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Pennsylvania Automatically Extends Certain Temporary Licenses for Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants

Since March 2020, the Department of State has received approval from the Governor for waivers to maintain or extend the duration or term of various temporary permits for certain licensees and professions during the COVID-19 emergency. These waivers include:

- [Pennsylvania Waives Some Nurse Licensing Requirements to Aid Coronavirus Response](#)
- [Pennsylvania Waives Certain Requirements for Cosmetologists and Barbers During COVID-19 Emergency.](#)
- [Pennsylvania Extends Expiration Dates of Temporary Permits for Additional Licensees During COVID-19 Emergency.](#)

These previous waivers extended temporary permits and temporary licenses that were on the verge of terminating or expiring before the permit or license holder would have the opportunity to take licensure exams that have been postponed indefinitely due to COVID-related closures of testing centers/sites. The Department of State has identified additional temporary licenses in the field of occupational therapy that could expire, with no defined timetable for when the relevant licensure examinations will be offered by testing centers/sites.

To become a licensed **occupational therapist** (OT) or licensed **occupational therapy assistant** (OTA) in Pennsylvania, an individual must meet the academic requirements of an educational program in occupational therapy approved by the State Board of Occupational Therapy (Board) and successfully complete a period of supervised fieldwork experience (six months for an OT; two months for an OTA). Thereafter, an applicant would be eligible to apply for and take the licensure examination.

Once an individual has completed the education and experience requirements – but prior to taking the licensure examination – he or she may apply to the Board for a “temporary license.” A temporary license is also available to individuals who have taken the examination once, failed it, and applied to retake the examination the next time it is offered. (Note: A different type of “temporary license” is also available for non-resident licensees; that temporary license, which is issued for six months, is not the subject of this waiver.)

This temporary license provides a limited authorization for the individual to practice occupational therapy while awaiting the next scheduled licensure examination. He or she may only practice to a level no higher than an assistant, and all such practice must be done under the direct supervision of a licensed occupational therapist. When a temporary license is issued, it remains valid for one year.

Because examination sites have been closed, the pandemic jeopardizes the validity of temporary licenses that would expire before the COVID-19 emergency ends and test centers re-open.

To address this, the Governor authorized the Department's request to automatically extended certain temporary OT and OTA licenses. This extension applies to all temporary licenses that were valid and active as of March 6, when the COVID-19 disaster emergency was declared, and any temporary OT and OTA licenses issued during the COVID-19 emergency. Such temporary licenses shall expire no earlier than 90 days following the end of the COVID-19 emergency.

Providing this automatic extension will preserve the validity of these temporary licenses and extend their duration until such time as licensure examinations become available again.