

# RULES AND REGULATIONS

## Title 49—PROFESSIONAL AND VOCATIONAL STANDARDS

### STATE BOARD OF OPTOMETRY

#### [ 49 PA. CODE CH. 23 ]

#### Child Abuse Reporting Requirements

The State Board of Optometry (Board) amends §§ 23.1, 23.11, 23.21, 23.26, 23.81—23.83, 23.111—23.116 and adds §§ 23.117 and 23.118 (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement; and child abuse recognition and reporting course approval process) to read as set forth in Annex A.

#### *Effective Date*

This final-form rulemaking will be effective upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

#### *Statutory Authority*

Section 3(b)(14) of the Optometric Practice and Licensure Act (act) (63 P.S. § 244.3(b)(14)) sets forth the Board's general rulemaking authority. Under 23 Pa.C.S. Chapter 63 (relating to Child Protective Services Law) (CPSL), specifically section 6383(b)(2) of the CPSL (relating to education and training), the Board is required to promulgate regulations to implement the mandatory reporting requirements for licensees of the Board.

#### *Background and Need for this Final-Form Rulemaking*

Since 2014, the General Assembly has made numerous amendments to the CPSL, including the requirement imposed by the act of April 15, 2014 (P.L. 411, No. 31) (Act 31) on all health-related boards to require training in child abuse recognition and reporting for licensees who are considered “mandated reporters” under the CPSL. Section 2 of Act 31 provided that these training requirements would apply to all persons applying for a license, or applying for renewal of a license, on or after January 1, 2015, and were implemented as of that date. This final-form rulemaking is required to update the Board's existing regulations on the subject of child abuse reporting to comport to the numerous amendments made to the CPSL, and to incorporate the mandatory training requirements required by Act 31.

Specifically, the Board is amending § 23.1 (relating to definitions) to update the definitions of terms used in the CPSL. Additionally, the Board is amending, where necessary throughout this final-form rulemaking, the name of the Department of Public Welfare, as the name of that agency has changed to the Department of Human Services. In addition, the Board is amending §§ 23.11 and 23.21 (relating to qualifications for license by examination; and reciprocal application) to incorporate the requirement that applicants for licensure complete at least 3 hours of approved training in child abuse recognition and reporting as required under section 6383(b)(3)(i) of the CPSL as a condition of licensure. The Board is also amending § 23.26 (relating to volunteer license) to incorporate the mandatory training requirements for applicants for a volunteer license in subsection (c) and for biennial renewal of a volunteer license in subsection (e). Further, the Board is amending the continuing education regulations in §§ 23.81—23.83 (relating to coverage; continuing education hour requirements; continuing education reporting; audit and enforcement; and continuing

education subject matter) to incorporate the 2 hours of mandatory continuing education in child abuse recognition and reporting required under section 6383(b)(3)(ii) of the CPSL.

In addition, the Board is making comprehensive amendments to the Board's existing child abuse reporting requirements in §§ 23.111—23.116 (relating to child abuse reporting requirements) to comport to the numerous amendments made to the CPSL since 2014. Finally, the Board is adding two new sections to incorporate the mandatory training requirements set forth in section 6383(b)(3)(i) and (ii) of the CPSL. Section 23.117 sets forth the requirement that all individuals applying to the Board for an initial license are required to complete at least 3 hours of approved training in child abuse recognition and reporting; and that all licensees seeking renewal of a license are required to complete at least 2 hours of approved continuing education in child abuse recognition and reporting as a requirement of renewal. This section also includes the process for applying for an exemption from the mandatory training requirements as set forth in section 6383(b)(4) and (6) of the CPSL, for individuals who have already completed similar training or who otherwise should be exempt from the training requirements.

Finally, the Board is adding § 21.118 to set forth the administrative process developed by the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs (Bureau), in conjunction with the Department of Human Services, for individuals, entities and organizations to apply for approval to deliver the training required under Act 31. To be approved to provide the mandatory training in child abuse recognition and reporting, an individual, entity or organization must be able to report attendance and participation electronically to the Bureau. In this manner, the completion of the training is automatically imported into the individual's record with the Board at the time the course is completed.

#### *Summary and Response to Comments*

Notice of the proposed rulemaking was published at 53 Pa.B. 2306 (April 29, 2023). Publication was followed by a 30-day public comment period during which the Board received no public comments. Additionally, there were no comments received from the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) other than to say that they have no objections, comments or recommendations to offer. IRRC further advised that if the final-form rulemaking is delivered without revisions, and the committees do not take any action, it will be deemed approved. The Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee of the Senate (SCP/PLC) and the Professional Licensure Committee of the House of Representatives (HPLC) did not submit comments. For these reasons, the Board made no changes to this final-form rulemaking.

#### *Fiscal Impact and Paperwork Requirements*

The Board does not anticipate any significant fiscal impact or paperwork requirements relating to these amendments. Because licensees are already required to complete mandatory continuing education, and these 2 hours in child abuse recognition and reporting are incorporated into the existing requirement, there would be no increased burden. Only applicants for licensure would incur an additional requirement, and as there are many low-cost and free options available to complete the training, the Board anticipates this impact to also be

minimal. Because all approved training providers of the mandatory training in child abuse recognition and reporting are required to report attendance or participation electronically, there are no additional paperwork requirements imposed on licensees. In addition, the implementation of an electronic reporting system for mandated reporters of child abuse under the CPSL by the Department of Human Services has decreased the paperwork requirements related to the mandatory reporting requirements.

*Sunset Date*

The Board continuously monitors the effectiveness of its regulations on a fiscal year and biennial basis. Therefore, no sunset date has been assigned.

*Regulatory Review*

Under section 5(a) of the Regulatory Review Act (71 P.S. § 745.5(a)), on November 6, 2023, the Board submitted a copy of this final-form rulemaking and a copy of a regulatory analysis form to IRRC and to the chairpersons of the SCP/PLC and the HPLC. A copy of this material is available to the public upon request.

Under section 5(c) of the Regulatory Review Act, IRRC, the SCP/PLC and the HPLC were provided with copies of the comments received during the public comment period, as well as other documents when requested. In preparing the final-form rulemaking, the Board has made no revisions based on a lack of comments received from the public, IRRC, the SCP/PLC and the HPLC.

Under section 5.1(j.2) of the Regulatory Review Act (71 P.S. § 745.5a(j.2)), on December 6, 2023, the final-form rulemaking was deemed approved by the SCP/PLC and the HPLC. Under section 5(g) of the Regulatory Review Act, the final-form rulemaking was deemed approved by IRRC effective December 6, 2023.

*Additional Information*

Additional information may be obtained by writing to Shakeena Chapelle, Board Administrator, State Board of Optometry, P.O. Box 2649, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2649, ST-OPTOMETRY@PA.GOV.

*Findings*

The State Board of Optometry finds that:

- (1) Public notice of proposed rulemaking was given under sections 201 and 202 of the act of July 31, 1968 (P.L. 769, No. 240) (45 P.S. §§ 1201 and 1202), referred to as the Commonwealth Documents Law, and the regulations promulgated under those sections at 1 Pa. Code §§ 7.1 and 7.2 (relating to notice of proposed rulemaking required; and adoption of regulations).
- (2) A public comment period was provided as required by law and no comments were received.
- (3) Amendments were not made to this final-form rulemaking and therefore this final-form rulemaking does not enlarge the original purpose of the proposed rulemaking published at 53 Pa.B. 2306.
- (4) This final-form rulemaking is necessary and appropriate for the administration of the relevant provisions of the CPSL.

*Order*

The Board, acting under its authorizing statute, orders that:

- (a) The regulations of the Board, 49 Pa. Code Chapter 23, are amended by amending §§ 23.1, 23.11, 23.21, 23.26, 23.81—23.83, 23.111—23.116 and adding §§ 23.117

and 23.118, to read as set forth in Annex A, with ellipses referring to existing text of the regulations.

