

**Mississippi State Board of Physical Therapy  
5 Year Strategic Plan  
FY 2027 – FY 2031**

### **1. Comprehensive Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Mississippi State Board of Physical Therapy is to safeguard the public health, safety, and welfare of citizens by establishing minimum qualifications, creating exclusive titles corresponding to the level of qualifications and regulating the competency of individuals who wish to offer physical therapy services in the State of Mississippi.

### **2. Philosophy**

The Mississippi State Board of Physical Therapy is committed to continually safe guarding Mississippi patients/clients through ensuring the highest degree of professional conduct by those physical therapists and physical therapist assistants engaged in offering physical therapy services. The Board endeavors to promote the highest professional standards, to indiscriminately enforce rules, accountability and regulations. The Board provides oversight for accountability and accuracy to ensure the highest quality of public services while respecting the rights of individual practitioners and patient/clients through oversight of the practitioners.

### **3. Relevant Statewide Goals and Benchmarks**

Statewide Goal #1.: To protect Mississippians from risks to public health and to provide them with the health-related information and access to quality healthcare necessary to increase the length and quality of their lives.

Relevant Benchmarks #1.:

- Number of practitioners needed to remove health professional shortage are designated by type of practitioner
- Preventable hospitalizations (discharge rate among the Medicare population for diagnoses amenable to non-hospital-based care)
- Number of persons treated in emergency rooms for non-emergency issues and costs, for Medicaid patients and for all patients
- Number of individuals on waiting list for home-and community-based services
- Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT)/well child screening rates for Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) children
- Percentage of children who have one or more emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions
- Hospital acquired infection rate
- Rate of complications among diabetes patients

- Adult compliance with recommended levels of aerobic physical activity (percentage of adults who report participating in 150 minutes or more of aerobic physical activity per week)
- Occupational fatalities (number of fatalities from occupational injuries per 100,000 workers)

Statewide Goal #2.: To protect the public's safety, including providing timely and appropriate responses to emergencies and disasters and to operate a fair and effective system of justice.

Relevant Benchmarks #2.:

- Quickly mobilize practitioners who can assist with disaster management through special licensure for qualified out of state practitioners.
- Special criteria for re-licensure of individuals that are serving in the National Guard or any branch of armed services

Statewide Goal #3.: To ensure that Mississippians are able to develop to their full potential by having their basic needs met, including the need for adequate food and shelter and a healthy, stable, and nurturing family environment or a competent and caring system of social support.

Relevant Benchmarks #3.:

- Substantiated incidence of child abuse or neglect (per 1,000 population)
- Percentage of the population of persons with a disability who are employed
- Percentage of individuals completing vocational rehabilitation services who obtain employment

Statewide Goal #4.: To create an efficient government and an informed and engaged citizenry that helps to address social problems through the payment of taxes, the election of capable leaders at all levels of government, and participation in charitable organizations through contributions and volunteerism.

Relevant Benchmarks #4.:

- Number of government employees per 10,000 population (broken out by federal, state, and local)
- Administrative efficiency: Expenditures on state government administrative activities as a percentage of total operational expenditures
- Average wait time for state government services
- Regulatory efficiency: average length of time to resolution of documented complaints to professional licensing agencies
- Number and average cost of regulatory actions taken, by regulatory body and type of action
- State dollars saved by providing government services online (e.g., document retrieval, issuance of new business permits, license renewal)

Statewide Goal #5.: To make available an accessible, quality public higher education at an affordable cost that prepares Mississippians to become productive, financially self-sufficient members of society while meeting the human resource needs of Mississippi and its employers, including the creation of new jobs through the commercialization of university-based research.

Relevant Benchmarks #5.:

- Licensure exam pass rate for community college students who successfully complete a technical or certificate program in a field requiring state and or national licensure
- Percentage of certificate graduates employed in jobs in their field of study within a year of graduation (job placement rate)
- Licensure exam pass rate for graduate school graduates, by discipline
- Percentage of University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) physical therapists program graduates practicing in Mississippi after licensure
- Percentage of graduates in high-need disciplines practicing in Mississippi, by discipline

#### **4. Overview of the Agency 5-Year Strategic Plan:**

There have been some recent notable changes. The Occupational Licensing Regulatory Committee (OLRC) in accordance with the Secretary of State's Administrative Procedure Act approved the Board's procedures for subpoena power and physical therapist practitioners privileged to implement services without a referral from another healthcare provider under circumstances. In the past fiscal year, the Board website was modernized to reflect current technology and facilitate ease of use.

