

Agency Summary

Board of Physical Therapy Examiners

Judy Chepeus, Executive Director

Phone: 6022717365

A.R.S. § 32-2001

Mission:

To protect the public from the incompetent, unprofessional, and unlawful practice of physical therapy. The Arizona Physical Therapy Practice Act establishes the standards for the practice of physical therapy, continuing competence and testing, and defines the scope and limitations of practice. The Board licenses and certifies qualified applicants as physical therapists and physical therapist assistants; and receives, investigates and adjudicates complaints against licensees and certificate holders.

Description:

The Board of Physical Therapy Examiners licenses physical therapists, certifies physical therapist assistants, registers physical therapy business entities, investigates and adjudicates complaints, assesses continuing competence, and enforces the standards of practice for the physical therapy profession. The Board also regulates business entities that provide physical therapy services.

Agency Summary: (\$ Thousands)

Program	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimate	FY 2025 Estimate
► Licensing and Regulation	517.2	591.5	635.2
Agency Total:	517.2	591.5	635.2

Funding:

	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimate	FY 2025 Estimate
Other Appropriated Funds	517.2	591.5	635.2
Total Funding	517.2	591.5	635.2

FTE Positions	3.3	4.0	4.5
----------------------	------------	------------	------------

5 Year Plan

Issue 1 Evaluate the Qualifications of Applicants for Licensure and Certification

Description: The Board licenses and certifies qualified applicants as physical therapists and physical therapist assistants, establishes the standards for testing, and adopts passing scores for examinations.

National examinations required for licensure and certification are administered through secured testing facilities on a quarterly basis with four exam dates each for physical therapist and physical therapist assistant candidates. The Board has seen an increase in the number of initial applications submitted for review resulting in a 138% increase in the number of regulated practitioners and entities between FY13 and FY 23.

Fixed examination dates and current application processing requirements combine to cause submission volume spikes that are increasingly difficult to process. Current staffing levels are insufficient to address the ongoing volume of submissions and subsequent phone calls and emails from applicants seeking regular updates. These issues are amplified and directly correlated during an approaching exam date.

The Board must seek opportunities to mitigate the demands that result from increased overall applications and volume spikes.

Solutions:

Additional personnel resources are required to support the essential functions of the agency, especially those with associated deadlines. This requirement is being submitted as a FY25 funding issue.

The Board is also seeking to avail themselves of a membership benefit offered through their regulatory association, the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy, to re-order the procedural application steps to help mitigate volume spikes.

A new license and complaint management platform will be deployed in FY24. It is anticipated that the new system will allow applicants to resolve deficiencies by uploading documentation to an application even after it is submitted. The effect will be an overall reduction in the multi-step processes currently encountered when deficient items are emailed to staff by the applicant.

Issue 2 Regulate the Practice of Physical Therapy by Interpreting and Enforcing this Chapter

Description: To protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public, the Board receives, investigates and adjudicates complaints against practitioners, privilege holders, and registrants practicing physical therapy in this state.

The Board receives between 40 and 70 complaints per year. Since 2019, the practitioners in Arizona have grown to include interstate telehealth providers and PT Compact privilege holders in addition to Arizona licensed physical therapists, certified physical therapist assistants, and registered business entities.

The Board currently employs a 0.25 FTE investigator which is inadequate to manage the caseload. An additional 0.5 investigator is needed to share the workload and assist in eliminating any case backlogs. Additionally, administrative support to assist with compliance tracking and monitoring is also required.

Solutions:

The Board has reclassified a current position to allow for the hiring of a 0.50 FTE Investigator to help reduce case backlog and support expedient complaint processing times.

The Board is submitting a FY25 funding issue for an additional 0.5 Program Projects Specialist. The staffing increase would provide support in many agency functional areas including, but not limited to, data entry and compliance tracking.

Staff will continue outreach efforts whenever possible to better inform PT and PTA students, licensees, and certificate holders of the statutes and rules governing the practice of physical therapy in Arizona.

Issue 3 Assessing Continuing Professional Competence

Description: The mission of the Board of physical therapy includes protecting the public from the incompetent, unprofessional, and unlawful practice of physical therapy. Licensed physical therapists and certified physical therapist assistants are required to complete continuing competence activities during each compliance period. Physical therapists must earn 20 contact hours and physical therapist assistants must earn 10 contact hours of continuing competence compliant with Board rules. The compliance period is two years in length beginning September 1 of an even numbered year and ending August 31 of the next even numbered year. Continuing competence audits are completed in odd fiscal years.

