PHYSICAL THERAPIST (PT) PROFESSIONAL LICENSING GUIDE

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1. HOW THE PROFESSION IS ORGANIZED IN MICHIGAN

OVERVIEW

This guide looks at what you as a foreign-educated physical therapist or physical therapist assistant must do to become eligible for licensing in Michigan. At the same time, it includes some background on the larger physical therapy profession to give you an idea of the variety of opportunities available as you work to build your career.

REGULATION OF THE PHYSICAL THERAPY PROFESSION

The practice of physical therapy in Michigan is regulated by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) on behalf of the Michigan Board of Physical Therapy. You must be licensed to practice as a physical therapist (PT) or physical therapist assistant (PTA) in Michigan.

The guide assumes that you hold the equivalent of a U.S. degree in physical therapy and that your Michigan license will be your first U.S. physical therapist license. As a foreign-educated PT or PTA, you are required to first have your physical therapy education evaluated by the Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy (FCCPT). The FCCPT uses a course-work tool that is based on the year you graduated to determine if your degree was equivalent to a U.S. physical therapist degree. The FCCPT also verifies that you have passed the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) examination.

You will become a Physical Therapist or Physical Therapist Assistant through Licensure by Examination. The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT) administers the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE), which is required to become licensed as a PT in Michigan. There is also a Michigan Jurisprudence examination covering the physical therapy laws and rules for licensure in Michigan. The Jurisprudence examination is completed as part of the licensure application process.

2. ELIGIBILITY FOR LICENSING

OVERVIEW

Internationally educated Physical Therapists need to meet several requirements to receive Licensure by Examination as a PT in Michigan.

I. EVALUATE YOUR FOREIGN DEGREE AND FOREIGN LICENSE WITH FCCPT

LARA requires that you have your foreign physical therapy degree evaluated using the FCCPT Coursework Evaluation Tool (CWT) that was in effect on the date you received your physical therapy degree.

The FCCPT instructs you on the steps necessary to evaluate your foreign degree and licensure. Here are the steps:

- Apply and pay online for the Educational Credentials Review Service
- Make sure that you ask for your report to be prepared for the Michigan Board of Physical Therapy as this will make your record available to the State electronically
- Send academic and licensing request forms from the FCCPT application to the appropriate educational or licensing institutions
- Submit a notarized attestation page from the FCCPT application with a photo to FCCPT
- Provide translations for any documents received by FCCPT that are not in English. FCCPT requires that you contact a certified translator who will then send a notarized copy of the documents directly to FCCPT
- If your physical therapy education was not taught in English, your FCCPT report will include a determination of English language proficiency as tested on the TOEFL examination.

If your degree is not deemed equivalent to a U.S. degree, you will be provided information about the courses or subject areas in which you are deficient. If the Educational Credentials Review results in your education being found “not equivalent”, you may apply to FCCPT for a re-evaluation of your educational credentials after submitting additional information about your education. You must work directly with FCCPT in correcting any deficiencies in your report; the Michigan Board of Physical Therapy has no role in the re-evaluation process.

There are two additional companies who can use the CWT to evaluate your education. The FCCPT procedures are outlined here as they are representative of the credential evaluation process and FCCPT is the entity that developed the CWT. The other companies that may be used for evaluations are International Consultants of Delaware, Inc (ICD) and International Education Research Foundation, Inc (IERF).

II. GET FINGERPRINTED VIA A MICHIGAN-APPROVED VENDOR FOR A CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

Directions for completing the fingerprint check are provided in the licensure application. The cost for the background check is around $60.00. Call the approved vendor to set up an appointment. It is critical that you save the receipt as proof that you have taken this step. You may need to provide it in case there are any questions about your background check.

III. SUBMIT YOUR LICENSURE APPLICATION, REQUIRED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS, AND PAY APPLICATION FEE

Your application sent to the Michigan Board of Physical Therapy (PT) & (PTA) should include:

- Licensure application from LARA that can be downloaded from www.michigan.gov/healthlicense
- Fee: $135 paid by a check or money order drawn on a U.S. financial institution and made payable to the State of Michigan
- The completed Michigan jurisprudence examination that is part of the application packet

Other documentation that must be received to complete your license application and be made eligible to take the NPTE exam:

- Licensure verification from any U.S. licensing agency or board in which you were ever licensed or are currently licensed submitted directly from the licensing agency or board
- FCCPT Educational Credentials Review report that is submitted to the Michigan Board directly from FCCPT
- Fingerprint/Criminal Background Check report

The licensure application and fee are valid for 2 years. If you have not passed the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) or met other licensing requirements within these 2 years you will need to submit a new application and pay the processing fee again.