(b) The Board shall submit a copy of this final-form rulemaking to the Office of Attorney General and the Office of General Counsel for approval as required by law.

(c) The Board shall submit this final-form rulemaking to IRRC, the SCP/PLC and the HPLC as required by law.

(d) The Board shall certify this final-form rulemaking and shall deposit it with the Legislative Reference Bureau as required by law.

(e) This final-form rulemaking shall take effect immediately upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

LUANNE K. CHUBB, OD, FAAO,  
*Chairperson*

*(Editor’s Note: See 53 Pa.B. 8038 (December 23, 2023) for IRRC’s approval.)*

**Fiscal Note:** Fiscal Note 16A-5215 remains valid for the final adoption of the subject regulations.

**Annex A**

**TITLE 49. PROFESSIONAL AND VOCATIONAL STANDARDS**

**PART I. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**Subpart A. PROFESSIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL AFFAIRS**

**CHAPTER 23. STATE BOARD OF OPTOMETRY  
GENERAL PROVISIONS**

**§ 23.1 Definitions.**

The following words and terms, when used in this chapter, have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

*Act*—The Optometric Practice and Licensure Act (63 P.S. §§ 244.1—244.12).

*Board*—The State Board of Optometry of the Commonwealth.

*Bodily injury*—Impairment of physical condition or substantial pain.

*Bureau*—The Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs within the Department of State of the Commonwealth.

*Child*—An individual under 18 years of age.

*Child abuse*—Intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

- (i) Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- (ii) Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
- (iii) Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of these acts or failures to act.
- (iv) Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
- (v) Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- (vi) Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- (vii) Causing serious physical neglect of a child.

(viii) Engaging in any of the following recent acts:

(A) Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.

(B) Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.

(C) Forcefully shaking a child under 1 year of age.

(D) Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under 1 year of age.

(E) Interfering with the breathing of a child.

(F) Causing a child to be present at a location while a violation of 18 Pa.C.S. § 7508.2 (relating to operation of methamphetamine laboratory) is occurring, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.

(G) Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the actor knows or reasonably should have known:

(I) Is required to register as a Tier II or Tier III sexual offender under 42 Pa.C.S. Chapter 97, Subchapter H (relating to registration of sexual offenders), when the victim of the sexual offense was under 18 years of age when the crime was committed.

(II) Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator under 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.24 (relating to assessments) or any of its predecessors.

(III) Has been determined to be a sexually violent delinquent child as defined in 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.12 (relating to definitions).

(IV) Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator under 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.58 (relating to assessments) or has to register for life under 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.55(b) (relating to registration).

(ix) Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.

(x) Engaging a child in a severe form of trafficking in persons or sex trafficking, as those terms are defined under section 103 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (Division A of Pub.L. No. 106-386).

*ChildLine*—An organizational unit of the Department of Human Services, which operates a 24-hour a day Statewide toll-free telephone system for receiving reports of suspected child abuse, referring reports for investigation and maintaining the reports in the appropriate file.

*Clinical skills assessment examination*—A clinical skills competency examination developed, prepared, administered and scored by the NBEO, which the Board adopts as the State clinical examination for licensure.

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*Inactive status*—The status of not having one's license currently registered.

*Mandated reporter*—A person who is required under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6311 (relating to persons required to report suspected child abuse) to make a report of suspected child abuse. For the purposes of this chapter, the term includes all licensed optometrists.

*NBEO*—The National Board of Examiners in Optometry.

*National Board Examination*—A written academic examination developed, prepared, administered and scored by the NBEO, which the Board adopts as the National uniform written examination for licensure.

*Parent*—A biological parent, adoptive parent or legal guardian.

*Perpetrator*—A person who has committed child abuse as defined in this section. The following apply:

(i) This term includes only the following:

(A) A parent of the child.

(B) A spouse or former spouse of the child's parent.

(C) A paramour or former paramour of the child's parent.

(D) An individual 14 years of age or older who is a person responsible for the child's welfare or who has direct contact with children as an employee of child-care services, a school or through a program, activity or service.

(E) An individual 14 years of age or older who resides in the same home as the child.

(F) An individual 18 years of age or older who does not reside in the same home as the child but is related within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity by birth or adoption to the child.

(G) An individual 18 years of age or older who engages a child in severe forms of trafficking in persons or sex trafficking, as those terms are defined under section 103 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000.

(ii) Only the following may be considered a perpetrator for failing to act, as provided in this section:

(A) A parent of the child.

(B) A spouse or former spouse of the child's parent.

(C) A paramour or former paramour of the child's parent.

(D) A person responsible for the child's welfare who is 18 years of age or older.

(E) A person 18 years of age or older who resides in the same home as the child.

*Person responsible for the child's welfare*—A person who provides permanent or temporary care, supervision, mental health diagnosis or treatment, training or control of a child in lieu of parental care, supervision and control.

*Program, activity or service*—Any of the following in which children participate and which is sponsored by a school or a public or private organization:

(i) A youth camp or program.

(ii) A recreational camp or program.

(iii) A sports or athletic program.

(iv) A community or social outreach program.

(v) An enrichment or educational program.

(vi) A troop, club or similar organization.

*Recent act or failure to act*—An act or failure to act committed within 2 years of the date of the report to the Department of Human Services or county agency.

*Retired practitioner*—One who is no longer engaged in the practice of optometry as defined in section 2 of the act (63 P.S. § 244.2; see definition of "practice of optometry").

*Serious mental injury*—A psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment, that does one or more of the following:

(i) Renders a child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear that the child's life or safety is threatened.

(ii) Seriously interferes with a child's ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental and social tasks.

*Serious physical neglect*—Any of the following when committed by a perpetrator that endangers a child's life or health, threatens a child's well-being, causes bodily injury or impairs a child's health, development or functioning:

(i) A repeated, prolonged or egregious failure to supervise a child in a manner that is appropriate considering the child's developmental age and abilities.

(ii) The failure to provide a child with adequate essentials of life, including food, shelter or medical care.

*Sexual abuse or exploitation*—Any of the following:

(i) The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another individual to engage in sexually explicit conduct, which includes the following:

(A) Looking at sexual or other intimate parts of a child or another individual for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in any individual.

(B) Participating in sexually explicit conversation either in person, by telephone, by computer or by a computer-aided device for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.

(C) Actual or simulated sexual activity or nudity for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.

(D) Actual or simulated sexual activity for the purpose of producing visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting or filming.

(ii) Any of the following offenses committed against a child:

(A) Rape as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3121 (relating to rape).

(B) Statutory sexual assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault).

(C) Involuntary deviate sexual intercourse as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse).

(D) Sexual assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault).

(E) Institutional sexual assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3124.2 (relating to institutional sexual assault).

(F) Aggravated indecent assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault).

(G) Indecent assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3126 (relating to indecent assault).

(H) Indecent exposure as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3127 (relating to indecent exposure).

(I) Incest as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 4302 (relating to incest).

(J) Prostitution as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 5902 (relating to prostitution and related offenses).

(K) Sexual abuse as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children).

(L) Unlawful contact with a minor as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 6318 (relating to unlawful contact with minor).

(M) Sexual exploitation as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 6320 (relating to sexual exploitation of children).

(iii) For the purposes of subparagraph (i), the term does not include consensual activities between a child who is 14 years of age or older and another person who is 14 years of age or older and whose age is within 4 years of the child's age.

*TMOD—Treatment and Management of Ocular Disease Examination*—An examination developed, prepared, administered and scored by NBEO, which the Board adopts as the examination for certification in pharmaceutical agents for therapeutic purposes.

