

Washington

Spring/Summer 2020

Occupational Therapy Practice Board

Newsletter

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What is HELMS?

HELMS is the Healthcare Enforcement and Licensing Modernization Solution. HELMS will support the licensing and regulatory needs of health care professionals and facilities. This will include licensing, credentialing, enforcement, and approval of providers, facilities and educational/training programs.

What is the mechanism for paying for HELMS?

We estimate HELMS will cost \$19 million to implement. Licensees will pay for it. Actual cost may differ from current estimates; we are still in the pre-implementation phase and expect to sign with a vendor in July 2020.

Rather than charging a temporary fee with each license, which would be costly to implement, we'll assess the fee against the fund balance for each profession or program. State law requires each profession to be financially self-sustaining. If this project causes a fund balance to go below the recommended reserve level, we'll make a future fee adjustment using the regular process.

Continued on page 2

License Statistics (then and now)

Occupational Therapists

Aug. 2019	3949
Apr. 2020	3989

Occupational Therapy Assistants

Aug. 2019	1216
Apr. 2020	1219

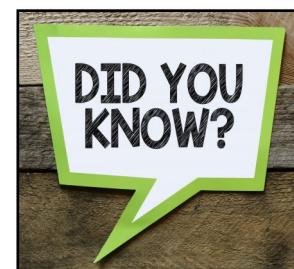
Board Members

Sunny Anderson, OTA, Chair
Mary Spores, OT
Walter Gruenwald, OT
Di Irons, Public Member

Did you know?

About the extension of health profession license expiration dates

As a reminder, to allow health professionals to focus on patient care during the COVID-19 outbreak and to reduce the economic burden on providers not able to work during this emergency, the secretary of health has extended health profession license expiration dates to September 30, 2020. Governor's Proclamation [20-32](#) provides authority for this action without agency rulemaking.



What is HELMS? (cont.)

(cont. from page 1.)

How much is the HELMS fee?

The annual project budget fluctuates from year-to-year-for a total of \$19 million. Because the actual cost will be allocated annually to the individual professions and programs, the assessment rate will also vary from year-to-year. Based on the current budget, the annualized assessment rate is \$8 to \$12.

How are the license counts determined?

For health professionals, the HELMS cost allocation will be based on the number of licensees in each program. For licensees who hold multiple credentials, the per-licensee cost will be prorated among all credentials that person holds. For example, if a person holds three credentials, one-third of the cost will be allocated to each of the three professions.

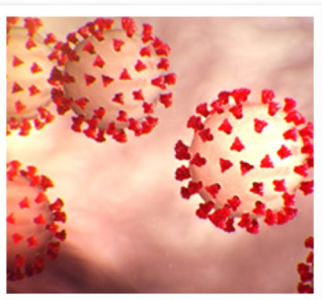
When will we see the impact of HELMS to our budget?

The Department of Health will assess the long-term effects of the total cost of the HELMS project to each profession, including other financial effects such as legislative changes, as part of our regular fee analysis process consistent with the six-year cost recovery policy.



[Click here to apply to become a board member](#)

Important Update



The Washington State Department of Health is no longer offering in-person customer service until further notice. You can still access some services such as [vital records](#) or [health care licensing services](#) online, by phone, or via email. For more information about other services still available, call our office at 360-236-4501 or 800-525-0127 during regular business hours. Please note: Normal turnaround times may be delayed as department staff members are helping to support the COVID-19 response.

The next Occupational Therapy Practice Board Meeting is scheduled to be held July 24, 2020. Updated meeting information can be found on the program's webpage at:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/ProfessionsNewReneworUpdate/OccupationalTherapist/BoardMeetings>

Occupational Therapy and Telehealth

Below is the WAC language for occupational therapists (OTs) and occupational therapy assistants about providing telehealth. OTs and OTAs are expected to follow the laws and rules regarding telehealth ([WAC 246-847-176](#)).

1) "Telehealth" means providing occupational therapy via electronic communication where the occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant and the patient are not at the same physical location.

(2) An occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant using telehealth to provide therapy to patients in Washington must be licensed to provide occupational therapy in Washington.

(3) Licensed occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants may provide occupational therapy via telehealth following all requirements for supervision and standard of care, including those defined in chapters 18.59 RCW and 246-847 WAC.

(4) The occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant must identify in the clinical record that the occupational therapy occurred via telehealth.



Reader Input

We want to hear from you. If you would like to read about something specific, [please let us know.](#)



Meet Sunny Anderson, OTA, Chair



Sunny Anderson graduated from occupational therapy assistant (OTA) school in August 1970. She has practiced in almost every setting over the past 50 years. The past 10 years she has found teaching the next generation of OTA students to be very rewarding. She has had the privilege of seeing occupational therapy around the world, moving with her husband as he served in the Navy. She has experienced the progression of occupational therapy assistants from a certificated program to an associate of arts program and soon to an applied bachelor of science degree. Sunny believes the Occupational Therapy profession is the greatest as it meets individual needs of the clients at every age.

Sunny says it has been an honor to serve on the Occupational Therapy Practice Board for the past four years. Sunny believes ethics should guide all occupational therapy practitioners in life while dealing with co-workers, volunteers, employers, community members, and clients. Changes are constantly happening. Continuing education, learning, and adapting to meet the need of the profession are paramount to making occupational therapy a valued and prime service.

When Sunny is not teaching or volunteering she spends time with her husband of almost 50 years and her two children, five grandchildren, and soon-to-be two great grandchildren. She also fills time with crafts and art that keep the mind and body moving.

Content provided by: Sunny Anderson