IV. REGISTER ONLINE WITH FSBPT FOR THE NATIONAL PHYSICAL THERAPY LICENSURE EXAMINATION (NPTE) BY

Register with FSBPT for the NPTE so that you will meet the deadline to be eligible for the next administration of the NPTE. There are fixed examination dates for the NPTE that include strict deadlines for registration. The NPTE costs $370 (as of 2013).

IV. RECEIVE AN AUTHORIZATION TO TEST (ATT) from FSBPT

FSBPT will send you an ATT letter that will include instructions about how to schedule your exam at a Prometric testing site. You must sit for the examination on the date indicated in the ATT letter. There is a $70.60 scheduling fee that is paid to Prometric when you schedule your exam.

VI. TAKE AND PASS THE NATIONAL PHYSICAL THERAPY EXAMINATION (NPTE) AND RECEIVE A PASSAGE LETTER

Your NPTE scores should be available to LARA within a week after testing. Once you have received a passing score on the NPTE you will receive a letter of passage from LARA and your license will be issued as soon as it can be processed, usually within 2 weeks.

3. TESTS

To become a licensed PT or PTA in Michigan, you must pass both the Jurisprudence and NPTE examinations.

The Jurisprudence exam consists of 25 multiple choice questions. The passing score on the exam is 75% (19/25). The jurisprudence examination is included in the application packet and must be completed and returned with your application and fee. The jurisprudence examination covers material that can be found in the Administrative Rules of the Michigan Board of Physical Therapy and in Article 15, parts 161 and 178 of the Michigan Public Health Code. Once you have passed the jurisprudence examination, and all other requirements for licensure have been met, you will be able to sit for the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE).

The National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) is a computer-based test that is designed to assess the basic entry-level competence of a physical therapist. This examination is required for licensure in every state in the U.S. You cannot bring reference materials or other testing aids to the exam.

CONTENT AREAS OF THE NATIONAL PHYSICAL THERAPY EXAMINATION (NPTE)

The content of the NPTE focuses on the clinical application of knowledge, concepts, and principles necessary for the provision of safe and effective patient care. The current NPTE exam (January 2013 edition) is divided into five domains, some of which have subcategories. The percentages show the approximate percent of questions each test taker will receive in the category:

1. Physical Therapy Examination (26.5%)
2. Foundations for Evaluation, Differential Diagnosis, and Prognosis (32.5%)
3. Interventions (28.5%)
4. Non-System Domains (12.5%)
    - Equipment & Devices; Therapeutic Modalities (6%)
    - Safety & Protection; Professional Responsibilities; Research (6.5%)

SCHEDULING AND TESTING SITE PROCEDURES OF THE NATIONAL PHYSICAL THERAPY EXAMINATION (NPTE)

Prometric administers the NPTE in testing centers across the U.S. You can register with Prometric, but you cannot schedule the exam until your Michigan application for Licensure by Examination has been processed and you have received an Authorization to Test (ATT) notice. The ATT includes detailed instructions for choosing a testing center and scheduling a date to take the NPTE.

On the day of the test, you must bring the ATT and two forms of acceptable identification. Acceptable ID is a currently valid, government-issued photo ID (passport, driver's license, etc.), and another piece of identification pre-printed with your name and containing your signature. You will be fingerprinted, scanned with a metal detector wand, and photographed before your test and will be

fingerprinted when you re-enter the testing area after breaks. You should arrive at least a half hour early; you will not be allowed to take the test if you arrive more than fifteen minutes late for your appointment. You will have up to 5 hours to complete the test, including time scheduled for optional breaks.

FAILING THE NPTE

If you fail the NPTE, you will provided with a Score Report which shows the areas that need improvement. You can use the report to learn what areas to study before you retake the exam. You must register to retake the examination with FSBPT. You are allowed to take the examination no more than three times in any 12-month period.

PRACTICING FOR THE NPTE

There are many different resources that can help you prepare for the content and the computer-based testing technology. There are a variety of test preparation resources available for low cost. FSBPT offers a Practice Review Tool and a practice examination (PEAT) that are both available through their website for a fee. Consider investing in test preparation as it may save you money by not having to pay to retake the test and by entering the job market faster.