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**LICENSE BY EXAMINATION**

**§ 23.11. Qualifications for license by examination.**

To obtain a license by examination, a candidate shall meet the following requirements:

(1) A Doctor of Optometry degree from an accredited optometric educational institution in the United States or Canada. A graduate of an unaccredited school of optometry shall also meet the requirements of § 23.14 (relating to graduates of unaccredited schools).

(2) Passing scores on Parts I, II Stage a and II Stage b of the National Board Examination, which the Board adopts as the written examination for licensure.

(3) Satisfaction of the general qualifications of section 4 of the act (63 P.S. § 244.4) and of this chapter.

(4) Passing scores of the Clinical Skills Assessment Examination. A candidate for license by examination will not be eligible to sit for the Clinical Skills Assessment Examination unless the candidate has met the requirements of paragraphs (1)—(3).

(5) Completion of at least 3 hours of approved training in child abuse recognition and reporting in accordance with § 23.117(a) (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement).

**LICENSE BY RECIPROcity AND INTERSTATE CERTIFICATION**

**§ 23.21. Reciprocal application.**

(a) An applicant for licensure by reciprocity to practice optometry in this Commonwealth shall submit or cause to be submitted the following to the Board:

(1) A completed application which has been filed with the Board together with the fee required by § 23.91 (relating to fees).

(2) A certificate of preprofessional education issued by the Department, showing that the preliminary education requirements are satisfied.

(3) A transcript of subjects and grades from the college or school of optometry from which the applicant has graduated.

(4) Proof of having completed at least 3 hours of approved training in child abuse recognition and reporting in accordance with § 23.117(a) (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement).

(b) A school or college of optometry from which the applicant for reciprocity has graduated shall be one approved by the Board at the time the applicant graduated.

(c) An applicant for licensure by reciprocity who is a graduate of an unaccredited school shall comply with the requirements of § 23.14 (relating to graduates of unaccredited schools).

### VOLUNTEER LICENSE

#### § 23.26. Volunteer license.

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(c) *Applications.* An applicant for a volunteer license shall complete an application obtained from the Board. In addition to providing information requested by the Board, the applicant shall provide, or cause to be provided:

(1) An executed verification on forms provided by the Board certifying that the applicant intends to practice optometry exclusively:

(i) Without personal remuneration for professional services.

(ii) In an approved clinic.

(2) A letter signed by the director or chief operating officer of an approved clinic that the applicant has been authorized to provide volunteer services in the named clinic by the governing body or responsible officer of the clinic.

(3) Evidence of completion of at least 3 hours of approved training in child abuse recognition and reporting in accordance with § 23.117(a) (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement).

(d) *Validity of license.* A volunteer license shall be valid for the biennial period for which it is issued, subject to biennial renewal. During each biennial renewal period, the licensee shall notify the Board of any change in clinic or volunteer status within 30 days of the date of a change, or at the time of renewal, whichever occurs first.

(e) *Biennial renewal.* A volunteer license shall be renewed biennially on forms provided by the Board.

(1) As a condition of biennial renewal, the applicant shall satisfy the same continuing education requirements as the holder of an active, unrestricted license, including at least 2 hours of approved courses in child abuse recognition and reporting in accordance with § 23.117(b).

(2) The applicant shall be exempt from payment of the biennial renewal fee of § 23.91 (relating to fees).

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### CONTINUING EDUCATION

#### § 23.81. Coverage.

(a) This section and §§ 23.82—23.89 apply to all optometrists who are required to be licensed under the act; however, an applicant, upon successful completion of the optometric examination for licensure, shall be exempt from the requirements of continuing education for only the biennial period during which the applicant successfully completed the examination if the applicant takes the examination within 2 years from the applicant's graduation from an accredited college or school of optometry.

(b) An individual who is in an inactive status or is a retired practitioner is not required to meet the continuing education requirements as outlined in this section and §§ 23.82—23.89 except to the extent that, upon application for reactivation, the individual shall be required to show proof of continuing education for the biennial period immediately preceding the request for reactivation, including at least 2 hours of approved courses in child abuse recognition and reporting as required under

§ 23.117(b) (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement).

#### § 23.82. Continuing education hour requirements; continuing education reporting; audit and enforcement.

(a) An applicant for biennial license renewal or reactivation of license is required to complete, during the 2 years immediately preceding renewal or reactivation, a minimum of 30 hours of continuing education, including at least 2 hours of approved courses in child abuse recognition and reporting in accordance with § 23.117(b) (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement). A licensee whose license is not renewed by the expiration of the biennial renewal period may not engage in the practice of optometry until the continuing education requirements are satisfied and the license has been renewed or reactivated.

(1) For licensees certified in accordance with 4.1 of the act (63 P.S. § 244.4a), regarding certification to prescribe and administer pharmaceutical agents for therapeutic purposes, at least 6 of the required 30 hours shall concern the prescription and administration of pharmaceutical agents for therapeutic purposes.

(2) For licensees certified in accordance with section 4.2 of the act (63 P.S. § 244.4b), regarding additional requirements to prescribe and administer pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain types of glaucoma, at least 4 of the 30 hours shall concern the prescription and administration of pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of glaucoma. No more than 4 hours taken in the treatment of glaucoma may be applied toward the 6 hours required to maintain therapeutic certification; however, all licensees shall complete at least 30 total hours.

(3) Completion of a Board-approved course described in section 4.1(a)(2) of the act or continuing education described in section 4.2 of the act shall satisfy the continuing education requirement for the biennial renewal period in which it is completed including the 6-hour requirement in therapeutics and the 4-hour requirement in glaucoma.

(b) Licensees shall certify completion of the required continuing education on the biennial renewal application as a condition of renewal. False certifications will be ground for disciplinary action under section 7(a)(3) of the act (64 P.S. § 244.7(a)(3)).

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#### § 23.83. Continuing education subject matter.

(a) Except as provided in subsection (d), acceptable courses of study are limited to those pertaining to the use or means or methods for examination, diagnosis and treatment of conditions of the human visual system and may include examination for and adapting and fitting of all types of lenses. The Board will not accept courses of study which do not relate to the actual practice of optometry such as studies in office management and financial procedures.

(b) Courses that will meet the requirements for certification in the prescription and administration of pharmaceutical agents for therapeutic purposes in accordance with section 4.1 of the act (63 P.S. § 244.4a) shall concern the treatment and management of ocular or oculo-systemic disease.

(c) Courses that will meet the requirements for certification to treat glaucoma in accordance with section 4.2 of the act (63 P.S. § 244.4b) shall concern the treatment and management of primary open angle glaucoma, exfoliation glaucoma and pigmentary glaucoma.

(d) At least 2 hours of continuing education shall be completed in child abuse recognition and reporting as required under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6383(b)(3)(ii) (relating to education and training) in accordance with § 23.117(b) (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement). Notwithstanding the requirements for Board approval of optometric continuing education programs in §§ 23.84—23.86 (relating to provider and program registration; standards for providers; and sources of continuing education hours), courses in child abuse recognition and reporting must be approved in accordance with § 23.118 (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting course approval process).

**CHILD ABUSE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

**§ 23.111. Suspected child abuse—mandated reporting requirements.**

(a) *General rule.*

(1) Under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6311 (relating to persons required to report suspected child abuse), optometrists are considered mandated reporters. A mandated reporter shall make a report of suspected child abuse in accordance with this section if the mandated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances:

(i) The mandated reporter comes into contact with the child in the course of employment, occupation and practice of the profession or through a regularly scheduled program, activity or service.

(ii) The mandated reporter is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child, or is affiliated with an agency, institution, organization, school, regularly established church or religious organization or other entity that is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child.

(iii) A person makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse.

