

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT BOARD LICENSURE—Audiologists

October 2013

## The Board & Licensure

### What is the Board's mission and authority?

The Board is granted authority from the Legislature to protect the public by regulating the practice of speech-language pathology and audiology in Oregon. The Board issues licenses to qualified applicants, establishes and audits quality standards for professional development and SLPA supervision, and ensures professional and ethical practice.

### Who serves on the Board?

The seven-member Board consists of two SLPs, two audiologists, an otolaryngologist, and two public members, who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Oregon Senate to serve 3-year terms.

### What is the difference between Board licensure and ASHA certification? What is TSPC licensure?

A Board issued license is required to use the title of or work as a speech-language pathologist, audiologist, or speech-language pathology assistant in Oregon. [\[ORS 681.250\]](#) ASHA's Certificate of Clinical Competence is a voluntary credential based on national standards, *not* a license to practice. ASHA CCCs alone do not allow an individual to practice legally in Oregon; they must also hold a Board license. Individuals must hold their license before starting work (even if it is "orientation" or other non-client contact work).

An exception to Board statute allows an SLP practicing *solely* in public schools in Oregon to hold an educator license with a communications disorders or speech impaired endorsement issued by the Teacher Standards & Practices Commission, or TSPC. A TSPC license does *not* allow an SLP to have a private practice or work in any other setting. [\[ORS 681.230\]](#).

### How does the Board's mission differ from that of ASHA, OSHA, AAA, ABA, and OAA?

National and state-level professional associations exist to advance the interests of the speech and hearing professions. They develop and promulgate professional and ethical standards, and scope of practice. They advocate for billing and reimbursement and other issues. They may offer continuing education programs, and set standards for continuing competency. They may lobby legislators to attain professional goals. As membership organizations, they charge dues.

The Board is an agency of state government that protects the public by regulating professional practice. The Board has a majority of professional members on it, and sets standards for licensure and continuing competency, and professional and ethical practice. However, the Board must act to protect the patient and public, *not* the professional. As a part of the executive branch, the Board may provide information to legislators, but is limited in how it can represent the interests of itself or its licensees. The Board is supported 99% by licensing fees; it receives no tax dollars.

### When will my license expire? What will I need to do to renew it?

All Board audiology licenses expire at the same time every two years. Your license will expire on January 30, 2014. The deadline for renewing your license is December 31, 2013 (think New Year's Eve!). Renewal applications received after 11:59 p.m. on December 31<sup>st</sup> will be charged a late fee of \$100. [\[OAR Chapter 335, Division 60\]](#) Renewal applications are completed online; you can pay online via a credit card or mail payment by check. All regular licensees must report professional development (PD) hours on their renewal application; see below for further information on PD.

### Is there a "grace period" during which I can practice with an expired license if I don't renew on time?

No. YOU MAY NEVER LEGALLY PRACTICE WITH AN EXPIRED LICENSE.

### **If I am not seeing clients, may I work without a license or call myself an SLP, SLPA or audiologist?**

No. Board statute prohibits individuals from calling themselves an SLP, audiologist, or SLPA without an appropriate license. This also means that you may not be employed in a position carrying that title without first obtaining a license, regardless of whether you actually see clients during that time. [\[ORS 681.250\(2\)\]](#)

### **What is my obligation to make sure that others are appropriately licensed?**

As a licensee, you are prohibited from assisting or permitting any person to practice speech-language pathology or audiology without a license. If you are in a supervisory position, please be aware of the license status of your employees/supervisees. [\[OAR 335-005-0010\(2\)\(g\)\]](#)

### **Are students or trainees required to be licensed?**

Anyone enrolled in a practicum course through an approved college or university program does not need to hold a Board license, as long as they are continuously supervised and clearly identified as a student or trainee, and are paid only a reasonable educational stipend. [\[ORS 681.230\]](#) Doctoral audiology students completing their externship year are trainees who do not require licensure.

## **Professional Development**

### **What do I need to do for continuing education or professional development (PD)?**

Professional development (PD) is an ongoing quality assurance activity of the Board. SLPs and audiologists must complete **30 hours** of approved professional development every two years. These hours are reported on your renewal application.

You must keep certificates of attendance or official transcripts for four years from the date of attendance, and be prepared to submit these if you are selected for PD audit.

Board rules spell out what types of activities are accepted, on what topics, and from what providers/ sponsors. Some activities are pre-approved; some require special approval. The PD Triple Test Guide has been developed to help you determine if you need to request special approval. Special approval must be requested before (or no later than 30 days after) the date of the PD activity. Look for the specifics in the PD rules, or the [Professional Development page](#) of the Board's website. [\[OAR Chapter 335, Division 70\]](#)

## **Disciplinary Actions & Complaints**

### **How does the Board monitor licensee conduct?**

The Board has professional and ethical standards that are similar to ASHA's [\[OAR Chapter 335, Division 5\]](#). The Board is also responsible for enforcing its statutes and rules regarding licensure requirements, professional development, SLPA supervision, etc. When a complaint is submitted to the Board by a patient, professional or member of the public—or when the Board becomes aware of a compliance issue—the Board reviews the evidence and may issue disciplinary action to a licensee or other responsible party.