The Board's new licensing management system, currently in development, is insufficient to accommodate the continuing competence categories and options itemized in Board rules, A.A.C. Title 4, Chapter 24, Article 4. When the Board's previous online solution provided by the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy was discontinued, the Board voted to allow submission of continuing competence materials through another online provider. Since the implementation of that option stalled through forces outside of the Board's control, the most recent biennial continuing competence audits have been conducted through email. While transmitting documentation through electronic means is more cost-effective and efficient than a paper-based process, processing submissions through email remains cumbersome and inefficient.

To improve processing and better utilize personnel resources, the Board needs a technology-driven solution to efficiently process continuing competence documentation.

Solutions:

The Board will leverage advances made by other state agencies who have successfully procured an online continuing competence management solution.

After the new license management platform is launched, opportunities for integration with the continuing competence management system will be investigated to unify the processes for licensees and certificate holders.

Issue 4 Complete Testing and Deployment of New Licensing and Complaints Management Platform

Description: The FY23 Executive Budget included a platform migration of the current enterprise solution licensing and complaint management system to a new platform. The ambitious project of transitioning multiple state agencies, including the State Board of Physical Therapy, has extended beyond the originally scheduled timeframe and is now anticipated to be completed in FY24.

Requirements drafting, product development, platform testing, and training are intricate and time consuming procedures. Vast amounts of staff time has already been consumed by this project, including, but not limited to, a dedicated 40 hours per week through the month of June.

With very few exceptions, the Board's application and complaint modules went online in 2018, and subsequently, a significant amount of data, documents, and processes must be transitioned to the new system. Staff training is paramount to help reduce processing delays caused by the inherent learning curve.

The new platform must be finalized and deployed with great attention to detail in order to minimize system glitches and process interruptions.

Solutions:

Staff will remain engaged in the process in an attempt to secure a system that is as functional as possible.

The agency will call on ADOA-ASET for assistance and support through the phases of data migration and validation.

Resource Assumptions

	FY 2026 Estimate	FY 2027 Estimate	FY 2028 Estimate
Full-Time Equivalent Positions	4.5	4.5	4.5
General Fund	-	-	-
Other Appropriated Funds	635,200.0	635,200.0	635,200.0
Non-Appropriated Funds	-	-	-
Federal Funds	-	-	-

◆ **Goal 1** To efficiently process licensure and certification applications.

Performance Measures	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimate	FY 2025 Estimate
Percent of Board meetings conducted within appropriate time frames	100	100	100	100	100
Percent of physical therapist licenses or physical therapist assistant certificates issued within the required time frames to eligible applicants.	100	100	100	100	100
Number of new licenses or certificates issued	832	875	853	875	875
Average time, in calendar days, between receipt of completed application to issuance or denial of licensure or certification.	3	3	3	3	3
Number of licenses/certificates denied.	-	-	-	-	-
Number of licenses/certificates renewed	N/A	7,500	7,892	N/A	8,200
Number of applications received	904	951	967	1,015	1,015

◆ **Goal 2** To investigate and adjudicate complaints in a timely manner.

Performance Measures	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimate	FY 2025 Estimate
Percent of complaints investigated over which the Board has jurisdiction.	100	100	100	100	100
Total number of complaints received over which the Board has jurisdiction.	47	65	62	55	65
Percent of unlawful practice complaints over which the Board has jurisdiction investigated.	100	100	100	100	100
Total number of disciplinary actions issued	7	40	22	30	30
Number of licenses suspended/revoked/voluntarily surrendered	3	5	4	4	4
Total number of unlawful practice investigations received by the Board for investigation	-	15	6	-	10

- ◆ **Goal 3** To provide accurate information, with the highest quality customer service, to all requests from citizens, licensees, health care organizations, and public agencies for public records information and license verifications.

Performance Measures	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimate	FY 2025 Estimate
Number of written requests for public records received.	36	30	57	50	50
Percent of requests for license verifications processed and issued within 15 days of receipt	93	100	97	100	100
To achieve an average score of 3.5 on a scale of 0 to 5.0 on the agency's customer satisfaction survey.	-	7	4	4	4
Number of formal verifications of licensure prepared and issued.	496	500	520	500	500
Average number of business days to process written requests for public records	5	5	5	5	5

- ◆ **Goal 4** To assess the continuing competence of physical therapist licensees and physical therapist assistant certificate holders selected through random audit.

Performance Measures	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimate	FY 2025 Estimate
Percent of physical therapist licensees whose continuing competence records were successfully audited by the Board for compliance.	N/A	2	2	N/A	2
Percent of continuing competence audit notices sent within 60 calendar days following the license renewal deadline. The audit is done every two years following renewal. Some years will have no results.	N/A	100	100	N/A	100