(iv) An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

(2) Nothing in this subsection shall require a child to come before the mandated reporter in order for the mandated reporter to make a report of suspected child abuse.

(3) Nothing in this subsection shall require the mandated reporter to take steps to identify the person responsible for the child abuse, if unknown, in order for the mandated reporter to make a report of suspected child abuse.

(b) *Staff members of public or private agencies, institutions and facilities.* Whenever an optometrist is required to make a report under subsection (a) in the capacity as a member of the staff of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility or agency, that optometrist shall report immediately in accordance with subsection (c) and shall immediately thereafter notify the person in charge of the institution, school, facility or agency or the designated agent of the person in charge.

(c) *Reporting procedure.* A mandated reporter shall immediately make a report of suspected child abuse to the Department of Human Services by either:

(1) Making an oral report of suspected child abuse by telephone to ChildLine at (800) 932-0313, followed by a written report within 48 hours to the Department of Human Services or the county agency assigned to the

case in a manner and format prescribed by the Department of Human Services. The written report submitted under this paragraph may be submitted electronically.

(2) Making an electronic report of suspected child abuse in accordance with 23 Pa.C.S. § 6305 (relating to electronic reporting) through the Department of Human Service’s Child Welfare Information Solution self-service portal at [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis). A confirmation by the Department of Human Services of the receipt of a report of suspected child abuse submitted electronically relieves the mandated reporter of the duty to make an additional oral or written report.

(d) *Written or electronic reports.* A written or electronic report of suspected child abuse, shall include the following information, if known:

(1) The names and addresses of the child, the child’s parents and any other person responsible for the child’s welfare.

(2) Where the suspected child abuse occurred.

(3) The age and sex of each subject of the report.

(4) The nature and extent of the suspected child abuse including any evidence of prior abuse to the child or any sibling of the child.

(5) The name and relationship of each individual responsible for causing the suspected abuse and any evidence of prior abuse by each individual.

(6) Family composition.

(7) The source of the report.

(8) The name, telephone number and e-mail address of the person making the report.

(9) The actions taken by the person making the report, including actions taken under 23 Pa.C.S. §§ 6314—6317.

(10) Other information which the Department of Human Services may require by regulation.

(11) Other information required by Federal law or regulation.

**§ 23.112. Photographs, medical tests and X-rays of child subject to report.**

An optometrist required to report suspected child abuse may take or cause to be taken photographs of the child who is subject to a report and, if clinically indicated, cause to be performed a radiological examination and other medical tests on the child. Medical summaries or reports of the photographs, X-rays and relevant medical tests taken shall be sent to the county children and youth social service agency at the time the written report is sent, or within 48 hours after an electronic report is made under § 23.111(c)(2) (relating to suspected child abuse—mandated reporting requirements), or as soon thereafter as possible. The county children and youth social service agency shall have access to actual photographs or duplicates and X-rays and may obtain them or duplicates of them upon request. Medical summaries or reports of the photographs, X-rays and relevant medical tests shall be made available to law enforcement officials in the course of investigating cases under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6340(a)(9) or (10) (relating to release of information in confidential reports).

**§ 23.113. Suspected death as a result of child abuse—mandated reporting requirement.**

An optometrist who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child died as a result of child abuse shall report that suspicion to the coroner or medical examiner of the

county where death occurred or, in the case where the child is transported to another county for medical treatment, to the coroner or medical examiner of the county where the injuries were sustained.

**§ 23.114. Immunity from liability.**

(a) Under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6318 (relating to immunity from liability) an optometrist who participates in good faith in the making of a report of suspected child abuse, making a referral for general protective services, cooperating or consulting with an investigation including providing information to a child fatality or near fatality review team, testifying in a proceeding arising out of an instance of suspected child abuse or general protective services or engaging in any action authorized under 23 Pa.C.S. §§ 6314—6317, shall have immunity from civil and criminal liability that might otherwise result by reason of the optometrist's actions. For the purpose of any civil or criminal proceeding, the good faith of the optometrist shall be presumed.

(b) The Board will uphold the same good faith presumption in any disciplinary proceeding that might result by reason of an optometrist's actions under §§ 23.211—23.113 (relating to suspected child abuse—mandated reporting requirements; photographs, medical tests and X-rays of child subject to report; and suspected death as a result of child abuse—mandated reporting requirement).

**§ 23.115. Confidentiality—waived.**

To protect children from abuse, the reporting requirements of this chapter take precedence over provisions of the act as defined in § 23.1 (relating to definitions) and other ethical principles or professional standards that might otherwise apply to optometrists. In accordance with 23 Pa.C.S. § 6311.1 (relating to privileged communications), privileged communications between a mandated reporter and a patient do not apply to a situation involving child abuse and do not relieve the mandated reporter of the duty to make a report of suspected child abuse.

**§ 23.116. Noncompliance.**

(a) *Disciplinary action.* An optometrist who willfully fails to comply with the reporting requirements in §§ 23.111—23.113 (relating to suspected child abuse—mandated reporting requirements; photographs, medical tests and X-rays of child subject to report; and suspected death as a result of child abuse—mandated reporting requirement) will be subject to disciplinary action under section 7(8), (10) and (11) of the act (63 P.S. § 244.7(8), (10) and (11)).

(b) *Criminal penalties.* Under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6319 (relating to penalties), a mandated reporter who is required to report a case of suspected child abuse or to make a referral to the appropriate authorities, and who willfully fails to do so commits a criminal offense, as follows:

(1) An offense not otherwise specified in paragraphs (2), (3) or (4) is a misdemeanor of the second degree.

(2) An offense is a felony of the third degree if all of the following apply:

- (i) The mandated reporter willfully fails to report.
- (ii) The child abuse constitutes a felony of the first degree or higher.
- (iii) The mandated reporter has direct knowledge of the nature of the abuse.

(3) If the willful failure to report continues while the mandated reporter knows or has reasonable cause to

suspect a child is being subjected to child abuse by the same individual, or while the mandated reporter knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that the same individual continues to have direct contact with children through the individual's employment, program activity or service, the mandated reporter commits a felony of the third degree, except that if the child abuse constitutes a felony of the first degree or higher, the mandated reporter commits a felony of the second degree.

(4) A mandated reporter who, at the time of sentencing for an offense under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6319, has been convicted of a prior offense under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6319, commits a felony of the third degree, except that if the child abuse constitutes a felony of the first degree or higher, the penalty for the second or subsequent offense is a felony of the second degree.

**§ 23.117. Child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement.**

(a) Except as provided in subsection (c), individuals applying to the Board for an initial license shall have completed at least 3 hours of training in child abuse recognition and reporting requirements which has been approved by the Department of Human Services and the Bureau, as set forth in § 23.118 (relating to child abuse recognition and reporter course approval process). The applicant shall certify on the application that the applicant has either completed the required training or has been granted an exemption under subsection (c). The Board will not issue a license unless the Bureau has received an electronic report from an approved course provider documenting the attendance or participation by the applicant or the applicant has obtained an exemption under subsection (c).

(b) Except as provided in subsection (c), licensees seeking renewal of a license issued by the Board shall complete, as a condition of biennial renewal of the license, at least 2 hours of approved continuing education in child abuse recognition and reporting, as a portion of the total continuing education required for biennial license renewal or reactivation set forth in § 23.82 (relating to continuing education hour requirements; continuing education reporting; audit and enforcement). For credit to be granted, the continuing education course or program must be approved by the Bureau, in consultation with the Department of Human Services, as set forth in § 23.118. The Board will not renew a license unless the Bureau has received an electronic report from an approved course provider documenting the attendance or participation by the licensee in an approved course within the applicable biennial renewal period or the licensee has obtained an exemption under subsection (c). If a licensee also holds a license issued by another licensing board within the Bureau that requires mandatory training in child abuse recognition and reporting, credit for completion of an approved course will be applied to both licenses.