### **What are my obligations to report certain situations to the Board?**

1. A licensee who is convicted of a misdemeanor or felony or who is arrested for a felony crime must report *it within 10 days* after the conviction or arrest. *(Notify the Board office via e-mail, and send copies of court or arrest documents).*
2. An SLPA or conditional SLP must report changes in their supervisory relationships (add/drop) **within 30 days** of the change. *(Download a supervisory change form from the Forms page of the website, and fax, email, or mail it to the Board office.)*

3. A licensee who has changed jobs or moved must submit new contact information (email address, work and home addresses, and phone numbers) **within 30 days of the change**. The Board relies on e-mail for newsletters and other correspondence. We use your e-mail only for Board business; it is not considered public, and we do not sell it. *(Submit an address change form, available on the Forms page of the website.)*
4. A licensee who has reason to believe that another licensee has engaged in unprofessional conduct (conduct unbecoming a licensee or detrimental to the best interests of the public, endangering a patient or client, and/or violated professional and ethical standards), or has engaged in prohibited conduct (a criminal act against a patient or client, or a criminal act that creates a risk of harm to a patient or client), must report that conduct to the Board without undue delay, but **not later than 10 working days** after learning of the conduct. *(Call or email the Executive Director, and send copies of relevant documents.)*
5. All Board licensees are mandatory reporters of child abuse (ORS 419B.010), elder abuse (ORS 124.060), abuse of mentally ill or developmentally disabled persons (ORS 430.765), and abuse of long term care facility residents (ORS 441.645). *See these specific Oregon Revised Statutes for reporting instructions.*

#### **How do I report a name change to the Board?**

Name changes must be reported to the Board **within 30 days of the change**. Download a [Name Change Report](#) from our Forms page, and submit it along with the court document (e.g., marriage certificate or divorce decree), that documents the legal name change. A new license will be printed and mailed to you. There is **no charge for this service** to our licensees.

#### **How do I get verification of my Oregon license status sent to another state?**

If the other state has a form they need filled out, send a copy of that to the Board office. Otherwise, you can email to ask us to send verification to the other state. Make sure that we have the full and correct address. There is **no charge for this service** to our licensees.

#### **If I am not working in Oregon, can I let my license lapse, and then reactivate it later?**

Yes, and there are two routes for this:

(1) **You can request to change your license to “inactive” status.** This is an actual license category that requires a small fee every two years to maintain. YOU MAY NOT PRACTICE OR BE EMPLOYED AS--OR CALL YOURSELF--AN SLP, AUDIOLOGIST OR SLPA IN OREGON while holding an inactive license. Download a [Request for Inactive Status Form](#) from our Forms page, and read the information carefully to make sure that you meet the criteria for going inactive and understand the obligations you will have when you reactivate your Oregon license.

(2) **You can let your license lapse by not renewing it when it expires.** If you wish to reactivate within 4 years, you may do so. However, if your license is expired for more than 4 years, you will need to reapply, including re-submitting all the documents originally required for application (i.e., transcripts, evidence of clinical fellowship or fieldwork, Praxis scores, verification of other licenses held).

So if you are working in another state, but intend to return to Oregon, or if you are “stopping out” of the profession for a while to raise a family, it is advisable to maintain your license in “inactive” status, so that you can readily reactivate it even if you are out of the profession for more than four years.

#### **How do I reactivate my inactive or expired license?**

Call or email the Board office; we will verify your license and address information and send you a reactivation application. You will need to pay a reactivation fee or a new application fee plus the license fee due at the time. You also will need to complete PD requirements, which vary depending on how long your license was inactive or expired.

## **Audiology Practice Issues**

### **Hearing Aid Dispensing**

Board rules spell out specific requirements for sales contracts, billing, and other issues related to hearing aid sales. See [OAR 335-005-030 and -035](#). Your Board license is sufficient for you to legally dispense hearing aids and to train or supervise hearing aid specialists; no separate license or endorsement is required. Of course, you must be qualified and competent to do so.

Hearing Aid Specialists are licensed separately by the Oregon Health Licensing Agency and their requirements for sales contracts and handling patient grievances parallel the Board's.

### **Telepractice**

The Board requires anyone providing speech and hearing services to hold an Oregon license if *either* the professional or the patient is in Oregon. The Board's professional and ethical standards require all services to be performed competently, and to hold the welfare of the client paramount. Any concerns about a licensee meeting these professional and ethical standards should be brought to the Board's attention, whether services were provided in-person or via telepractice.

The Board is currently considering further refinements of its rules specifically to address some of the nuances of telepractice.

### **Businesses Representing that Audiologists are on Staff**

Board rules outline requirements for accurately representing that an audiologist is on staff at businesses that dispense hearing aids. These include the number of hours that the audiologist must work at each location. See [OAR 335-005-0025](#). It is important that consumers are well aware whether their care is being provided by a hearing aid specialist or an audiologist.

### **Audiology Assistants**

Currently, any assistants employed by an audiologist to support his/her practice are operating under the direction and license of the licensed audiologist. The Board and professional associations are beginning to discuss whether audiology assistants should be regulated, as are speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs).

### **Pediatric Audiology, Tinnitus Evaluation and Treatment, and Other Specialty Practice Areas**

Currently, there are no special endorsements to audiology licenses to provide these specialty services. However, you should have specialized training and experience to competently provide these services, and if there is any complaint, the Board will apply national and community standards to determine if professional and ethical standards have been violated.