associate degree for one of the entry points for licensure and it was recommended by the council that the committee also explore avenues to maintain an apprenticeship program along with the option for a two-year associate degree. The council did not rule out an associate degree but allowed for the associate degree plus the option of an apprenticeship program.

Frink talked about the fears of supervisors just signing off on hours without those hours actually being completed and the difficulty of finding a supervisor for trainees. Frink stated this was one of the reasons the associate degree was proposed; it would provide a structured and formalized training program. The trainee would not have to worry about finding a supervisor. Murphy stated if the committee directed her to do so she

could present two recommendations to the council: One would be the 520 hours of practical training and the other would be the associate degree program.

Murphy presented Frink's evaluation and summary of the domains and proposal of a total of 520 hours of practical training. Details of the proposal:

- Audiometric Testing and Evaluation (60 hours)
- Counseling Regarding hearing Examination (60 hours)
- Hearing Aid Selection (60 hours)
- Ear Mold Impressions (60 hours)
- Hearing Aid Fitting and Follow-up (180 hours)
- Business Practices (60 hours)
- Elective hours in any of the above categories (40 hours)

Total: 520 Hours

Frink explained the "Business Practices" category combined certain areas previously outlined such as infection control, sanitation, HIPPA, ethics, etc. and now included a few new options collectively considered "back-office." The "elective hours" concept would allow a trainee to include additional hours from the general topics to fill out the required 520 hours. This concept would allow the trainee and supervisor some flexibility to focus more on specific areas as needed.

Murphy also presented a proposal emailed to the committee from Cornell Saftencu for 350 hours. Details of the proposal were as follows:

- Sanitation (2 hours)
- Audiometric Testing (100 hours)
- Counseling (50 hours)
- Hearing Aid Selection (50 hours)
- Ear Mold Impressions (25 hours)
- Fitting & Follow-up (120 hours)
- Business Procedures (3 hours)

Total: 350 Hours

Saftencu noted his proposal was based on similar license requirements for the states of Texas and California. Saftencu also commented that direct supervision, in his opinion, should be a minimum of 50 percent of the time before a trainee takes the examination. If the trainee were to fail either the written examination or the practical examination then the trainee would be 100 percent under direct supervision until the examinations were passed.

Frink provided the committee with emails he had received from consumers and professionals in the industry voicing their concern over the inadequate number of hours {160 hours} now required for hearing aid specialists compared to the knowledge the specialist should have to perform well in the field. Some emails had recommended specific hours but the consensus was that 160 hours are not enough.

Murphy asked the committee to make a determination of how many hours it wished to recommend to the full council. Kocer stated her initial concern was that the supervisor would find too many hours as a daunting task for direct supervision and therefore too few hearing aid specialists would be willing to take on a trainee. For that reason Kocer felt the 1200 hours Frink originally proposed were too many but 520 hours makes more sense. Kocer also felt that Frink's proposal had good rationales. Cloutier expressed he was in favor of the 520 hours. Kocer mentioned how very thorough she felt the IHS *Distance Learning Program for Professionals in Hearing Health Sciences* for theory was.

Public Comment

Duane Smelser, licensed hearing aid specialist, asked the committee to ensure there is direct supervision of a trainee. Murphy offered, as with other boards, the supervision requirements are placed in the law and if there is a complaint which results in an investigation and the hearing aid specialist is found to be in violation of the law, they would be cited. Smelser later explained he had worked in the corporate world in development and training and he had found the 160 hours of training he received as a hearing aid specialist grossly inadequate and he found himself ill-equipped to do the job well. Only through his own efforts to self-educate was he able to perform well. Smelser stated he has clients coming to his office unhappy with the service they had received at other offices. Frink interjected he felt formal complaints were not filed because the dispensers are not giving the clients the information on how to file complaints. Frink stated he sees clients at least once a week coming into his office because they have had a bad experience elsewhere.

Paul Willoughby commented that he has been in the field for many years and has trained a lot people. He stated it is obvious from the state examination who is being trained properly by supervisors and who is not. Willoughby suggested monitoring the examination for ongoing problems for those trainees under the same supervisor that continue to fail in the same section of the test.