(c) An applicant or licensee may apply in writing for an exemption from the training/continuing education requirements set forth in subsections (a) and (b) provided the applicant or licensee meets one of the following:

(1) The applicant or licensee submits documentation demonstrating that:

- (i) The applicant or licensee has already completed child abuse recognition training as required by section 1205.6 of the Public School Code of 1949 (24 P.S. § 12-1205.6).

(ii) The training was approved by the Department of Education in consultation with the Department of Human Services.

(iii) The amount of training received equals or exceeds the amount of training or continuing education required under subsection (a) or subsection (b), as applicable.

(iv) For purposes of licensure renewal, the training must have been completed during the relevant biennial renewal period.

(2) The applicant or licensee submits documentation demonstrating that:

(i) The applicant or licensee has already completed child abuse recognition training required by 23 Pa.C.S. § 6383(c) (relating to education and training).

(ii) The training was approved by the Department of Human Services.

(iii) The amount of training received equals or exceeds the amount of training or continuing education required under subsection (a) or subsection (b), as applicable.

(iv) For purposes of licensure renewal, the training must have been completed during the relevant biennial renewal period.

(3) The applicant or licensee submits documentation acceptable to the Board demonstrating why the applicant or licensee should not be subject to the training or continuing education requirement. The Board will not grant an exemption based solely upon proof that children are not a part of the applicant's or licensee's practice. Each request for an exemption under this paragraph will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Board may grant an exemption if it finds that completion of the training or continuing education requirement is duplicative or unnecessary under the circumstances.

(d) Exemptions granted under subsection (c) are applicable only for the biennial renewal period for which the exemption is requested. If an exemption is granted, the Board will issue or renew the license, as applicable. If an exemption is denied, the Board will e-mail the applicant or licensee a discrepancy notice notifying them of the need to either complete an approved course or, if warranted, to submit additional documentation in support of their request for exemption.

**§ 23.118. Child abuse recognition and reporting course approval process.**

(a) An individual, entity or organization may apply for approval to provide mandated reporter training as required under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6383(b) (relating to education and training) by submitting the course materials set forth in subsection (b) simultaneously to the Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families, and to the Bureau at the following addresses:

(1) Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families, Health and Welfare Building, 625 Forster Street, Harrisburg, PA 17120; or electronically at RA-PWOCYFCPSL@pa.gov.

(2) Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs, 2601 North Third Street, P.O. Box 2649, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2649; or electronically at RA-stcpsl\_course\_app@pa.gov.

(b) Submissions shall include the following:

(1) Contact information, including mailing address, e-mail address and telephone number, for the agency/course administrator.

(2) General description of the training and course delivery method.

(3) Title of the course.

(4) Timed agenda and estimated hours of training.

(5) Learning objectives.

(6) Intended audience.

(7) Course-related materials, including as applicable:

(i) Handouts.

(ii) Narrated script or talking points.

(iii) Interactive activities or exercises.

(iv) Videos and audio/visual content.

(v) Knowledge checks, quizzes or other means of assessing participant's understanding of the material.

(vi) For online courses, a transcript or recording of audio training.

(8) Citation of sources, including written permission to use copyrighted material, if applicable.

(9) Anticipated credentials or experience of the presenter, or biography of presenter, if known.

(10) Printed materials used to market the training.

(11) Evaluation used to assess participants' satisfaction with the training.

(12) Sample certificate of attendance/participation, which shall include all of the following:

(i) Name of participant.

(ii) Title of training.

(iii) Date of training.

(iv) Length of training (2 hours or 3 hours).

(v) Name and signature of the authorized representative of the provider. The signature may be an electronic signature.

(vi) Statement affirming the participant attended the entire course.

(13) Verification of ability to report participation/attendance electronically to the Bureau in a format prescribed by the Bureau.

(c) The Bureau will notify the individual, entity or organization in writing upon approval of the course and will post a list of approved courses on the Bureau's web site and the Board's web site.

[Pa.B. Doc. No. 24-103. Filed for public inspection January 26, 2024, 9:00 a.m.]

**Title 49—PROFESSIONAL AND VOCATIONAL STANDARDS**

**STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY**

**[ 49 PA. CODE CH. 45 ]**

**Child Abuse Reporting Requirements**

The State Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (Board) amends §§ 45.12, 45.13, 45.401—45.407 and 45.501—45.503 and adds §§ 45.408 and 45.409 (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement; and child



abuse recognition and reporting course approval process) to read as set forth in Annex A.

#### *Effective Date*

This final-form rulemaking will be effective upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

#### *Statutory Authority*

Section 5(2) of the Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Licensure Act (act) (63 P.S. § 1705(2)) sets forth the Board's general rulemaking authority. Under 23 Pa.C.S. Chapter 63 (relating to Child Protective Services Law) (CPSL), specifically section 6383(b)(2) of the CPSL (relating to education and training), the Board is required to promulgate regulations to implement the mandatory reporting requirements for licensees of the Board.

#### *Background and Purpose*

Since 2014, the General Assembly has made numerous amendments to the CPSL, including the requirement imposed by the act of April 15, 2014 (P.L. 411, No. 31) (Act 31) on all health-related boards requiring training in child abuse recognition and reporting for licensees who are considered "mandated reporters" under the CPSL. Section 2 of Act 31 provided that these training requirements would apply to all persons applying for a license, or applying for renewal of a license, on or after January 1, 2015, and were implemented as of that date. This final-form rulemaking is required to update the Board's existing regulations on the subject of child abuse reporting to comport to the numerous amendments made to the CPSL.

Specifically, the Board is amending § 45.12 (relating to licensure application procedures) to incorporate the requirement for all applicants to complete, as a condition of licensure, at least 3 hours of training in child abuse recognition and reporting as required by section 6383(b)(3)(i) of the CPSL. Similarly, the Board is amending § 45.13 (relating to renewal of license; inactive status of license; required continuing education) to set forth the requirement that licensees applying for biennial renewal complete at least 2 hours of continuing education in approved courses in child abuse recognition and reporting as a condition of renewal as required by section 6383(b)(3)(ii) of the CPSL.

The Board is making comprehensive amendments to the Board's existing child abuse reporting requirements in §§ 45.401—45.407 (relating to child abuse reporting requirements) to comport to the numerous amendments made to the CPSL since 2014. Additionally, the Board is adding two sections to incorporate the mandatory training requirements set forth in section 6383(b)(3)(i) and (ii) of the CPSL. Section 45.408 would set forth the requirements that all individuals applying for an initial license are required to complete at least 3 hours of approved training in child abuse recognition and reporting in subsection (a) and that all licensees seeking renewal are required to complete at least 2 hours of approved continuing education courses in child abuse recognition and reporting as a requirement of biennial renewal in subsection (b). This section also includes the process for applying for an exemption from the mandatory training requirements as set forth in section 6383(b)(4) and (6) of the CPSL, for individuals who have already completed similar training or who otherwise should be exempt from the training requirements.

Additionally, the Board is adding § 45.409 to set forth the administrative process developed by the Bureau of

Professional and Occupational Affairs (Bureau), in conjunction with the Department of Human Services, for individuals, entities and organizations to apply for approval to deliver the mandatory training in child abuse recognition and reporting required under Act 31. To be approved to provide the mandatory training in child abuse recognition and reporting, an individual, entity or organization must be able to report participation or attendance electronically to the Bureau. In this manner, the completion of the training is automatically imported into the applicant's or licensee's record with the Board at the time the course is completed.

