



Oregon Board of Examiners for
Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology

Established in 1973

2023-25 Governor's Budget
Report to the Legislature, February 2023

Link to Governor Kotek's full Budget Book is here: https://www.oregon.gov/das/financial/documents/2023-25_gb.pdf

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, one otolaryngologist (ENT physician) and one speech-language pathology assistant (position added to statute in 2021 session).
- The Board is more diversified than the state as a whole and includes including representation from both urban and rural areas of Oregon.
- 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 must 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 2,900 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 350 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 must 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 2021-23 Biennium Financial Status

- The Emergency Board approved additional limitation of \$107,000 due to unanticipated legal fees, FBI background check and bank fees increased substantially because of a large increase in the number of licensees. The board is now projected to be under budget in total expenditures.
- Revenue for the current biennium already exceeds LAB by \$168,278, and we expect to end the biennium with at least \$265,818 more in revenue than what was budgeted.
- We project an ending fund balance at 6/30/23 of \$450,635 which is \$250,475 more than LAB and provides an 8 month contingency. (The board needs at least five months).

Key Initiatives, Changes

- Implemented first-ever telepractice rules in 2019. Those rules allow licensees to treat Oregonians while living in another state.
- Updated SLPA rules which were implemented January 1, 2020. Testing a self-audit tool and a new audit system in 2023 to try and obtain better compliance.
- Moved to online licensing system December 1, 2019 just in time for the pandemic. Working to be a paper free office by 2025.
- Covid-19 pandemic response including immediate change to remote working and paperless operations, temporary rulemaking and guidance documents with ODE
- Updating clinical fellowship rules in 2023-25.

Major Budget Drivers

- Steady upward trend in number of licensees continues. The percentage increase in the number of licensees has averaged 13% per biennium since 2015. In 2015 there were 2,100 licensees, and as of January, 2023, there are more than 3,500 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. 56% of all new licensees approved in 2020, 2021, and 2022 live outside of Oregon!
- Increases in DOJ costs.

Governor's 2023-25 Budget

- Stable program, continuing with 3 FTE despite significant annual increases in the number of licenses, especially from people living out of state who telepractice into Oregon. The Board is still able to provide excellent customer service and if all documents have been received issues licenses within one business day.
- Fees were raised in 2021 after not having been raised since 2013. We do not anticipate the need for a fee increase in 2023-25.
- Governor's Budget provides an adequate level of reserves to ensure required cash flow at the end of the biennium. The bulk of revenue comes in at the beginning of the biennium via biennial renewals.

Key Performance Measures

- In 2019, the Legislature added a new KPM for the Board that began calendar year 2020 regarding timely processing of complaints: 90% all investigations must reach the Board within 180 days of receipt of the complaint. The Board exceeded that mark: 2020 92% and 2021 93.2%. 2022 numbers will be available in July, 2023 (180 days after the close of 2022).
- The Board is not asking for any changes to the Key Performance Measures. However, we continue to be concerned about speech-language pathology assistant (SLPA) rules compliance. As such the board is distributing a self-audit document to all SLPAs and SLP supervisors and posting it to the website. It will be sent prior to the 2023 audit. The rules were updated in 2020, so we have also revamped the way the audit is conducted and will continue to refine it. The Board will provide a report on the new processes and possibly recommend a change to KPM in 2025.