



American Association of Certified Orthoptists

2022 AACO Town Hall The Road to Licensure: Past, Present, and Future Chat Transcript Webinar Presented April 7, 2022

- **Megan35:31**

Thank you Dr Gold!!!

-  **Leslie France38:31**

can the sound be increased? seems to come in and out

-  **Pattye Jenkins38:56**

agree!

-  **Megan Evans39:35**

Sound is better with headphones if available to you

-  **Laura Kirkeby41:55**

The volume/audio is set by each speaker.

-  **Helia46:16**

Hello - is it still possible to register for this town hall meeting and get a link right now?

-  **AACO46:50**

Yes

-  **Tara Bragg**49:06

Was AAP membership an option when we paid our dues this year? I didn't see it

-  **Kyle Arnoldi**49:25

Tara, you have to do it through AAP website.

-  **Kyle Arnoldi**49:43

aap.org

-  **Kimberly Merrill, CO**49:53

You also have to have an MD sponsor that's an AAP member.

-  **Megan**49:56

Thank you!

-  **Lisa Rovick**50:48

Can a single AAP member sponsor a large number of orthoptists in the US/CA?

-  **Kyle Arnoldi**51:19

Yes. There is no limit. Geoff Bradford or George Ellis would be happy to sponsor anyone interested.

-  **Lisa Rovick**51:32

thx

-  **Kimberly Merrill, CO**01:02:31

Thank you for your support, Dr. Bradford!

-  **Megan**01:03:12

Amazing

-  **David Wheeler**01:05:26

Thank you, Lisa!! Wonderful to see you.

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:14:36

Do you think there would be opposition to CO licensure from comprehensive ophthalmology or nursing?

-  **Kimberley Beaudet**01:15:36

No. Maybe a small minority.

-  **Kyle Arnoldi**01:15:58

That was how we started, Lisa. There was opposition from the general ophthalmologist. But that was before subspecialties were created. I doubt that the general ophthalmologist would oppose this.

-  **David Wheeler**01:17:30

I agree there will be a few EyeMDs but hopefully not many. AAPOS told us this evening that they will be supportive. I don't think nurses have a dog in this fight.

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:17:57

@Kyle: acknowledged.....just trying to think of any existing obstacles, avoid surprises.

-  **Alex Christoff**01:18:56

I honestly don't know what to expect from IJCAHPO-it could go either way

-  **Kimberly Merrill, CO**01:19:17

Agreed, IJCAHPO and ODs will be the largest obstacle

-  **Kyle Arnoldi**01:20:06

Opticians might also be a problem in some states. For example, I believe in Florida, opticians are licensed to do a number of things that typically fall under optometry.

-  **Kevin Williamson**01:20:39

I had some opposition in coming back to MS after fellowship, oddly enough from some general ophthalmologists who referred all double vision out anyway

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:20:40

@Kyle: yes.. the licensed optician states might also object

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:21:59

go to the slide show in the top tool bar then share from the beginning of the presentation

-  **David Wheeler**01:25:15

It's important to realize that there will be immense difference between the process in different states. The holy grail would be for a way to bypass state by state licensure by piggybacking on a licensed group (like PAs)

-  **Alex Christoff**01:27:26

But Dr Wheeler, that might mean undoing the school structure we have spent decades creating in the AOC by establishing a university setting or program to do basically what is now done in Halifax

-  **David Wheeler**01:28:56

Which I agree is not where we want to go at all, but I think we are well served by looking at all the options on the table. There may be a hybrid model.

-  **Kyle Arnoldi**01:29:02

Alex, I suspect that this may be required if we really want to pursue licensure. This is why I asked the question in my intro. In other countries where orthoptists have the equivalent of a license, they have transitioned to advanced degree programs, Masters and doctorate.

-  **Aaron Miller**01:29:31

Every option has pros and cons. Piggybacking on PA would require a dramatic change in the process. But it would require the support of the PA profession. And it would require current orthoptist to want this avenue.

-  **occo**01:30:25

Ophthalmology Physician Assistant that what level orthoptists are now in my opinion with 2 year after bachelor degree.

-  **Alex Christoff**01:31:25

Kyle you are probably right. The next question is how many schools can we create in the short term. This will take many years

-  **Aaron Miller**01:31:57

The key is to be strategic in first defining what you all want to accomplish. What is the goal? Expand your income potential? I think to be politically the most successful, you will want to emphasize improving access to quality care. Income will change as the value of what you all do is recognized.