4. TIME AND COSTS

Evaluating your foreign degree and achieving licensure as a Physical Therapist in Michigan depends on many factors. A few of these include:

- The completeness of your educational and professional records (the more documentation, the better)
- The efficiency of your home country's system in compiling and transmitting your university records and verification of licensing
- Your performance on the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE)
- Your free time and how much money you have to spend

We provide two hypothetical scenarios below to show some of the variety in results that immigrant professionals may find when they seek to become registered physical therapist in Michigan. Please consider these scenarios as two examples out of many possibilities. Your experience will vary.

TWO HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIOS FOR LICENSING AS A PHYSICAL THERAPIST:

Step	**More Efficient Scenario** ***Approximate Time and Cost***	**Less Efficient Scenario** ***Approximate Time and Cost***
1 Degree Evaluation	• It takes you just 3 months to get your home country documents to a credentialing organization to complete your degree evaluation • No translation is needed • 3 months + $490	• Problems with your documents take 6 months to resolve and are expensive since you must pay others in your country to visit institutions for you • Your documents must be translated • 8 months + $1,100
2 Fingerprints	• You identify a finger printing provider and make an appointment	• You identify a finger printing provider and make an

	• 1 month + $60.00	appointment • 1 month + $60.00
3 Submit Licensure Application to Board	• You assemble your Licensure application packet relatively quickly • 6 months + $135	• Your licensing application is incomplete the first time and you must resubmit it • 9 months + $135
4 Register with Prometric for the NPTE	• You register for the NPTE. • You begin a self-study course for the NPTE for $300 • $670 total	• You register for the NPTE • $370
5 Receive Authorization to Test and Schedule NPTE	• You schedule the NPTE right after receiving the Authorization to Test • $70.60	• You schedule the NPTE right after receiving the Authorization to Test • $70.60
6 Take and Pass NPTE	• Your skills are fresh and you've been using a self-study program throughout the process; you pass the NPTE on the first try. Your license is received 3 months after you take the exam • 5 months	• It takes you 2 tries to pass the NPTE. In between tests, you enroll in a 4-month NPTE preparation class for $1,000. Your license is received 3 months after you take the second exam • 8 months + $1,441
	More Efficient Total *About 1 1/2 years and $1,426*	**Less Efficient Total** *About 2 years and $3,177*

5. OTHER CAREERS AND CREDENTIALS

LOWER-LEVEL OPPORTUNITIES

You may want to consider if taking a lower-level job in healthcare in the short-term can help you meet longer-term goals of licensing as a physical therapist.

Preparing for the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) can take time. Working in healthcare in a different way and with fewer responsibilities may offer you some advantages, such as

- employers paying for tuition and fees associated with the NPTE and licensing
- more energy to focus on studying
- a chance to adapt to the U.S. healthcare system and workplace culture in a lower-pressure environment

You should be honest with your employer about your long-term plans and be sure that they have benefits such as tuition reimbursement or schedule flexibility that will support your goals.

PHYSICAL THERAPY AIDE/TECH

A physical therapy aide/tech can perform some general duties at a site providing physical therapy services. A physical therapy aide/tech cannot provide physical therapy services to a client and would work under the supervision of a licensed PT. A physical therapy aide/tech typically earns about $22,000 a year if working full time.

CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT, CNA

CNAs are also commonly referred to as nurses' aides or orderlies. CNAs have very limited responsibilities and work under nurse supervision. Additionally, you must complete a relatively short training program, pass a test and undergo a criminal background check before working as a CNA. Working as a CNA in the healthcare field will provide you with an opportunity to build a professional network, gain U.S. experience that is highly relevant to your profession, and possibly receive tuition reimbursement for relicensing purposes. CNAs typically earn approximately $12 per hour.

Applications and additional Information regarding certification as a CNA can be reviewed at https://www.prometric.com/en-us/clients/Nurseaide/Pages/MI.aspx.

HEALTHCARE INTERPRETER

If you are bilingual and a strong communicator, you may want to research opportunities for work in hospitals as an interpreter. This type of role is not regulated in Michigan, so standards for employment as well as pay and benefits may be very different depending on the employer. You are more likely to have benefits such as tuition reimbursement if you find work as a direct employee of a healthcare facility, instead of working for a company that provides interpretation services to hospitals. You may want to begin your research by directly contacting human resource departments at hospitals.