The Mississippi State Board of Physical Therapy has targeted priorities for the next five years. First, the Board will continue to offer heightened communication and licensing options through expansion and full implementation of the online database of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants. This augmentation will decrease office costs, streamline communication systems and increase consumer patient access to physical therapy services. The Board has all physical therapy practitioners applying for licensure complete and online jurisprudence exam on the Board's rules and regulations. The Board has required all applicants for licensure to have a criminal background check since 2009. As a convenience to licensure applicants, the Board provides access to a Live Scan fingerprinting equipment in the office. The Board will continue to use an online database that requires that all licensed physical therapy practitioners complete their renewal online, including submission of a current photo every four years, listing of advanced certifications and residence/business addresses. The Board has implemented and will continue to require all physical therapists and physical therapist assistants to upload and store proof of their continuing competence through a free online Board approved organization. The free system is a resource for recording and tracking their continuing competence hours for the entirety of a therapist's career. The Board is continuing to investigate mechanisms requiring random criminal background checks during the licensure renewal process. A Board subcommittee is reviewing all regulations per the Tackle the Tape Initiative.

Secondly, the Board will continue to improve the pre-licensure program criteria and examination process. This includes regulating the amount of time an applicant may take the licensure examination as well as giving potential practitioners an earlier opportunity to sit for the examination, thus decreasing the amount of time between graduation and licensure date. Many applicants have been able to take advantage of this opportunity. A subcommittee has been updating the Board's pre-licensure jurisprudence exam. The Board committee is charged with reviewing pre-licensure and compact privilege jurisprudence exam. Another Board committee has convened and presented a series of additional application/renewal related to application questions, to required materials and other recommended changes which have adopted. The Board has continued to use both onsite and electronic meetings to complete these activities which enhance the process and safe practices for patients/clients.

The third priority for the Board is to continue tracking the capability, efficiency and quality of licensed physical therapy practitioners. The Board monitors continuing competency during the re-licensure process. Onsite random audits are conducted to verify the current licensure status and compliance with practice regulations. To promote legal practice, the Board requires criminal background checks for new licensees, posts a list of licensees on the Board website, processes complaints, holds hearings and renews licenses. For patient/client/public information, the Board certifies and posts a list of physical therapists qualified to provide dry needling, and requires posting of a practitioner's current license in a public place within the practice setting. Promotion of services available to the public has been facilitated by posting the compact privilege licensure practitioners and data on the physical therapy workforce in Mississippi. The workforce data has been shared and is in the process of being updated. Telehealth criteria for physical therapy healthcare delivery continues to be posted on the Board website. The Board continues to identify areas of emerging advanced and enhanced practice opportunities, develop criteria for practitioners to offer these services and develop methods to identify these practitioners for the public. Some emerging practice opportunities include: instrument assisted manipulation, virtual reality, lymphedema, kinesotaping and imaging. Any additional advanced certifications held by practitioners are in the process of being added to the online applications for licensure and renewal. Many practitioners have submitted documentation of their advanced certifications during the online renewal process. This data is useful in man power data collected and projecting future needs to enhance the physical therapy care for all Mississippians. The Board is exploring a way to make advanced practitioner information available to the public.

The Board's fourth priority is to use current technology for continuing to move all functions of the Board toward a paperless system. The Board continues to send electronically renewal notices, initial licensure information and other correspondences such as that includes emergency notifications related to disasters/pandemics, etc. The implementation of mandatory online licensure applications and renewals are currently in place. Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are currently editing information that is accessible to them in their profile and utilizing the online payment system to pay fees. These uses of technology for communication and agency licensure/regulation roles have improved organizational efficiency and consumer accountability. All practitioners receive a licensure certificate and ID card in their personal online portal. This is saving the staff time as well as printing and mailing costs. This method has decreased the time that the practitioners wait for verification of licensure thus making services to patients/clients more rapidly accessible.

Board meeting packets will continue to be sent to the members through a secure link and uploaded to an electronic device to be used during Board meetings. Virtual technology is used for Board meetings and hearings in special situations.

The Board is currently addressing two electronic projects. First, using electronic letterhead for correspondence to other state agencies and Board related organizations. Second, change the paper based random audit form to an electronic component. The Board recently began using FSBPT ID numbers as a part of a practitioner's profile in the Board's database and Application Program Interface (API) which has enhanced administrative efficiency. These are other mechanism to protect the practitioner's personal data and administrative efficiencies.