Finally, the Board is amending Subchapter G (relating to continuing education) to incorporate the 2 hours of child abuse recognition and reporting training as part of the existing requirement for licensees to complete 20 clock hours of continuing education, and not as an additional requirement. Section 45.502 (relating to exemption and waiver) would be amended to clarify that these 2 hours of mandatory training are an exception to the rule that licensees are not required to complete continuing education during the first biennial period in which first licensed. Finally, § 45.503 (relating to continuing education requirement for reactivation of inactive and lapsed licenses) is likewise amended to incorporate the mandatory training in child abuse recognition and reporting as a condition of reactivation of an inactive or lapsed license.

#### *Summary and Response to Comments*

Notice of the proposed rulemaking was published at 53 Pa.B. 2316 (April 29, 2023). Publication was followed by a 30-day public comment period during which the Board received no public comments. Additionally, there were no comments received from the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) other than to say that they have no objections, comments or recommendations to offer. IRRC further advised that if the final-form rulemaking is delivered without revisions, and the committees do not take any action, it will be deemed approved. The Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee of the Senate (SCP/PLC) and the Professional Licensure Committee of the House of Representatives (HPLC) did not submit comments. For these reasons, the Board makes no changes to this final-form rulemaking.

#### *Fiscal Impact and Paperwork Requirements*

The Board does not anticipate any significant fiscal impact or paperwork requirements relating to these amendments. Because licensees are already required to complete mandatory continuing education requirements, and these 2 hours in child abuse recognition and reporting are incorporated in the existing requirement, there would not be an increased burden. Only applicants for licensure would incur an additional requirement and, as there are many low-cost and free options available to complete the training, the Board anticipates this impact to also be minimal. Because all approved training providers of the mandatory training in child abuse recognition and reporting are required to report participation or attendance electronically, there are no additional paperwork requirements imposed on licensees. In addition, the implementation of an electronic reporting system for mandated reporters of child abuse under the CPSL by the Department of Human Services has decreased the paperwork requirements related to the mandatory reporting requirements.

*Sunset Date*

The Board continuously monitors the effectiveness of its regulations on a fiscal year and biennial basis. Therefore, no sunset date has been assigned.

*Regulatory Review*

Under section 5(a) of the Regulatory Review Act (71 P.S. § 745.5(a)), on November 6, 2023, the Board submitted a copy of this final-form rulemaking and a copy of a Regulatory Analysis Form to IRRC and to the Chairpersons of the SCP/PLC and the HPLC. A copy of this material is available to the public upon request.

Under section 5(c) of the Regulatory Review Act, IRRC, the SCP/PLC and the HPLC were provided with copies of the comments received during the public comment period, as well as other documents when requested. In preparing the final-form rulemaking, the Board has made no revisions based on a lack of comments received from the public, IRRC, the SCP/PLC and the HPLC.

Under section 5.1(j.2) of the Regulatory Review Act (71 P.S. § 745.5a(j.2)), on December 6, 2023, the final-form rulemaking was deemed approved by the SCP/PLC and the HPLC. Under section 5(g) of the Regulatory Review Act, the final-form rulemaking was deemed approved by IRRC effective December 6, 2023.

*Additional Information*

Additional information may be obtained by writing to Shakeena L. Chappelle, Board Administrator, State Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, P.O. Box 2649, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2649, ST-SPEECH@PA.GOV.

*Findings*

The State Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology finds that:

(1) Public notice of the proposed rulemaking was given under sections 201 and 202 of the act of July 31, 1968 (P.L. 769, No. 240) (45 P.S. §§ 1201 and 1202), referred to as the Commonwealth Documents Law, and the regulations promulgated under those sections at 1 Pa. Code §§ 7.1 and 7.2 (relating to notice of proposed rulemaking required; and adoption of regulations).

(2) A public comment period was provided as required by law and no comments were received.

(3) Amendments were not made to this final-form rulemaking and therefore this final-form rulemaking does not enlarge the original purpose of the proposed rulemaking published at 53 Pa.B. 2316.

(4) This final-form rulemaking is necessary and appropriate for the administration of the relevant provisions of the CPSL.

*Order*

The Board, acting under its authorizing statute, orders that:

(a) The regulations of the Board, 49 Pa. Code Chapter 45, are amended by amending §§ 45.12, 45.13, 45.401—45.407 and 45.501—45.503 and adding §§ 45.408 and 45.409 to read as set forth in Annex A, with ellipses referring to existing text of the regulation.

(b) The Board shall submit a copy of this final-form rulemaking to the Office of Attorney General and the Office of General Counsel for approval as required by law.

(c) The Board shall submit this final-form rulemaking to IRRC, the SCP/PLC and the HPLC as required by law.

(d) The Board shall certify this final-form rulemaking and shall deposit it with the Legislative Reference Bureau as required by law.

(e) This final-form rulemaking shall take effect immediately upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

PATRICK MURPHY, AuD,  
Chairperson

(*Editor's Note:* See 53 Pa.B. 8038 (December 23, 2023) for IRRC's approval.)

**Fiscal Note:** Fiscal Note 16A-6805 remains valid for the final adoption of the subject regulations.

**Annex A**

**TITLE 49. PROFESSIONAL AND VOCATIONAL STANDARDS**

**PART I. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**Subpart A. PROFESSIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL AFFAIRS**

**CHAPTER 45. STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY**

**Subchapter B. LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION**

**§ 45.12. Licensure application procedures.**

(a) The applicant for licensure shall submit to the Board, along with required fees as provided by § 45.1 (relating to fees), a completed, signed and dated application and applicable documentation.

(b) Excluding applicants who fall within the exclusions in section 6(b) of the act (63 P.S. § 1706(b)), the applicant for licensure shall file, or cause to be filed, with the Board evidence that the applicant has:

(1) *Speech-language pathologists.*

(i) Met the educational requirements of § 45.17(a) (relating to education requirements).

(ii) Completed 9 months of supervised professional experience requirements of § 45.20 (relating to supervised professional experience required for licensure as a speech-language pathologist).

(iii) Passed an examination approved by the Board.

(iv) Demonstrated that the applicant is of good moral character.

(v) Completed at least 3 hours of approved training in child abuse recognition and reporting in accordance with § 45.408(a) (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement).

(2) *Audiologists.*

(i) Met the educational requirements of § 45.17(b).

(ii) Passed an examination approved by the Board.

(iii) Demonstrated that the applicant is of good moral character.

(iv) Completed at least 3 hours of approved training in child abuse recognition and reporting in accordance with § 45.408(a).

(c) An applicant who wishes to apply for more than one Board-issued license or provisional license specified in § 45.11 (relating to licenses and certifications) shall submit a separate application for each license or provisional license.

**§ 45.13. Renewal of license; inactive status of license; required continuing education.**

\* \* \* \* \*

(f) A licensee who fails to renew a license or who requests to be placed on inactive status will not be sent Board notifications until the license is renewed or reactivated.

(g) An application for renewal of a license will not be granted unless the licensee has certified that the licensee has completed the required continuing education hours under § 45.501 (relating to credit hour requirements), including at least 2 hours of approved continuing education in child abuse recognition and reporting in accordance with § 45.408(b) (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement). If requested by the Board, an application for renewal shall also include the documentation required under § 45.504 (relating to reporting completion of continuing education).

(h) An application for reactivation of an inactive or lapsed license shall also include the documentation required under § 45.504 for the preceding biennial period.

**Subchapter F. CHILD ABUSE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

**§ 45.401. Definitions.**

The following words and terms, when used in this subchapter, have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

*Bodily injury*—Impairment of physical condition or substantial pain.

*Bureau*—The Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs within the Department of State of the Commonwealth.

*Child*—An individual under 18 years of age.

*Child abuse*—Intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

(i) Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.

(ii) Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.

(iii) Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of these acts or failures to act.

(iv) Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.

(v) Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.

(vi) Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.

(vii) Causing serious physical neglect of a child.

