

Date of Hearing: April 10, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Al Muratsuchi, Chair
AB 2725 (Blanca Rubio) – As Amended March 18, 2024

SUBJECT: Teacher credentialing: administrative services credential: occupational and physical therapists

SUMMARY: Adds to the minimum requirements for a preliminary services credential with a specialization in administrative services, a valid license to practice occupational therapy or a valid license to practice physical therapy, verification of meeting a basic skills requirement as determined by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), and three years of experience as a school-based occupational therapist (OT) or physical therapist (PT). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Adds to the minimum requirements for a preliminary services credential with a specialization in administrative services, a valid license to practice occupational therapy issued by the California Board of Occupational Therapy or a valid license to practice physical therapy issued by the Physical Therapy Board of California, verification of meeting a basic skills requirement as determined by the CTC, and three years of experience as a school-based OT or PT.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Specifies that the minimum requirements for the preliminary services credential in administrative services are all of the following:
 - a) Possession of one of the following:
 - i) A valid teaching credential requiring the possession of a baccalaureate degree and a professional preparation program including student teaching;
 - ii) A valid designated subjects career technical education, adult education, or special subjects teaching credential, provided the candidate also possesses a baccalaureate degree;
 - iii) A valid services credential with a specialization in pupil personnel, health, or clinical or rehabilitative services or a valid services credential authorizing service as a teacher librarian; or
 - iv) A valid credential issued under the laws, rules, and regulations in effect on or before December 31, 1971, which authorizes the same areas as in subparagraphs (ii) and (iii).
 - b) Completion of a minimum of three years of successful, full-time classroom teaching experience in the public schools, including, but not limited to, service in state- or county-operated schools, or in private schools of equivalent status or three years of experience in the fields of pupil personnel, health, clinical or rehabilitative, or librarian services;

- c) Completion of an entry-level program of specialized and professional preparation in administrative services approved by the CTC or a one-year internship in a program of supervised training in administrative services, approved by the CTC;
 - d) Current employment in an administrative position after completion of professional preparation whether full or part-time, in a public school or private school of equivalent status. The CTC encourages school districts to consider the recency of preparation or professional growth in school administration as one of the criteria for employment; and
 - e) Specifies that a preliminary administrative services credential is valid for 5 years from the date of an initial employment in an administrative position and is not renewable. (Education Code (EC) 44270)
- 2) Prohibits the CTC from issuing an initial credential, permit, certificate, or renewal of an emergency credential to a person to serve in the public schools unless the person has demonstrated proficiency in basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills in the English language, as specified. (EC 44252 (b))
 - 3) Specifies that the minimum requirements for a services credential with a specialization in health are:
 - a) Five years, or its equivalent, of college or university education, or five years of professional preparation approved by the CTC;
 - b) Possession of a valid license, certificate, or registration, appropriate to the health service to be designated, issued by the California agency authorized by law to license, certificate, or register persons to practice that health service in California; and
 - c) Such additional requirements as may be prescribed by the CTC.
 - 4) Authorizes the holder of a services credential with a specialization in health to perform, at all grade levels, the health service approved by the CTC as designated on the credential. Services as an audiometrist, occupational therapist, or physical therapist are not deemed health services. (EC 44267)
 - 5) Specifies that the minimum requirements for a services credential in a specialization in clinical or rehabilitative services are:
 - a) A baccalaureate degree or higher degree from an institution approved by the CTC;
 - b) A fifth year, or its equivalent, of college or university education; and
 - c) Such specialized and professional preparation as the CTC may require.
 - 6) Authorizes the holder of a services credential with a specialization in clinical or rehabilitative services to perform, at all grade levels, the service approved by the CTC as designated on the credential. This includes but is not limited to, speech, language, and hearing services. (EC 44268)

