

ALASKA LICENSING BOARD UPDATE AND GUIDELINES FOR IN-PERSON THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

The following is information from the Alaska PT/OT Licensing Board. The role of the Licensing Board is to protect the consumers and patients of Alaska. Their recommendations and guidelines are in line with the Governor's office and the Department of Health and Social Services and officials in those offices. We are grateful for their guidance and clarifications for how we can serve our patients in this pandemic.

1. The COVID crisis and updates are ever changing. Licensed professionals should go to the directly to the [State of Alaska website](#) for the most current COVID updates. The Governor, [Health and Social Services \(HSS\)](#) and Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing (CBPL) updates are amended as changes occur.
2. In light of the COVID-19 crisis, the Licensing Board is considering making an adjustment to CEU requirements for this licensing period. Nothing official yet. There is no planned extension of license renewal that is this June. The renewal application will be online and most people will qualify to complete an online renewal application. The online renewal application will be available no later than May 29. The Board's intent can be viewed in the March 26, 2020 draft minutes located on the [website](#). Agenda Item 8 - Audit discussion and Agenda Item 9 - COVID 19 and SB241 and HB311.
3. All licensees are reminded to keep a current mailing address for their professional license. You may update it directly in your license record in the upper right corner titled EDIT CONTACT INFORMATION. Most licensing examiners within the division are working from home to help flatten the curve. Please allow additional response time.
4. Finally, the Licensing Board, in cooperation with Governor Dunleavy's office and the DHHS commissioner, have [published clarifications](#) related to *IN-PERSON THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS*.

Here are the clarifications from the document:

Board of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy: Clarification of Emergent/Urgent Procedures March 31, 2020

Emergent criteria which supports In-person therapeutic intervention include, but are not limited to:

1. Significant restrictions of mobility which impair patients' movement and/or activity thus restricting their ability to maintain health and wellness or potentially increases the risk of more invasive care such as invasive medical procedures, hospitalization or other healthcare resources.
2. Significant functional impairments which predispose patients to further disability or dysfunction which could further burden healthcare resources.
3. Post-operative and post-traumatic care necessary to reduce risk of re-injury or to avoid delay in recovery which could require invasive medical procedures, hospitalization or other healthcare resources
4. Patients working in critical infrastructure industry deemed to have pain-related conditions or movement dysfunctions which interfere with or restrict performance of essential duties.
5. Conditions that increase risks for falls or significant injury which could lead to further burden healthcare resources.

The Alaska Board of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy advises licensed providers to adhere to the published health mandates and CDC guidance regarding COVID-19. All Therapists must adequately screen patients to determine potential risks of exposure and existence of co-morbid conditions which may impair patient health status. Therapists are responsible for ensuring emergent criteria are fulfilled prior to performing any care which may be considered an exception to the standing mandates. It is critical that all in-person encounters are conducted in an environment that minimizes the potential risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus while reducing the burden on strained healthcare resources. Therapists have advanced training in cardiovascular and pulmonary function which will be relevant for the screening procedures necessary to identify exposure risk among patients.

Recommendations for mitigating COVID-19 exposure risk include, but are not limited to:

1. Conduct screening procedures for all patients to determine risks of COVID-19 exposure and identify high risk individuals with impaired health status. Recommend delay in treatment or telehealth options if screening identifies potential exposure or impaired health status. [CDC Guidelines on COVID-19](#)
2. Complete thorough cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces, equipment and tools with potential patient/provider contact. The CDC has provided a resource for getting your practice ready. [CDC Get Clinic Ready for COVID-19](#)
3. Maintain social distancing in all common areas of the practice in accordance with health mandates. Implement measures in the clinical setting to reduce contact: one on one visits, staggered scheduling, 6 feet distancing of seating in reception area, advising patients to not be accompanied, unless a minor.

4. Maintain the highest sanitary levels via frequent handwashing/sanitizer use. For example, any provider-patient contact will require immediate sanitization and handwashing before and after contact.
5. Limit use of personal protective equipment except in cases where there is a potential for exposure to high risk patients. The need for patient contact must adhere to the criteria for critical and necessary care and follow sanitation guidelines.
6. Keep clinical staffing to essential providers and limit administrative personnel, to ensure a safe and clean treatment setting, while avoiding any unnecessary interactions.