(viii) Engaging in any of the following recent acts:

(A) Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.

(B) Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or duration of the restraint or confinement.

(C) Forcefully shaking a child under 1 year of age.

(D) Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under 1 year of age.

(E) Interfering with the breathing of a child.

(F) Causing a child to be present at a location while a violation of 18 Pa.C.S. § 7508.2 (relating to operation of methamphetamine laboratory) is occurring, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.

(G) Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the actor knows or reasonably should have known:

(I) Is required to register as a Tier II or Tier III sexual offender under 42 Pa.C.S. Chapter 97, Subchapter H (relating to registration of sexual offenders), when the victim of the sexual offense was under 18 years of age when the crime was committed.

(II) Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator under 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.24 (relating to assessments) or any of its predecessors.

(III) Has been determined to be a sexually violent delinquent child as defined in 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.12 (relating to definitions).

(IV) Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator under 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.58 (relating to assessments) or has to register for life under 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.55(b) (relating to registration).

(ix) Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.

(x) Engaging a child in a severe form of trafficking in persons or sex trafficking, as those terms are defined under section 103 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (Division A of Pub.L. No. 106-386).

*ChildLine*—An organizational unit of the Department of Human Services, which operates a 24-hour a day Statewide toll-free telephone system for receiving reports of suspected child abuse, referring reports for investigation and maintaining the reports in the appropriate file.

*Licensee*—An audiologist or speech-language pathologist licensed by the Board.

*Mandated reporter*—A person who is required under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6311 (relating to persons required to report suspected child abuse) to make a report of suspected child abuse. For purposes of this subchapter, the term includes all audiologists and speech-language pathologists licensed by the Board.

*Parent*—A biological parent, adoptive parent or legal guardian.

*Perpetrator*—A person who has committed child abuse as defined in this section. The following apply:

(i) This term includes only the following:

(A) A parent of the child.

(B) A spouse or former spouse of the child's parent.

(C) A paramour or former paramour of the child's parent.

(D) An individual 14 years of age or older who is a person responsible for the child's welfare or who has direct contact with children as an employee of child-care services, a school or through a program, activity or service.

(E) An individual 14 years of age or older who resides in the same home as the child.

(F) An individual 18 years of age or older who does not reside in the same home as the child but is related, within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity by birth or adoption, to the child.

(G) An individual 18 years of age or older who engages a child in severe forms of trafficking in persons or sex trafficking, as those terms are defined under section 103 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000.

(ii) Only the following may be considered a perpetrator for failing to act, as provided in this section:

- (A) A parent of the child.
- (B) A spouse or former spouse of the child's parent.
- (C) A paramour or former paramour of the child's parent.
- (D) A person responsible for the child's welfare who is 18 years of age or older.
- (E) An individual 18 years of age or older who resides in the same home as the child.

*Person responsible for the child's welfare*—A person who provides permanent or temporary care, supervision, mental health diagnosis or treatment, training or control of a child in lieu of parental care, supervision and control.

*Program, activity or service*—Any of the following in which children participate and which is sponsored by a school or a public or private organization:

- (i) A youth camp or program.
- (ii) A recreational camp or program.
- (iii) A sports or athletic program.
- (iv) A community or social outreach program.
- (v) An enrichment or educational program.
- (vi) A troop, club or similar organization.

*Recent act or failure to act*—An act or failure to act committed within 2 years of the date of the report to the Department of Human Services or county agency.

*Serious mental injury*—A psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment, that does one or more of the following:

- (i) Renders a child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear that the child's life or safety is threatened.
- (ii) Seriously interferes with a child's ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental and social tasks.

*Serious physical neglect*—Any of the following when committed by a perpetrator that endangers a child's life or health, threatens a child's well-being, causes bodily injury or impairs a child's health, development or functioning:

- (i) A repeated, prolonged or egregious failure to supervise a child in a manner that is appropriate considering the child's developmental age and abilities.
- (ii) The failure to provide a child with adequate essentials of life, including food, shelter or medical care.

*Sexual abuse or exploitation*—Any of the following:

- (i) The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another individual to engage in sexually explicit conduct, which includes the following:
  - (A) Looking at sexual or other intimate parts of a child or another individual for any purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in any individual.

(B) Participating in sexually explicit conversation either in person, by telephone, by computer or by a computer-aided device for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.

(C) Actual or simulated sexual activity or nudity for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.

(D) Actual or simulated sexual activity for the purpose of producing visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting or filming.

(ii) Any of the following offenses committed against a child:

- (A) Rape as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3121 (relating to rape).
- (B) Statutory sexual assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault).
- (C) Involuntary deviate sexual intercourse as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse).
- (D) Sexual assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault).
- (E) Institutional sexual assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3124.2 (relating to institutional sexual assault).
- (F) Aggravated indecent assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault).
- (G) Indecent assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3126 (relating to indecent assault).
- (H) Indecent exposure as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3127 (relating to indecent exposure).
- (I) Incest as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 4302 (relating to incest).
- (J) Prostitution as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 5902 (relating to prostitution and related offenses).
- (K) Sexual abuse as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children).
- (L) Unlawful contact with a minor as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 6318 (relating to unlawful contact with minor).
- (M) Sexual exploitation as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 6320 (relating to sexual exploitation of children).

(iii) For the purposes of subparagraph (i), the term does not include consensual activities between a child who is 14 years of age or older and another person who is 14 years of age or older and whose age is within 4 years of the child's age.

**§ 45.402. Suspected child abuse—mandated reporting requirements.**

(a) *General rule.*

(1) Under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6311 (relating to persons required to report suspected child abuse), licensees of the Board are considered mandated reporters. A mandated reporter shall make a report of suspected child abuse in accordance with this section if the mandated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances:

- (i) The mandated reporter comes into contact with the child in the course of employment, occupation and practice of the profession or through a regularly scheduled program, activity or service.
- (ii) The mandated reporter is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child, or

is affiliated with an agency, institution, organization, school, regularly established church or religious organization or other entity that is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child.

(iii) A person makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse.

(iv) An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

(2) Nothing in this subsection shall require a child to come before the mandated reporter in order for the mandated reporter to make a report of suspected child abuse.

(3) Nothing in this subsection shall require the mandated reporter to take steps to identify the person responsible for the child abuse, if unknown, in order for the mandated reporter to make a report of suspected child abuse.

(b) *Staff members of public or private agencies, institutions and facilities.* Whenever a licensee is required to make a report under subsection (a) in the capacity as a member of the staff of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility or agency, that licensee shall report immediately in accordance with subsection (c) and shall immediately thereafter notify the person in charge of the institution, school, facility or agency or the designated agent of the person in charge.

(c) *Reporting procedure.* A mandated reporter shall immediately make a report of suspected child abuse to the Department of Human Services by either:

(1) Making an oral report of suspected child abuse by telephone to ChildLine at (800) 932-0313, followed by a written report within 48 hours to the Department of Human Services or the county agency assigned to the case in a manner and format prescribed by the Department of Human Services. The written report submitted under this paragraph may be submitted electronically.

(2) Making an electronic report of suspected child abuse in accordance with 23 Pa.C.S. § 6305 (relating to electronic reporting) through the Department of Human Service's Child Welfare Information Solution self-service portal at [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis). A confirmation by the Department of Human Services of the receipt of a report of suspected child abuse submitted electronically relieves the mandated reporter of the duty to make an additional oral or written report.

(d) *Written or electronic reports.* A written or electronic report of suspected child abuse, shall include the following information, if known:

(1) The names and addresses of the child, the child's parents and any other person responsible for the child's welfare.

(2) Where the suspected child abuse occurred.

(3) The age and sex of each subject of the report.