- 7) Defines “related services” as transportation, and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services (including speech-language pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, social work services, school nurse services designed to enable an individual with exceptional needs to receive a free appropriate public education as described in the individualized education program (IEP) of the child, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation, and mobility services, and medical services, except that such medical services are for diagnostic and evaluation purposes only) as may be required to assist an individual with exceptional needs to benefit from special education, and includes the early identification and assessment of disabling conditions in children. (EC 56363)
- 8) Specifies that occupational therapy services encompass occupational therapy assessment, treatment, education of, and consultation with, individuals who have been referred for occupational therapy services subsequent to diagnosis of disease or disorder (or who are receiving occupational therapy services as part of an IEP pursuant to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Occupational therapy assessment identifies performance abilities and limitations that are necessary for self-maintenance, learning, work, and other similar meaningful activities. Occupational therapy treatment is focused on developing, improving, or restoring functional daily living skills, compensating for and preventing dysfunction, or minimizing disability. (Business and Professions Code (BPC) 2570.2).
- 9) Specifies that physical therapy encompasses the physical or corrective treatment of any bodily or mental condition of any person by the use of the physical, chemical, and other properties of heat, light, water, electricity, sound, massage, and active, passive, and resistive exercise, and shall include physical therapy evaluation, treatment planning, instruction, and consultative services. The practice of physical therapy includes the promotion and maintenance of physical fitness to enhance the bodily movement related health and wellness of individuals through the use of physical therapy interventions. (BPC 2620)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Physical Therapists (PTs) have been providing related services to students in public schools since the 1970s and are the only Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)-mandated professionals not included in a credential opportunity afforded to teachers and all other related services providers. This is based on a statute that was written at a time prior to IDEA and districts’ employment of OTs and PTs. Currently, OTs and PTs working in school systems are not authorized to obtain a base credential, thereby rendering them ineligible to pursue an administrative services credential or participate in many higher-level positions. Creating a pathway for OTs and PTs who desire to obtain an administrative services credential will allow qualified personnel an opportunity to move into administrative roles and share their unique expertise at a leadership level.”

Therapy services being provided in schools today. According to the California Department of Education’s (CDE) *Guidelines for Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy in California*

Public Schools, 2012, OTs and PTs work with the educational team to support a child's ability to gain access to the general education curriculum, meet state standards, participate in postsecondary education, and become functional independent citizens upon graduation. In school-based practice, OTs are health professionals whose purpose in a public school setting is to support a child's engagement and participation in daily occupations, which include activities of daily living, education, prevocational work, play, rest, leisure, and social participation. PTs are health professionals whose purpose is to correct, facilitate, or adapt the child's functional performance in motor control and coordination, posture and balance, functional mobility, accessibility, and the use of assistive devices.

Occupational therapy and physical therapy are designated services that are sometimes identified by a student's individualized educational program (IEP). Such services fall under the umbrella of related services and are required in order to assist an individual with exceptional needs to benefit from special education. Local educational agencies (LEAs) currently employ OTs and/or PTs as either classified staff or contracted employees to serve in non-classroom based assignments. The CDE's California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) documentation defines OTs as "a healthcare professional employed by an LEA trained to treat injured, ill, or disabled patients through the therapeutic use of everyday activities. They help these patients develop, recover, improve, as well as maintain the skills needed for daily living and working." Similarly, PTs in public schools are defined as "a health care professional employed by an LEA who is trained in the treatment of disease, injury, or deformity by physical methods such as massage, heat treatment, and exercise."

According to the Occupational Therapy Association of California, occupational therapy services have been provided to students in public schools since the 1970s. There are currently 16,000 OTs licensed to practice in California and 3,000, or 20% of these, are estimated to practice in school-based settings.

According to the California Physical Therapy Association, physical therapy services have been provided in schools since the 1970s. There are 22,000 PT practitioners currently licensed in California and approximately 8% of these, or over 1,700, practice in school-based settings.

