

MICHIGAN PHYSICAL THERAPIST (PT) LICENSING GUIDE FOR SKILLED IMMIGRANTS

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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 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). You must be licensed to practice as a physical therapist (PT) in Michigan.

This 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 therapy license. As a foreign-educated PT, you are required to first have your physical therapy education evaluated by the Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy (FCCPT).

You will become a Physical Therapist by examination. The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT) administers the National Physical Therapy Exam (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 administered by PSI and must be completed as part of the licensure process.

2. ELIGIBILITY FOR LICENSING

OVERVIEW

Internationally educated PTs need to meet several requirements to receive Licensure by Examination 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 which includes the following:

- Apply and pay online for the Educational Credential 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 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 Credential 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 in this guide. FCCPT's procedures are representative of the credential evaluation process for all 3 companies since 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. Submit your licensure application, required supporting documents, and pay the application fee

Your application sent to the Michigan Board of Physical Therapy should include:

- Licensure application from LARA that can be downloaded from www.michigan.gov/healthlicense
- Appropriate Fee
- Take the jurisprudence examination through PSI. You may contact PSI to schedule your exam by visiting www.psiexams.com or by calling PSI at 800-733-9267.
- An applicant whose educational program was taught in a language other than English must submit a certified score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language – Internet Based Test. Required section scores on the TOEFL-IBT are:
 - Not less than 21 on the reading section
 - Not less than 18 on the listening section
 - Not less than 26 on the speaking section
 - Not less than 24 on the writing section
- FCCPT Educational Credential Review report that is submitted to the Michigan Board directly from FCCPT.

The licensure application and fee are valid for 2 years. If you have not met all licensing requirements within those 2 years you will need to submit a new application and pay the appropriate fee again.

- III. Be fingerprinted by a Michigan-approved vendor for a criminal background check.

Directions for completing the fingerprint requirement are mailed to you from the Department upon receipt of your application.

- IV. Register online with FSBPT for the NPTE

Register with FSBPT for the NPTE so that you will meet the deadline to be made eligible by FSBPT for the next administration of the NPTE. Examination dates are fixed for the NPTE with strict deadlines for registration.

- V. 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. There is a scheduling fee that is paid to Prometric when you schedule your exam.

- VI. Take and pass the 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, your license will be issued as soon as it can be processed.

3. TESTS

Michigan requires passing both the jurisprudence and NPTE examinations for a PT to become licensed in Michigan.

The passing score on the jurisprudence exam is 75%, (21 out of 28 questions). Licensure candidates must take the jurisprudence examination through PSI. 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.

The NPTE is a computer-based test that is designed to assess the basic entry-level competence of a PT. This examination is required for licensure in every state in the U.S.

CONTENT AREAS OF THE 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 four domains, some of which have subcategories. The percentages below 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 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 ATT notice provided by FSBPT. 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 identification 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. A digital image of your fingerprint will be taken, you will be scanned with a metal detector wand, and you will be photographed at the testing center. Another fingerprint will be taken each time you leave or re-enter the testing room during your exam. You should arrive at least thirty minutes early. You are allowed 5 hours for the PT examination.

FAILING THE NPTE

If you fail the NPTE, you will be 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. FSBPT will only allow you to take the examination a maximum of 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 at low cost. FSBPT offers a practice exam and assessment tool (PEAT) that is 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. 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 PT. Working in healthcare in a different capacity and with fewer responsibilities may offer you some advantages:

- Your employer may pay for some costs associated with licensing
- You can focus more energy on studying
- You will have 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. You may find some employers have benefits such as tuition reimbursement or schedule flexibility that will support your goals.

CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT, CNA

CNAs are also commonly referred to as nurse's 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 licensing purposes.

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.

5. BEYOND LICENSING

MAINTAINING LICENSURE

PT licenses must be renewed every two years through the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Bureau of Professional Licensing. Your license will expire on July 31. You are responsible for renewing your license even if you do not receive a notice from the Department, so be certain to keep your contact information up-to-date with their office. You must renew online. 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. 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.

Beginning in 2017 every time you renew your license you must certify that you have met a 24-credit professional development requirement. You need to retain documentation of meeting the professional development requirement in case you are audited. There are many opportunities to earn these hours, but special rules apply. You should check the Department website for details, or consider joining a professional association that offers continuing education opportunities to members.

LICENSING MOBILITY (ENDORSEMENT)

The State of Michigan grants licensing to PTs either by examination (the process described in this topic) or by endorsement. A PT licensed in another state, who wants to practice in Michigan, must independently meet all Michigan requirements for licensing. If you become licensed in Michigan and want to practice physical therapy in another state, you will need to research the legal requirements for that state. Fortunately, since the NPTE is accepted by all states, a physical therapist looking to relocate to Michigan will not have to retake the NPTE.

6. IMPORTANT LINKS

LICENSING AND REGULATION:

- The main page for the licensing of any health profession is www.michigan.gov/healthlicense.
- The page that focuses specifically on physical therapy which includes information regarding the boards, applications and frequently asked questions is: http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-72600_72603_27529_27549---.00.html.
- Contact information: Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
Bureau of Professional Licensing
PO Box 30670
Lansing, MI 48909
Telephone Number: 517-335-0918
Fax: 517-241-0035
Email: bplhelp@michigan.gov

- The laws that regulate licensing for all health professions including PTs can be located 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/Files/AdminCode/1597_2015-088LR_AdminCode.pdf

CREDENTIAL REVIEW AGENCIES

- Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy www.fccpt.org
- International Consultants of Delaware, Inc www.icdeval.com
- International Education Research Foundation, Inc www.ierf.org

TESTING

- NPTE Exam Application and Information - Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy – www.fsbpt.org
- Prometric administers the NPTE www.prometric.com
- PSI administers the jurisprudence examination - www.psiexams.com

NATIONAL RESOURCES

- The FSBPT represents members of Physical Therapy Boards for all 50 states. It develops the NPTE www.fsbpt.org
- The American Physical Therapy Association is a national organization that represents physical therapists and advocates for physical therapy issues. www.apta.org