

# Arizona State Board of Physical Therapy

## Five Year Strategic Plan

### **Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Arizona State Board of Physical Therapy is 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.

### **Agency Description:**

The State Board of Physical Therapy licenses qualified physical therapists (PT's), certifies qualified physical therapist assistants (PTA's), 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 regulates approximately 7,900 professionals or entities licensed, certified, or registered to practice or provide physical therapy services in the State. As of September 2011, the Board regulates business entities that provide physical therapy services. The Board serves all citizens of and visitors to the state who receive physical therapy care by an Arizona licensed physical therapist or a certified physical therapist assistant.

### **Strategic Issues:**

1. Establish the mechanisms for assessing continuing professional competence of physical therapists to engage in the practice of physical therapy and the competence of physical therapist assistants to work in the field of physical therapy.
  - a. The Board of physical therapy currently requires licensed physical therapist to complete 20 contact hours of continuing competence activities during each compliance period. 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.
  - b. As of April 2019, Certified physical therapist assistants are required to complete 10 contact hours of continuing competence activities during each compliance period. 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.
2. Regulate the practice of physical therapy by interpreting and enforcing this chapter.
  - a. The Board received between 50 and 70 complaints per year.
  - b. The Board currently maintains a 1 FTE to investigate all complaints received against physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and business entities.

- c. The Board has seen an increase in the number of complaints filed each year as well as an increase in the complexity of the cases.
3. Evaluate the qualifications of applicants for licensure and certification; and provide for national examinations for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants and adopt passing scores for these examinations.
  - a. The Board has seen an increase in the number of applications filed in any calendar year from 600 in 2011 to 962 in 2019. In addition, the number of physical therapists renewing active licenses increased to 5559 in 2018. Physical therapist assistant renewals increased to 965 in 2018.
  - b. The national examinations for physical therapist and physical therapist assistants have been changed from tests given on a continuous basis on almost every day of the year to tests provided only four to five times each per year.

**Strategies:**

1. The Board, in April, 2019, was able to pass rules package that required physical therapist assistants to be required to complete continuing competency activities.
  - a. A minimum requirement of 10 hours of continuing competence activities is required.
  - b. Physical Therapist Assistants will engage in the first audit for continuing competency following the 2020 certification renewal period which ends August 31, 2020.
2. The Board has evaluated its current investigative resources and appropriated adequate manpower to maintain active investigations.
  - a. Board hired an additional physical therapist (.5 FTE) to engage in investigations in 2019.
  - b. In addition, the Board completed improvements to its complaint and compliance tracking portions of its license and certificate holder through the eLicensing database to allow for historical and real-time tracking of complaint and disciplinary information.
  - c. All disciplinary actions are posted and attached to the public look up of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants so that when a search in the eLicensing system is conducted by any member of the public, the disciplinary history is available for review.
3. The Board physical therapy is currently addressing the need for improved processes for the increased number of applicants, requirement of fingerprint clearance card and in the limited availability of national tests.
  - a. On March 15, 2012, A.R.S. §32-2024 was modified to allow applicants to test for their national examinations before completing their full educational programs, which allows increased options in taking one or more of the four/five tests allowed per year.

- b. The Board has implemented a new preapproval process for all applicants. The process allows most applicants to receive approve for licensure or certification once the application is complete with the exception of test scores and receipt of transcripts. The process allows licensure or certification to be issued upon receipt of these final applicant requirements reduces the wait time from application to licensure/certificate by a maximum of 30 days.
- c. The introduction and utilization of eLicensing in 2018 has enabled the applicants to upload digital documents to support the application which significantly reduces the time to process those documents from application submittal to approval.
- d. Board hired Customer Services Representative (.5 FTE) whose sole responsibility is to answer e-mail and phone contacts to ensure efficient and effective communication with public, licensee and certificate holders.

**Resource Assumptions:**

Resource Assumptions (agency level) Board of Physical Therapy					
	FY 2018	FY2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022 Estimate
FTE	4	4	4	4	4
General Fund	0	0	0	0	0
Other Appropriated Fund (PTA 2053)	\$412,200	\$499,600	\$503,700	\$513,900	\$513,900
Non-Appropriated Funds	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Federal Funds	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Agency Funds	\$413,200	\$499,600	\$503,700	\$513,900	\$513,900