The Board's fifth priority is to focus on the rapidly changing modes of practice in healthcare. For example, AI is currently being used by many healthcare practitioners for documentation of patient progress. In the area of direct care, virtual reality is being utilized in education programs. Referral for additional tests that can complement care such as referral for x-rays are being used in physical therapy in other states. The implications of nutrition on chronic diseases are another area of practice that is emerging.

## **5. Agency's External/Internal Assessment**

- 1) Changes in state or federal laws related to the practice of physical therapy.
- 2) Economic pandemic or catastrophic conditions that relate to the number of physical therapy practitioners needed or that can be successfully employed.
- 3) Unpredictable changes in health care programs/legislation and changes in governmental paperwork.
- 4) Rapid advances in healthcare knowledge and technologies.
- 5) Changes in the diversity, lifespan and other characteristics of the state population served by the practitioners and agency.
- 6) Number of licensee applicants impacts the collection of fees.
- 7) Complexity of the complaints can affect attorney fees, investigation costs, travel funds and other meeting costs.
- 8) Changes in the online database system positively impacts personnel efficiency.
- 9) Emerging new technologies and mechanisms to conduct the licensure program.
- 10) Amount of time required for Board members to assimilate new trends and uses of technology.
- 11) Actions taken by the professional organization, the national and international licensure bodies.
- 12) Annual internal control review.
- 13) The time requirement for the administrative process in obtaining clearance for implementation of new rules and regulations.
- 14) Inquires, suggestions, complimentary comments, and complaints received by the Board.
- 15) Changes in compact privilege licensure.
- 16) Current and projected workforce data.
- 17) Infrastructure and technology changes
- 18) New Board member orientation packets are continually updated to reflect any new changes in regulations or statutes.

- 19) Opportunities to attend in person a national meeting on Board responsibilities/legal constraints/opportunity for enhancing consumer quality of care funded by FSBPT.
- 20) Electronic national licensure regulatory meetings are available to Board members.
- 21) Board members participate in a variety of clinical and management courses focusing on current physical therapy practices as a part of their own professional development. They are responsible for all financial accepts of these activities. This is very helpful in keeping the Board aware of future trends in the profession.

At a minimum of once quarterly, the Board meets to continue the on-going process of evaluating all aspects of mandated duties and responsibilities. Through these quarterly meetings, the Board determines the needs and requirements of patients/clients. The Board also makes decisions on requests and updates any rules and regulations that need to be revised. Inquires made by practitioners of the Board rules and regulations are responded to and later shared electronically. As part of this process, they provide direction for the Executive Director, make decisions on requests, evaluate the progress made towards established goals and objectives, and make changes when appropriate within budgetary constraints. This includes implementing the policy rules and standards set forth in the Rules and Regulations and standards/processes for initial licensure and renewal. Finally, the Board evaluates and discusses the progress made towards its mission and philosophy.

The agency already has in place some internal mechanisms to monitor and evaluate performance such as all license requests being independently reviewed by two staff members. There is an annual internal control review required by DFA and by utilizing a third party to perform many of the accounting tasks for the agency. The Board will continue to develop additional procedures that continue this effort.

Through interfacing with American Physical Therapy Association - Mississippi, American Physical Therapy Association, the membership of the Federation of State Physical Therapy Licensure Boards, the World Confederation for Physical Therapy, and the online offerings of International Network of Physiotherapy Regulatory Authorities, the Board continues to identify changes in the field of practice and regulation. From this information the Board assesses how these changes may affect the physical therapy practice and practitioners in the State. Then the Board determines if its regulations continue to meet the needs of the public within the authority granted by law.

## **6. Agency Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Measures by Program:**

### **6.1 Agency Goals by Program**

#### **Program 1: Licensure & Regulation**

**GOAL A: Issue initial licenses and renewals to individuals who meet Board approved standards and qualifications** (Miss. Code Ann. Section 73-23- 43, 73-23-47, 73-23-49, 73-23-51, 73-23-57 & 73-23-101)

**OBJECTIVE A.1.** Develop and implement the quality standards that are required for individuals to obtain a license or advanced certification as a physical therapists or physical therapist assistants including ongoing continuing competency.

*Outcome:* Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants with current professional skills

*Outcome:* Physical therapists meeting specific standards for practice without referral from another healthcare practitioner in specific situations

*Outcome:* Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants with advanced practice skills verified through certification will be able to provide specialized services for patients/clients with specific needs

**A.1.1. STRATEGY:** Offer an online comprehensive application that requires proof of good moral character, jurisprudence exam, criminal background check and meet other licensure requirements to practice as a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant.