Licensure requirements. Historically services have been provided in public schools by OTs and PTs that are licensed by their respective boards within the California Department of Consumer Affairs – the Board of Occupational Therapy for OTs, and the Physical Therapy Board of California for PTs. Much like the teaching profession, licensed PTs are required to graduate from a professional degree program at an accredited postsecondary institution, or institutions approved by the Physical Therapy Board, complete a professional education program including academic course work and clinical internship in physical therapy, and pass the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy examination. The same is true for OTs, who must complete an accredited university program with a bachelor's or master's degree in an occupational therapy related field, including a 24-week internship and passage of the Occupational Therapist Registered (OTR) exam.

Role of the CTC. The CTC is an independent governmental entity that is responsible for accrediting educator credential preparation programs, issuing credentials and permits for service in California public schools, and administering credential discipline when necessary. Current pupil personnel services (PPS) credentials authorized by the CTC include:

- School nurses;
- Teacher librarians;
- School counselors;
- School social workers;
- School psychologists;
- Speech language pathologists;
- Audiologists; and
- Orientation and mobility specialists.

OTs and PTs do not currently have the opportunity to earn a credential in their field. This bill would authorize OTs and PTs to be eligible for a preliminary services credential in administrative services based upon their licensure to practice occupational therapy or physical therapy.

In a report to the CTC for its February 2022 meeting, staff noted that the CTC has been asked by many in the OT and PT sector to consider the development of a credential for individuals that serve as OTs and PTs. Requests for a credential are based on a desire for individuals serving as OTs or PTs to advance in their careers, enter the certificated employee salary scale, and hold Administrative Services positions.

Currently, there is no credential requirement for OTs and PTs to serve in California's public schools. There is also no avenue for such individuals to obtain an Administrative Services Credential, as the statutory requirements for the credential require possession of a teaching or services credential issued by the CTC. The lack of a pathway for OTs and PTs who provide special education related services in the public schools prevents these educators from being able to take on certificated leadership roles, as a basic credential is required for OTs and PTs to gain access to an administrative credential under current law.

Recommended Committee Amendments. Staff recommends that the bill be amended as follows:

- 1) Use a cross-reference to the basic skills requirement in the Code rather than referring to the discretion of the CTC.

Arguments in support. The Occupational Therapy Association of California and the California Physical Therapy Association write, in a joint letter, "OTs and PTs have been providing educationally-related services to students in public schools since the 1970s and are the only Individual with Disabilities Education Act mandated professionals who are not included in a credential opportunity afforded to other related service providers and teachers. Currently, OTs and PTs working in the school systems are not authorized to obtain a base credential, thereby rendering them ineligible to pursue an administrative service credential. This measure would allow OTs and PTs to pursue administrative and leadership positions. Their unique training and expertise can contribute meaningfully at a systems level to support access and inclusion of all students.

Thus, Education Code Section 44270 needs to be modified to increase professional equity for OTs and PTs and ultimately support improved outcomes for all students. Passage of AB 2725 is

a crucial step in supporting children and families by providing a pathway for OTs and PTs to advance within the educational system.”

Related legislation. AB 381 (Blanca Rubio) of the 2023-24 Session would have authorized OTs and PTs to be eligible for the services credential with a specialization in health. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 2386 (Rubio) of the 2017-18 Session would have required the CTC to convene a workgroup to consider whether developing a service credential with a specialization in OT or PT is warranted, and, if it is, requirements for that credential. It required the CTC to provide a report on its findings by January 1, 2020. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 1087 (Irwin) of the 2017-18 Session would have required the CTC to develop a services credential with a specialization in OT and PT services. This bill was held in the Assembly Education Committee.

AB 2221 (Bloom), Chapter 490, Statutes of 2018, makes numerous changes to the Occupational Therapy Practice Act, including definitions relating to scope of practice OTs and occupational therapy assistants (OTAs), supervision ratios and duties, methods the California Board of Occupational Therapy (CBOT) may verify advanced practice requirements, and requirements related to the use of doctoral degree titles.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
California Federation of Teachers
California Labor Federation
California Physical Therapy Association
California School Employees Association
California State Council of The Service Employees International Union
Occupational Therapy Association of California
40 Individuals

Opposition

None on file

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