-  **occo01:32:23**

PA as is making more money outside pediatric ophthalmology .What would be benefits for someone to study 2 more years?

-  **Lisa Rovick01:32:33**

a couple of challenges with university-based degree programs:>>require annual enrollment of around 16-20 students to cover the costs of the degree program and all services.>>a Master's degree program would require doctorate-level instructors or at least Masters-degree level instructors

-  **Kimberly Merrill, CO01:33:42**

We have COs that are Associate Professors

-  **Lisa Rovick01:33:47**

Nova Southeastern has a Masters level program within their Optometry school, focused on research.

-  **occo01:33:48**

Orthoptists taking care of neuro-ophthalmology adult clinic.It should be clear with license ability to take care of both adults and children

-  **Dimitra Triantafilou01:34:21**

I think the problem with university situation/licensure that Alex has brought up in the past (early stages of licensure investigation) was the low number of students

-  **Kimberly Merrill, CO**01:34:36

Thank you, Dr. Cossari

-  **Megan**01:35:29

Thank you. This is very exciting. I think defining the goal is important to know where to go.

-  **Brianna Groomes**01:36:00

Could we form an outreach/recruitment committee to recruit pre-med/biology undergraduate students

-  **beth colon**01:36:25

Thanks to every one! This was so informative and each speaker has really illuminated the process that will be needed in order to achieve the goal.

-  **Philip Villanueva**01:36:50

Agreed with Brianna! I promote orthoptics like crazy to everyone I meet, in person or who I interact with online

-  **Tara Bragg**01:37:27

Phil your social media presence is amazing! Fantastic work!

-  **Aaron Miller**01:37:38

Philip that is sooooo important!!!! Promote what you all do. Create awareness!

-  **Brooke Geddie**01:38:24

I think having a university program with financial aid options, degree and ultimate licensure will help to recruit students and support the profession.

-  **Patty Jenkins**01:38:59

as optometry schools are so full with no shortage of students, seems the 4 yr doctorate would be the way to go at this point. ???

-  **Tara Bragg**01:39:10

My program is affiliated with a university and there are a lot of recruitment opportunities that target certain majors - I've recruited several students from those experiences. I had to seek them out - none of them reached out to me

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:40:08

You can have faculty as content experts with the Orthoptic terminal degree (Bachelors)... but the institutional accreditors would want to see degreed faculty also

-  **Brooke Geddie**01:40:57

Maybe pediatric ophthalmologists can be those faculty at the university programs

-  **Aaron Miller**01:41:33

This is where the relationships you all build with your patients are so important and could be one of the biggest sources of growing awareness. For a small profession in numbers to be effective, leverage the relationships you build... with patients, with other organizations, with political figures.

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:41:55

it would be worth looking at the Higher Learning Commission institutional requirements for accreditation.

-  **Tara Bragg**01:42:17

I learned an interesting fact about financial aid. We really need to offer semester hours (which we do not at Iowa) in order for the financial aid office to easily administer their services to your students. With so few students it wasn't worth the effort for my financial aid office to administer aid to my students off-semester cycle based on clock hours

-  **occo**01:42:17

no

-  **Megan**01:42:22

Yes you can

-  **Tara Bragg**01:42:26

Yes you can get aid for graduate degreee

-  **Jesse**01:42:27

no, you cannot

-  **Megan**01:42:34

It has to be accredited

-  **Lindsay**01:42:35

yes, Mayo have financial aid

-  **Hanny B**01:42:43

In all of these scenarios, would current practicing Orthoptists have to go through more education or would they be "grandfathered in"?

-  **Jesse**01:42:47

no student loans for orthoptists that I have seen

-  **Tara Bragg**01:42:52

I just lost the ability to offer federal financial aid for the reason I mentioned above just this last year.

-  **Pattye Jenkins**01:42:56

we used to offer student loans for CO students at UT Houston

-  **occo**01:42:57

Med school have different salary after graduation

-  **Tara Bragg**01:42:59

In Iowa we had then until 2022

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:44:04

great concept Kyle!

-  **Tara Bragg**01:44:19

If you offer semester hours, as you would as a masters degree program, it is totally possible to get federal student loans thru the fafsa program.

-  **Kimberly Merrill, CO**01:44:23

Lindsay, that's great you offer financial aid! Do students get credits?