Frink offered that part of his proposed outline of hours addressed the supervision issue. Frink explained his proposed supervisor standards:

1. Three years of previous licensed experience with NBC-IHS credentialing or four years without.
2. Currently licensed in Oregon with no more than one violation in the previous four years.

Frink stated should a pattern of failure occur in a specific area, OHLA should suspend the supervisor's status until he/she has demonstrated completion of additional training in that area. What this requirement would do is make it so that supervisors would not send their trainees for examination until they felt they were competent since the supervisor's status could be in jeopardy if they rushed trainees through the process.

Cornel Saftencu stated that he agreed that supervision has numerous failure issues and this issue should be pursued but he does not see where there are a lot of consumer complaints. Saftencu stated the dispensing community at this point was not in jeopardy and there are very qualified people in the field. Saftencu agreed that 160 hours was not enough and had proposed 350 hours but he was comfortable with 400 hours.

Duane Davis, member of the hearing aid association, stated that he has met with people who currently wear hearing aids and has found that they have not been shown how their hearing aids work by the hearing aid dispenser. For example, he has explained that they need to turn their T-coil (or on and most do not know what the T-coil is and what it is for. Davis felt that even 550 hours is not enough training for a hearing aid specialist.

D. Wayne Seely has used hearing aids for approximately 45 years but first time hearing aid users don't know if they should complain or not. They just stick their hearing aids in a drawer and don't use them. Technology is changing so very rapidly, Sealy said, and hearing aid dispensers need a much higher level of training. The complexity of the audiology/hearing aid field has evolved immensely in the last 15 years. Sealy felt a two-year associate degree was not too much to ask.

Bob Williams had hearing loss since he was 23 years old. Williams thanked the council for exploring the hour requirement issue. Williams stated he works with the hard of hearing and many have put their hearing aids on the shelf because they just don't know how to use them. Williams felt that on-the-job training was important with all the new products and he did not feel that an associate degree was unreasonable and that hearing aid

specialists need to be truly professionals. Williams stated there should never be a client who walks away from a hearing aid dispenser and not understand all the features or how to operate the new hearing aid(s).

Samie Patnode, Policy Analyst, addressed the committee explaining the role of an advisory committee and advisory council. There has been no consensus among hearing aid dispensers and hearing aid users on the issue of a two-year associate degree which would require a statute change. The Legislature would not be interested in an issue in which stakeholders do not agree, Patnode stated. Patnode suggested taking smaller steps in rule with education for the patient and the hearing aid specialist.

Cloutier closed public comment.

Proposed Issue Statements

Murphy summarized points so far made in the committee meeting before moving into executive session to discuss and review the practical examination.

Murphy stated there will be two issue statements from the Education and Examination Committee to recommend to the full council.

1. First issue statement recommendation would be the 520 hours of practical training plus the IHS *Distance Learning Program for Professionals in Hearing Health Sciences* for theory.
2. Second issue statement would offer the two-year associate degree.
3. The previous rule request for direct supervision will be retracted.

A future agenda item for discussion by the committee would be client education requirements, as for example, battery safety.

Frink spoke about verification measures for audiologists. Murphy pointed out that audiologist no longer have to follow the laws and rules for hearing aid specialists. If audiologists maintain their hearing aid specialist license then they do have to follow the laws and rules pertaining to a hearing aid specialist. Kocer noted an audiologist who is not a hearing aid specialist cannot be a supervisor.

Executive Session

Don Cloutier called the Advisory Council on Hearing Aids Education and Examination Committee immediately into Executive Session pursuant to Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 192.660(2)(f) at 12:01 pm in order to review and discuss the practical examination.

Don Cloutier ended the Advisory Council on Hearing Aids Education and Examination Committee executive session at 2:45 pm and reconvened regular session at 2:47 pm. Cloutier stated that no decisions or recommendations were made during executive session.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:02 pm.

Prepared by Sinnamon Harris, Board Specialist