



Oregon Board of Examiners for  
Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology

Established in 1973

2021-23 Governor's Balanced Budget  
Report to the Legislature, February 2021

Pictured: South Santiam River near Lebanon, Oregon, Photo by Gary Halvorson

# The Board's Mission and Makeup

- The Board of Examiners was established in 1973 to license and regulate the performance of speech-language pathologists and audiologists for consumer protection.
- Board is comprised of two public members, two audiologists, two speech-language therapists and one otolaryngologist (ENT physician).
- Efforts are made to have a diversified board including representation from both urban and rural areas of Oregon.
- Through SB 124 the Board is asking that an additional board position be added to be filled by a speech-language pathology assistant (SLPA)
- Three full time staff (director, Investigator, administrative assistant)

# Regulation of Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology

- **Audiologists** - about 400 licensees. Audiologists must hold a doctorate that included a successful fellowship and also pass the PRAXIS exam.
- Audiologists apply the principles, methods and procedures of measurement, prediction, evaluation, testing, counseling, consultation and instruction that relate to the development and disorders of hearing, vestibular functions including tinnitus, and related language and speech disorders to prevent or modify the disorders or to assist individuals in auditory and related skills for communication. They also fit and sell hearing aids.
- Audiologists work in schools, hospitals, clinics and other settings.

# Regulation of Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology

- **Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs)** – approximately 2,200 licensees. Requires Master's Degree plus successful completion of 9 month clinical fellowship and passing PRAXIS exam score. A conditional license is required during the fellowship.
- SLPs apply the principles, methods and procedures of measurement, prediction, evaluation, testing, counseling, consultation and instruction that relate to the development and disorders of speech, voice, swallowing and related language and hearing disorders to prevent or modify the disorders or to assist individuals in cognition-language and communication skills.
- SLPs work with Oregonians of all ages in clinics, hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and other settings.

# Regulation of Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology

- **Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs)** – approximately 400 licensees. Requires either a Bachelor's Degree in communication disorders, or an associate's degree in speech-language pathology assisting. Applicants must have completed 100 hours of fieldwork supervised by a licensed SLP.
- SLPAs may not have a caseload and work under the supervision of their supervising SLP to provide services for that SLP's caseload. They may not conduct evaluations, write or change plans of care, and have other restrictions. They provide therapy as directed by the SLP, who is responsible for the services they provide.
- SLPAs work with Oregonians of all ages in both educational and healthcare settings.

# Current 2019-21 Biennium Financial Status

- The Board asked the Legislature to cut \$25,527 in DOJ costs during the 2020 special session, which was granted.
- The Legislature approved a full time Investigator 2, who was hired in May, 2019. As such, the Board projects it will save \$84,000 in professional services dedicated to investigations. We also project \$30,000 underspending for I.T. costs this biennium.
- Revenue for the current biennium already exceeds LAB by \$100,000, and we expect to end the biennium with at least \$150,000 more in revenue than what was budgeted.

# Key Initiatives, Changes

- Implementation of FBI fingerprint background checks June, 2015 for new applicants and LEDS check on all renewals starting February, 2016
- Implementation of universal licensure on July 1, 2016, all SLPs in Oregon must now obtain Board licensure, TSPC exemption phased out (current TSPC license holders may continue to work under the old TSPC license)
- Upgraded to new Oregon “look and feel” website February, 2017
- Implementation of OHA Workforce data collection in 2017
- Implemented first-ever telepractice rules in 2019
- Updated SLPA rules which were implemented January 1, 2020
- Moved to online licensing system December 1, 2019
- Covid-19 pandemic response including immediate change to remote working and paperless operations, temporary rulemaking and guidance documents with ODE
- 2021-23 Governor’s Budget calls for the Board’s, budget, staff and program to move to the OHA Health Licensing Office (HLO) beginning year 2 of the biennium (7/1/22).

# Major Budget Drivers

- Steady upward trend in number of licensees continues. The number of licensees is up at least 10.3% over the last biennium. Before that, biennial increases have been 11.5%, and 14.3%. There are now more than 3,000 licenses.
- Board caseload averages increasing substantially and becoming more complex. In 2008 there were only 20 cases while in 2020 there 66. In 2017 there were 100 cases. The legislature approved a full time investigator position, which the Board hired in May, 2019.
- Increasing numbers of out of state providers obtaining license so they can provide telepractice services to Oregonians from their home states. This trend existed before the pandemic and continues.
- Possible passage of compact licensure which would increase costs, require additional staff time and create a slight revenue loss.
- Increases in DOJ costs.
- ED position reclassification and pay equity costs.



# Major Budget Drivers

- Recently converted to fully online system, continuing to complete that process. Working to move licensing operations to a fully paperless system. Major increase in annual I.T. expenses due to new provider and systems.
- The Board has absorbed inflationary costs and has not increased fees since 2013. The Board has conserved funds by sharing its executive director with another board for several months during 2018, and delayed hiring the investigator until 2019.
- The Board has long projected that a fee increase would be needed for the 2021-23 biennium, and it is asking for them at this time. The highest increase is \$40 per biennial renewal, (\$20 per year).

# 10% budget reductions & cost reductions

- The Board has already pre-emptively cut more than 10% from CSL/LAB and those reductions were built into the Governor's Budget. Reductions include reducing DOJ costs, professional services for investigations, and I.T. costs.
- The 10% reduction form submitted would include an additional 10% in cuts taken by reducing the investigator from full time to part time. Between the cut already taken for professional investigation services, this personnel cut would cripple investigations and set the agency back in the ability to conduct timely investigations.

# Key Performance Measures

- The Board is not asking for any changes to the Key Performance Measures.
- In 2019, the Legislature added a new KPM for the Board that begins calendar year 2020 regarding timely processing of complaints: 90% all investigations must reach the Board within 180 days of receipt of the complaint. We are unable to provide that information until 180 days from the last day of 2020, which will be on July 1, 2021. However, we can report on complaints received through June 30, 2020: 26 complaints were received from 1/1/20 – 6/30/20. Of those, all but 2 were heard by the board within 180 days. As such 92.3% were heard by the board within 180 days, exceeding the KPM by 2.3% as of halfway through the calendar year.