



State of Louisiana
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HOSPITALS
Louisiana Physical Therapy Board

August 24, 2016

Dear Licensees,

The Louisiana Physical Therapy Board (herein "LPTB" or "Board"), in accordance with La. R.S. 37:2405.A.(4) and 2424.A., as well as the Administrative Procedures Act, La R.S. 49:950 has published Rules in the August 2016 State Register that are **effective as of August 20, 2016**. The Board encourages you to review the rules so you are familiar with the changes. This letter is being sent to all licensees as an email notification and is also published on the Board website (www.laptboard.org). The purpose of this letter is to provide a summary of Rule changes to all licensees and to provide information as to why these changes are necessary at this time. Rule changes include edits related to course content criteria, course review requirements and the fee schedule. References to fee changes have been made on the Board website and Board forms and are effective as of August 20, 2016. For transitional purposes, payments made in accordance with the expired fee schedule will not be returned if dated before September 1, 2016.

For decades, the LPTB has strived to keep costs down and has worked to keep licensee fees to a minimum. The initial license fee has not changed since the Board was established in the 1980s. The Board enforced a fee increase fourteen years ago, in 2002, increasing the fees for licensure verification, duplicate wall and wallet license, and licensure renewal. In 2002, there were 2,632 licensees in Louisiana, as compared to 700 total licensees when the fees were first established in 1987. In 2016, Louisiana has 4,284 active licensees and has increased the number of new licensees at 3% per year, on average, since 2002. The average cost of doing business in Louisiana has increased 2.34% per year, on average, since 2002. The cost of living and cost of employing has increased since 2002, when the minimum wage was 41% lower than it is today. Although the number of licensees steadily increases each year, the Board office has managed to keep staffing relatively low in an effort to keep costs down.

The intention of the Board to keep costs at a minimum by limiting staff support has inadvertently resulted in the Board office facing unnecessary challenges with the transition of leadership in the Board office. There was not a succession plan for leadership when the previous Executive Director retired in 2014. Our Board is made up of therapists and one physician who work full-time in their profession and also have specific obligations to LPTB. To assist with the transition in leadership, the Board hired a firm to complete an organization assessment for the Board office, search for a new Executive Director, and provide guidance on staffing, organizational structure, and recommendations for overall improvement. The final report provided a recommendation to hire an additional staff member to assist the Board office with management and operation functions and to provide for distributed leadership. This will build a structure that is not dependent on institutional knowledge, nor individualized to the leadership hired by the Board. The Board agreed with the proactive assessment that would allow the Board adequate staffing and distributed leadership for systems and controls to be in place that improve the function of the office while minimizing disruption should leadership turnover again. In 2014, the Board approved hiring an Assistant Executive Director.

At the same time, the Board was made aware that the current office computer system was in jeopardy and would need to be replaced in the near future. The hardware system was built on technology that would soon be unsupported by Microsoft. The database software, which housed all licensee information, was not industry-standard. The Board decided that the security of licensee information was absolutely critical and voted to spend a portion of the reserves to upgrade outdated technology.

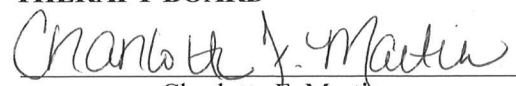
Since 2015, the Board has been able to maintain approximately \$700,000 in reserve, following one-time expenses of hiring a consulting firm, updating technology, and other non-operating costs such as paying an architect for building plans and hiring an unbiased third-party consultant to facilitate the direct access study. Operating at a deficit each year has significantly reduced the reserve fund. Additionally, the Board voted to earmark \$250,000 for a Public Service Announcement, leaving \$450,000 in reserve. The Board voted to discontinue to use the reserves to fund operating expenses. The Board looked at the operating budget with scrutiny and has made every effort to balance the operating budget. The Board has cut all out-of-state travel unless funded by an outside organization, significantly reduced per diem reimbursement for Board work, put a moratorium on professional development of staff and legal, reduced assistance from as-needed contractors as much as possible such as the CPA, investigators and legal, and in an effort to recover expenses, the staff has implemented an aggressive tracking system of disciplinary costs to ensure that disciplined licensees reimburse all costs of administrative and legal expenses related to their investigation. At this time, the Board has cut as much as it can and the only options to balance the budget in the next fiscal year are to either increase the fees or to eliminate a full-time employee position. Without a fee increase or eliminating one full-time employee, the FY2017 net income is negative \$60,000.

The Board voted to approve a fee increase in Rule. The fee schedule changes include a fee increase for course sponsor applications, initial license applications and renewal applications. Course sponsor fees will increase for courses that are less than eight hours from \$50 to \$100 and for courses that are eight or more hours from \$75 to \$150. Individual licensees who apply for course approval will not experience a fee increase. The review fee will remain \$20. Initial license application fee will increase by \$50, from \$200 to \$250. The application fee applies to initial license applications and is a one-time fee, unless the applicant does not complete the licensing process within a one-year period and is required to fully re-apply in a subsequent year. The renewal application fee is based on an annual fee and will be increased by \$25, from \$115 to \$140. The renewal fee applies to all Louisiana licensees who are required to maintain a license to practice in the state. In 2002, the Board decided to increase the annual renewal fee increased by \$40, from \$75 to \$115 and the fee has not been increased since. Fourteen years later, in 2016, the number of Louisiana licensees has grown to 4,284 and the Board now agrees that it is appropriate for a \$40 increase to the renewal fee. The overall net effect will balance the budget, restore reserves and allow the Board to continue operating and employing special projects to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public while providing for state administrative control, supervision, licensing and regulation of the practice of physical therapy in Louisiana.

The Board submitted other Rule changes that were published in the August 2016 State Register and are effective as of August 20, 2016. These Rule changes include “clean-up” items for all fees to be moved to the fee schedule found in Rule §501, as well as substantial language modifications in the course review requirements (Rule §193). The proposed language for Rule §193 will change the course review period for both the licensee and the course sponsor. According to the revised language, licensees will be allowed to submit a course at any time, as long as the course application is received at least 60 days prior to the requestor’s license term. The previous language only allowed courses to be submitted by a licensee within 90 days of the course completion date and in no case could a course be reviewed 90 days prior to the requestor’s license term. The Board is able to justify these course review dates now that the staff has implemented an online review and approval system through the updated Board website, which was launched in December 2015. Course review periods have been significantly reduced since 2014, when the course review time was closer to 45 days and was not completed through an electronic system.

If you have questions, need clarification, or request justification of anything that was not addressed in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
**THE LOUISIANA PHYSICAL
THERAPY BOARD**


Charlotte F. Martin