-  **Lindsay**01:44:23

to Tara's comment, we created credit hours with state licensure in MN so have financial aid.

-  **Lindsay**01:44:30

yes

-  **Tara Bragg**01:44:59

That is amazing.

-  **Lindsay**01:45:00

Mayo is really pushing us to create a Master's degree

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:45:11

programs have to be recognized by the Dept. of Ed in order to offer federal financial aid

-  **katie patterson**01:45:12

Would we be all grandfathered in?

-  **Tara Bragg**01:45:29

Once one of us gets there I think the rest will have an easier road!

-  **Julie's iphone**01:45:30

I have the same question as Hanny. What does this mean for those of us who are already certified?

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:46:17

usually existing professionals in a profession are grandfathered in when there are credential changes. OT is now doctoral level but bachelors prepared OT still practice

-  **Aaron Miller**01:47:53

You need to hire a political strategist. Not necessarily a lawyer or a lobbyist.

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:48:41

You could contact the AAs in Wisconsin to discuss their experience in the extremely ugly licensure battle there.

-  **Lisa's iPhone**01:49:00

Everyone's work is much appreciated. This is history in the making!

-  **Josephine Infantino**01:49:17

Many years ago NYEE tried to set up a masters program sponsored by NYU but could not get enough support. Also when we speak of procedures we perform NYC meets with opposition from the OD. ie: we do refractometry not refractions

-  **Aaron Miller**01:50:35

Once you have a defined goal, you could reach out to the political arms of your support organizations to aid you in figuring out how to get there.

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:52:17

What is the scope of practice for a PA in the ophthalmology setting? the model for ophthalmic PA already exists... they usually work in busy anterior segment practices doing H&P, etc

-  **Leslie France**01:52:38

they have to take board exam every three or so years in PA not just orthoptics

-  **occo**01:52:52

How you make licensed Pa instead of working independently go back to school for 2 years with more loans?

-  **Dimitra Triantafilou**01:53:00

I would wonder if there would be any draw to a PA to do additional training in orthoptics

-  **Kevin Williamson**01:53:11

that's great, for new student, but does not help current orthoptists

-  **Aaron Miller**01:53:25

To me, the underlying goal is to identify how to get reimbursed better for the activities you all are already trained to do.

-  **Pattye Jenkins**01:53:28

agreed

-  **Lisa Rovick**01:53:38

scope of practice for PA from AAPA https://www.aapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Issue-brief_Scope-of-Practice_0117-1.pdf

-  **Tara Bragg**01:53:39

Pay for orthoptics would have to match pay for a GP PA

-  **occo01:53:48**

Any Ped ophthalmologist can train PA to become his assistant without orthoptic training

-  **Kimberly Merrill, CO01:53:57**

Tara has a good point, there's

-  **Kimberly Merrill, CO01:54:10**

definite pay gap

-  **Lisa Rovick01:54:23**

Thank you for taking this on, everyone!!

-  **Dimitra Triantafilou01:54:24**

Exactly @Tara

-  **Megan01:54:37**

Thank you to everyone

-  **Aaron Miller01:54:41**

Yes occo.... but I don't think any pedi ophth can train a PA to do the things an orthoptic certified program can provide.

-  **Emily Miyazaki01:54:43**

That was my concern. Why would a PA/NP take a pay cut and do 2 additional years of training to end with a pay cut.

-  **Pattye Jenkins01:54:45**

great - thank you all!

-  **Kimberly Merrill, CO**01:55:08

Become AAP members!

-  **Kyle Arnoldi**01:55:22

Orthoptists have a different fund of knowledge than the pediatric ophthalmologist. I believe that we have a greater depth of knowledge in sensory physiology and binocular vision.

-  **Dipti's iPhone**01:55:45

Thanks to everyone on the panel, very interesting look at where our profession could go! 😊

-  **Kyle Arnoldi**01:55:46

So I don't think a peds MD could train an orthoptist

-  **Tara Bragg**01:55:46

Agree 🙌 Kyle!

-  **Aaron Miller**01:56:05



-  **Peggy Therriault**01:56:14

Thank you everyone!

-  **Alex Christoff**01:56:24

thanks everyone

-  **Tara Bragg**01:56:27

Thank you!!

-  **Philip Villanueva**01:56:32

Thank you

-  **Adam iPhone 7 128GB**01:56:38

Great, thanks everyone for this great presentation and for all of your hard work!

-  **Jesse**01:56:38

Thank you!!