6. BEYOND LICENSING

MAINTAINING LICENSURE

Physical Therapists must renew their license every 2 years. Licenses expire on July 31 every two years. LARA sends a notice reminding you to renew your license, so be certain to keep your contact information up-to-date with their office. You are responsible for renewing your license even if you do not receive a notice from the Department. You must renew online. The cost to renew on time is $180. You will have sixty days after the expiration date in which you may continue to practice without a lapse in your license as long as you renew within that sixty day grace period. If you do not renew during that grace period, the expiration date of your license will revert to July 31. Be careful: if you continue to practice after your license has expired (lapsed), you could have disciplinary action taken against you. If your license does expire, you will be required to apply for relicensure to reactivate your license.

There are currently no continuing education requirements that must be met in order to renew a license. This could change in the future; any change in requirements will be posted on the LARA website.

LICENSING MOBILITY (RECIPROCITY)

The state of Michigan does not have any shared agreement to honor the physical therapist licenses of other states. It grants licensing to physical therapists by either examination (the process described in this topic) or endorsement (where a physical therapist licensed in another state must meet all Michigan requirements for licensing). Fortunately, since the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) is accepted by all states, a physical therapist looking to relocate to Michigan will not have to retake the NPTE.

7. IMPORTANT LINKS

REGULATION:

- The Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) issues licenses for Physical Therapists. Application packets (both by Examination and by Endorsement) can be downloaded on the homepage.
- The main page for the licensing of any health profession is www.michigan.gov/healthlicense. The page that specifically concerns physical therapy:
- http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-35299_63294_27529_27549---,00.html and it includes information regarding the boards, applications and frequently asked questions.
- Contact information: Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Bureau of Professional Licensing PO Box 30670, Lansing MI 48909 Telephone Number 517-335-0918; Fax: 517-373-7179 Email: BPLhelp
- The law that regulates licensing for all health professions including can be read at http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-368-1978-15;
- The administrative rules governing physical therapy practice in Michigan can be located at: http://w3.lara.state.mi.us/orr/AdminCode.aspx?AdminCode=Department&Dpt=LR&Level_1=Bureau+of+Professional+Licensing

TESTING

- NPTE Exam Application - Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy – www.fsbpt.org
- NPTE Exam Information – www.fsbpt.org
- Prometric administers the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) www.prometric.com

CREDENTIAL REVIEW AGENCIES

- Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy (FPT) www.fccpt.org
- International Consultants of Delaware, Inc (ICD) www.icdel.com
- International Education Research Foundation, Inc www.ierf.org

NATIONAL RESOURCES:

- The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT) represents member Physical Therapy Boards for all 50 states. It develops the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE). www.fsbpt.org
- The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) is a national organization that represents physical therapists and advocates for physical therapy issues. www.apta.org

8. TIPS

PROVIDE COMPLETE DOCUMENTS

Physical Therapy foreign degree evaluation services require that your university and licensing authority send transcripts directly to them. Invest the time and money early to facilitate this process. Providing additional documentation about your program of study, such as syllabi or course descriptions, can make the most of your degree evaluation. Making an effort here can result in significant savings of time and money by minimizing the gaps in comparing your degree to its U.S. equivalent.

GET YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Be your own advocate throughout the licensing process. Seek clarification about questions and concerns directly from official sources. If you feel your degree has been misinterpreted or you do not understand a fine point about testing or state regulations, organize your questions and then

contact FCCPT, Prometric, or the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs and ask for assistance.

INVEST IN TEST PREPARATION

If you can afford it, invest some money in test preparation. There are online and in-person formats available, including a moderately priced Practice Review Tool by the makers of the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE). Investing money wisely now to make your licensing process a success will get you into a job that pays well that much faster! You should feel prepared to take the NPTE by the time your licensing by examination application is ready to submit because the events that follow are sensitive to deadlines and you will lose money if you delay.

BE FLEXIBLE IN YOUR JOB SEARCH

Build professional networks; consider employment in healthcare at a lower level, to give you a lower-stress job that allows you to study for licensing and open opportunities to meet employers. If you are overqualified for positions you are applying for, explain how your plans can bring long-term value to the employer.