*Output:* Physical therapist and physical therapist assistant who have knowledge of professional standards, ethical practices and legally required standards

*Output:* Additional physical therapists and physical therapist assistants

*Efficiency:* Optimizes the safety, access to services and quality skills of the practitioners available to Mississippi patient/clients

**A.1.2. STRATEGY:** License applicants meeting licensure requirements based upon completion of their qualifications online.

*Output:* Total number of applications submitted monthly

*Output:* Practitioner information added to an online database system

*Output:* Verification of licensure for the public via online

*Output:* Data for workforce information

*Efficiency:* Cost of application processing is covered by a fee

*Efficiency:* A decrease in cost for processing due to automation

**A.1.3. STRATEGY:** Update online application process when necessary to reflect changes in Board policy, federal or state laws, national licensure body and professional standards.

*Output:* The Board in conjunction with the Executive Director reviews and makes changes as appropriate but minimally on an annual basis.

*Efficiency:* Keeps agency in compliance with federal/state laws, national licensure bodies and professional standards

*Efficiency:* Promotes accessible safe patient-consumer services for the public

**A.1.4 STRATEGY:** Examine new graduate, foreign trained, licensees from other states for entry level competency prior to licensing and maintain a list of compact privilege licensees.

*Output:* Additional qualified physical therapists and physical therapist assistants

*Output:* Added physical therapists and physical therapist assistants

*Efficiency:* Ensuring all applicants meet identical entry level competency

**OBJECTIVE A.2.** Oversee online renewal process for compliance with continuing competency, ethics, updated practitioner photo, advanced practice certification and place of residence/business address(s).

*Outcome:* More qualified physical therapist and physical therapist assistant practitioners

*Outcome:* Decreased agency renewal cost

*Outcome:* Continued public protection related to current practitioner photographs and practice locations

*Efficiency:* Provides workforce data

**A.2.1. STRATEGY:** Posting the renewal instructions and application online.

*Output:* More online and fewer paper renewals

*Output:* Less staff time required at renewal time with the online process

*Efficiency:* Offset of administrative costs through less staff devoted to this activity

**A.2.2 STRATEGY:** Licensure certificates and ID cards are sent to practitioners via their personal portal to be printed by the recipient.

*Output:* Less staff time required at renewal time with the online process

*Efficiency:* Offset of administrative costs through less staff devoted to this activity

*Efficiency:* This method decreases the time that the practitioners wait for verification of licensure thus making services to patients/clients more rapidly accessible.

**GOAL B: Regulation and enforcement of the laws governing licensed physical therapists and physical therapist assistants (Miss. Code Ann. Section 73-23-31 – 73-23-67)**

**OBJECTIVE B.1.** Establish procedures to ensure compliance with standards, laws, rules and regulations.

*Outcome:* Identical qualifications for each practitioner category

*Outcome:* Change in the number and types of reported complaints

*Efficiency:* Decrease the questions related to legal practice

*Efficiency:* Decrease in staff time needed for responding to questions on practice

**B.1.1. STRATEGY:** Using the statute to develop rules and regulations for implementation.

*Output:* An online guide to the rules and regulations of the Board

*Output:* Establishes standardized policies for physical therapy practitioners

*Efficiency:* The online posting of rules and regulations facilitates communication with practitioners/public and moves the Board towards becoming a paperless agency

**OBJECTIVE B.2.** Regulate and enforce state laws, rules and regulation primarily through biannual renewal and onsite random audit process of practitioners.



*Outcome:* Standard qualifications for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants

*Outcome:* Facilitates practitioner compliance

*Efficiency:* Promotes compliance with rules and regulations

**B.2.1. STRATEGY:** Update regulations and state statute when necessary to reflect changes in Board policy, federal-state laws, current professional practice and national licensure body standards.

*Output:* Board proposes changes to regulation through utilizing the state administrative procedure process

*Output:* Board proposes changes to state statute through legislature

*Output:* Keeps agency up to date with changes in the external healthcare arena and enables the highest quality care services for consumers

*Efficiency:* Costs incurred for Board meetings, legal counsel, paperwork, and legislative activity are met through non-state funds

**B.2.2. STRATEGY:** Renewal of physical therapists and physical therapist assistant licensees on a biannual basis utilizing an online program.

