

Legislative Finance Committee- Sunset/Sunrise Subcommittee: October 16, 2020

**Gail Stockman MS, OTR/L, Licensee #311
New Mexico Occupational Therapy Board of Examiners,
professional member**

- Practicing OT in New Mexico since 1989
- Worked at rehabilitation center with clients with Traumatic Brain Injuries, Spinal Cord Injuries, Cerebral Vascular Accidents and orthopedic injuries/surgeries
- Albuquerque Public Schools with elementary and middle school students with a variety of intellectual and physical challenges that impacted their ability to participate in learning
- UNM Occupational Therapy Graduate Program: lecturer II and fieldwork (clinical) coordination
- InnovAge New Mexico PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly a Medicare/Medicaid program)
- DD Waiver provider with Center for Function & Creativity

Occupational therapy is a very distinct health profession that works across multiple settings, including medical facilities (physical and mental health), schools, homes, and in the community. We are recognized for using daily life activities as the process and outcome for therapy. Our knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding the recovery from illness and restoration to life participation are not like the medical model, but we work well within its structures to help people regain the abilities to perform valued life activities safely and in good health.

Occupational interventions are evidence-based. Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants work with clients across the lifespan, including those from vulnerable populations.

This includes, but is not limited to,

1. Individuals with developmental disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum;
2. Individuals who are blind or visually impaired;
3. Individuals who have hearing deficits;
4. With the elderly in homes, hospice, assisted living, long-term care and medical facilities
5. And with individuals who have experienced trauma, depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions.

AOTA (American Occupational Therapy Association) and NBCOT (National Board of Certification in OT) are collaborating with the Council of State Governments to create an interstate licensure compact for the occupational therapy profession. A compact will allow occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants to practice in each state in which they want to practice.

An interstate licensure compact for the occupational therapy profession will:

1. Improve consumer access to OT
2. Increase opportunities to practice across state lines (e.g. telehealth, telerehabilitation, distance education)
3. Enhance mobility of OT practitioners and their families
4. Support spouses/partners of relocating military families

5. Improve continuity of care

6. Enhance exchange of licensure verification, investigatory, and disciplinary information between member states.

Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants are licensed in all 50 states, plus DC, Puerto Rico, and Guam. Licensure protects the public and ensures that all practitioners must complete standardized, accredited educational program, including standardized clinical fieldwork and pass a national exam before applying for a license to practice. Licensure of Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants in New Mexico is overseen by the Board of Occupational Therapy Examiners which was created by the Occupational Therapy Act in 1978. This should remain a separate entity in New Mexico and not be combined with other professions. Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants should be able to regulate themselves and know their profession and should not be regulated by other professions.

As per Chapter 61, Article 12A states the role of the board is:

1. "To provide for the regulation of persons offering OT services to the public in order to safeguard the public health, safety and welfare;
2. to protect the public from being misled by incompetent and unauthorized persons;
3. to assure the highest degree of professional conduct on the part of occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants;

4. and to assure the availability of occupational therapy services of high quality to persons in need of such services.”

We must have continued licensure to protect the public and a dedicated board of examiners that understands the distinct demands of our profession.