

Board of Registration for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Meeting Held by Phone

DATE: March 23, 2020

TIME: 9:00 a.m.

Public Session Minutes

A regularly scheduled open public meeting of the Massachusetts Board of Registration of Speech-Language pathology and Audiology (“the Board”) was held via Conference Call due to Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, § 20.

Board Members Present by phone:

Nicole Laffan
Donna Noonan
Kristin Bresnahan
Sarah Young-Hong

Staff Present by phone:

Michael Hawley, Executive Director
Lynn Read, Board Counsel

Members of the Public Present by phone:

Multiple attendees were present by phone

Housekeeping

- Meeting Called to Order: At 9:00 a.m., Dr. Laffan called meeting to order.

Discussion

- **Review Policy 2019-001 regarding the provision of services by electronic means for possible changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

A number of licensees and other interested parties inquired about the possible relaxation of training requirements, in person evaluation and other provisions of the telepractice policy in light of the need to provide service to clients who, by reason of the COVID-19 emergency are not able to receive treatment in person. The Board heard from several members of the public regarding current practice of telehealth during the state of emergency and some conflicting direction that licensees have been receiving regarding the need to observe provisions of the current policy.

The Board discussed the policy and the reasons for the requirements. The Board agreed to temporarily eliminate the requirement of an in-person evaluation prior to the provision telehealth services, while the restrictions on provision of in-person treatment are in effect.

The Board also discussed reducing the policy requirement of 10 hours of training before providing telehealth services. Members agreed that training, as required in the Policy, is important, but in recognition of state of emergency, normal training may be reduced or delayed. The Board discussed that during the emergency, some professional organizations had made training available online and some training was available at no cost. For these reasons, the Board felt that it would not be a burden on practitioners to obtain at least two hours of training before beginning telepractice or to get the remainder of the 10 hours of training specified in the current policy over a period of four months.

The Board also briefly discussed the Governor’s “Order Extending the Registrations of Certain Licensed Health Care Professionals” which delays the expiration of licenses

during the state of emergency and grants those licensees ninety additional days beyond the termination of the state of emergency to renew their licenses. The Board expressed appreciation of this order and agreed to extend the deadline for completion of required continuing education for those licensees for the same ninety days.

Ms. Noonan moved to delegate to Board Counsel and the Executive Director the task of creating and seeking administration approval for a temporary policy, to be in effect for the duration of the state of emergency. The policy should eliminate the requirement for an in-person evaluation of individuals prior to the commencement of telepractice services. The policy should also reduce the number of hours of training licensees must obtain prior to offering telepractice services to two and require licensees to obtain the additional eight hours of training within four months of commencing telepractice. Dr. Bresnahan seconded. The motion passed on a roll call vote: Ms. Noonan – “yes”; Dr. Laffan – “yes”; Dr. Bresnahan – “yes”; Ms. Young-Hong – “yes”

Motion to adjourn. At 10:30, Dr. Laffan moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Bresnahan seconded. Motion passed on a roll call vote: Ms. Noonan – “yes”; Dr. Laffan – “yes”; Dr. Bresnahan – “yes”; Ms. Young-Hong – “yes”

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Hawley", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael Hawley
Executive Director

Documents Used in the Open Meeting:

- Agenda
- Governor’s “Order Extending the Registrations of Certain Licensed Health Care Professionals”