*Output:* Increase use of online system

*Output:* Decrease number of paper renewals

*Output:* Ensures adequate annual operational finances

*Efficiency:* Reduction in agency cost for renewals is decreased

*Explanatory:* The cost reduction of online biannual renewals enables the agency to provide additional services without employing additional personnel and maintain fiscal stability

**B.2.3. STRATEGY:** Mandate continuing competency activities biannually.

*Output:* Require 30 hours of competency activities

*Output:* Allow at least 15 CCUs in the certified activities category and a maximum of 15 CCUs in the approved activities category

*Output:* Require the utilization of the free online Board approved system to record and track CCUs

*Output:* Restrict CCUs to Board approved courses and presenters

*Output:* Keep practitioners updated with current practice

*Efficiency:* Practitioners are more likely to use current efficiency, and quality treatment methods

**B.2.4. STRATEGY:** Advise practitioners and the public of updates and/or changes to rules and regulations as appropriate.

*Output:* Post online any proposed and/or adopted rule changes

*Output:* Post dates for Board meetings online

*Efficiency:* Dissemination of information online results in cost reductions for the agency and has reduced the amount of additional physical records storage space needed

**OBJECTIVE B.3.** Monitor current best physical therapy practices.

**B.3.1. STRATEGY:** Participate in state physical therapy association meetings.

*Output:* Executive Director is invited to present rules and regulations related to practice frequently at physical therapy meeting

*Output:* Board practitioner members participate in education sessions at meetings

*Output:* Executive Director is invited to present information at educational programs for students on licensure acquisition and Board rules/regulations

*Efficiency:* Enables the agency to react to changes of the practice environment more readily

*Explanatory:* Cost for meeting participation is covered by the requesting organization, at times the agency or Board practitioner

**B.3.2. STRATEGY:** National licensure conferences.

*Output:* Board members and staff annually attend national licensing activities/meetings related to their roles and responsibilities

*Efficiency:* Staff and Board members are able to be more effective in fulfilling their Board roles and responsibilities

*Explanatory:* Incurred expenses are reimbursed by the national association

**B.3.3 STRATEGY:** National professional meetings and conferences.

*Output:* Board members often attend national physical therapy educational activities and meetings related to their practice settings.

*Efficiency:* Board members are more effective in recognizing current practice trends

*Efficiency:* Is able to implement current practices more rapidly

*Explanatory:* Incurred expenses are reimbursed by the Board member

**OBJECTIVE B.4.** Investigate complaints against practitioners and hold hearings when appropriate to implement action as needed.

*Outcome:* Safeguard the public by taking action against incompetent practitioners

*Outcome:* Provide due process

*Outcome:* Respond to public concerns promptly

**B.4.1. STRATEGY:** Use a committee to implement established investigatory policies and administrative hearings for any charge or complaint as appropriate.

*Output:* Promptly respond to complaints made to the Board

*Output:* Knowledge of an experienced physical therapy practitioner, legal and investigatory personnel review the complaint to determine what additional information is needed including any subpoenas

*Output:* The Board investigator follows up on any committee recommendations

*Output:* Protect the public while ensuring the rights of the practitioner

*Output:* Notify practitioners and if indicated schedule and hold hearings

*Efficiency:* Expenses incurred for investigations and hearings are covered by fees imposed on the practitioner

*Explanatory:* The fees imposed are based on the cost of the investigatory, legal, hearing processes and severity of the offense

**B.4.2. STRATEGY:** Restriction, suspension or revocation of licenses when deemed necessary.

*Output:* Complaints are addressed and resolved by the Board

*Output:* Fewer practitioners in non-compliance

*Output:* Disciplined practitioners posted online

*Efficiency:* Expenses incurred for investigations and hearings are covered by fees imposed on the practitioner

*Explanatory:* The fees imposed are based upon the cost of the investigatory, legal, hearing processes and severity of the offense

*Explanatory:* Public awareness of Board disciplinary actions is posted on the website as a part of safe guarding the public

**OBJECTIVE B.5.** Conduct onsite random audits of physical therapy practitioners for compliance of rules/regulations regarding transparency of practitioner qualifications.

*Outcome:* Safeguard the public by taking action against non-compliant practitioners

**B.5.1. STRATEGY:** Use Board approved evaluation tool.

*Output:* Protect the public while ensuring the rights of the practitioner

*Output:* Fewer practitioners in non-compliance

*Explanatory:* The non-compliance fees imposed are based upon the number of items not adhering to Board rules/regulations