(4) The nature and extent of the suspected child abuse, including any evidence of prior abuse to the child or any sibling of the child.

(5) The name and relationship of each individual responsible for causing the suspected abuse and any evidence of prior abuse by each individual.

(6) Family composition.

(7) The source of the report.

(8) The name, telephone number and e-mail address of the person making the report.

(9) The actions taken by the person making the report, including actions taken under 23 Pa.C.S. §§ 6314—6317.

(10) Other information which the Department of Human Services may require by regulation.

(11) Other information required by Federal law or regulation.

**§ 45.403. Photographs, medical tests and X-rays of child subject to report.**

A licensee required to report suspected child abuse may take or cause to be taken photographs of the child who is subject to a report and, if clinically indicated, cause to be performed a radiological examination and other medical tests on the child. Medical summaries or reports of the photographs, X-rays and relevant medical tests taken shall be sent to the county children and youth social service agency at the time the written report is sent, or within 48 hours after an electronic report is made under § 45.402(c)(2) (relating to suspected child abuse—mandated reporting requirements), or as soon thereafter as possible. The county children and youth social service agency shall have access to actual photographs or duplicates and X-rays and may obtain them or duplicates of them upon request. Medical summaries or reports of the photographs, X-rays and relevant medical tests shall be made available to law enforcement officials in the course of investigating cases under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6340(a)(9) or (10) (relating to release of information in confidential reports).

**§ 45.404. Suspected death as a result of child abuse—mandated reporting requirement.**

A licensee who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child died as a result of child abuse shall report that suspicion to the coroner or medical examiner of the county where death occurred or, in the case where the child is transported to another county for medical treatment, to the coroner or medical examiner of the county where the injuries were sustained.

**§ 45.405. Immunity from liability.**

(a) Under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6318 (relating to immunity from liability) a licensee who participates in good faith in the making of a report of suspected child abuse, making a referral for general protective services, cooperating or consulting with an investigation including providing information to a child fatality or near fatality review team, testifying in a proceeding arising out of an instance of suspected child abuse or general protective services or engaging in any action authorized under 23 Pa.C.S. §§ 6314—6317, shall have immunity from civil and criminal liability that might otherwise result by reason of the licensee's actions. For the purpose of any civil or criminal proceeding, the good faith of the licensee shall be presumed.

(b) The Board will uphold the same good faith presumption in any disciplinary proceeding that might result by reason of a licensee's actions under §§ 45.402—45.404 (relating to suspected child abuse—mandated reporting requirements; photographs, medical tests and X-rays of child subject to report; and suspected death as a result of child abuse—mandated reporting requirement).

**§ 45.406. Confidentiality—waived.**

To protect children from abuse, the reporting requirements of §§ 45.402—45.404 (relating to suspected child abuse—mandated reporting requirements; photographs,

medical tests and X-rays of child subject to report; and suspected death as a result of child abuse—mandated reporting requirement) take precedence over the provisions of any client confidentiality, ethical principle or professional standard that might otherwise apply. In accordance with 23 Pa.C.S. § 6311.1 (relating to privileged communications), privileged communications between a mandated reporter and a patient do not apply to a situation involving child abuse and do not relieve the mandated reporter of the duty to make a report of suspected child abuse.

**§ 45.407. Noncompliance.**

(a) *Disciplinary action.* A licensee who willfully fails to comply with the reporting requirements in §§ 45.402—45.404 (relating to suspected child abuse—mandated reporting requirements; photographs, medical tests and X-rays of child subject to report; and suspected death as a result of child abuse—mandated reporting requirement) will be subject to disciplinary action under section 10 of the act (63 P.S. § 1710).

(b) *Criminal penalties.* Under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6319 (relating to penalties), a mandated reporter who is required to report a case of suspected child abuse or to make a referral to the appropriate authorities and who willfully fails to do so commits a criminal offense, as follows:

(1) An offense not otherwise specified in paragraphs (2), (3) or (4) is a misdemeanor of the second degree.

(2) An offense is a felony of the third degree if all of the following apply:

(i) The mandated reporter willfully fails to report.

(ii) The child abuse constitutes a felony of the first degree or higher.

(iii) The mandated reporter has direct knowledge of the nature of the abuse.

(3) If the willful failure to report an individual suspected of child abuse continues while the mandated reporter knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being subjected to child abuse by the same individual, or while the mandated reporter knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that the same individual continues to have direct contact with children through the individual's employment, program, activity or service, the mandated reporter commits a felony of the third degree, except that if the child abuse constitutes a felony of the first degree or higher, the mandated reporter commits a felony of the second degree.

(4) A mandated reporter who, at the time of sentencing for an offense under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6319, has been convicted of a prior offense under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6319, commits a felony of the third degree, except that if the child abuse constitutes a felony of the first degree or higher, the penalty for the second or subsequent offense is a felony of the second degree.

**§ 45.408. Child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement.**

(a) Except as provided in subsection (c), individuals applying to the Board for an initial license shall complete at least 3 hours of training in child abuse recognition and reporting requirements which has been approved by the Department of Human Services and the Bureau, as set forth in § 45.409 (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting course approval process). The applicant shall certify on the application that the applicant has either completed the required training or has been granted an exemption under subsection (c). The Board will not issue

a license unless the Bureau has received an electronic report from an approved course provider documenting the attendance or participation by the applicant or the applicant has obtained an exemption under subsection (c).

(b) Except as provided in subsection (c), licensees seeking renewal of a license issued by the Board shall complete, as a condition of biennial renewal of the license, at least 2 hours of approved continuing education in child abuse recognition and reporting, as a portion of the total continuing education required for biennial renewal. For credit to be granted, the continuing education course or program must be approved by the Bureau, in consultation with the Department of Human Services, as set forth in § 45.409. The Board will not renew a license unless the Bureau has received an electronic report from an approved course provider documenting the attendance or participation by the licensee in an approved course within the applicable biennial renewal period or the licensee has obtained an exemption under subsection (c). If a licensee holds more than one license issued by the Board, or holds a license issued by another licensing board within the Bureau that requires mandatory training in child abuse recognition and reporting, credit for completion of an approved course will be applied to both licenses.

(c) An applicant or licensee may apply in writing for an exemption from the training/continuing education requirements set forth in subsections (a) and (b) provided the applicant or licensee meets one of the following:

(1) The applicant or licensee submits documentation demonstrating that:

(i) The applicant or licensee has already completed child abuse recognition training as required by section 1205.6 of the Public School Code of 1949 (24 P.S. § 12-1205.6).

(ii) The training was approved by the Department of Education in consultation with the Department of Human Services.

(iii) The amount of training received equals or exceeds the amount of training or continuing education required under subsection (a) or subsection (b), as applicable.

(iv) For purposes of licensure renewal, the training must have been completed during the relevant biennial renewal period.

(2) The applicant or licensee submits documentation demonstrating that:

(i) The applicant or licensee has already completed child abuse recognition training required by 23 Pa.C.S. § 6383(c) (relating to education and training).

(ii) The training was approved by the Department of Human Services.

(iii) The amount of training received equals or exceeds the amount of training or continuing education required under subsection (a) or subsection (b), as applicable.

(iv) For purposes of licensure renewal, the training must have been completed during the relevant biennial renewal period.

(3) The applicant or licensee submits documentation acceptable to the Board demonstrating why the applicant or licensee should not be subject to the training or continuing education requirement. The Board will not grant an exemption based solely upon proof that children are not a part of the applicant's or licensee's practice. Each request for an exemption under this paragraph will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Board may grant the exemption if it finds that completion of the

training or continuing education requirement is duplicative or unnecessary under the circumstances.

(d) Exemptions granted under subsection (c) are applicable only for the biennial renewal period for which the exemption is requested. If an exemption is granted, the Board will issue or renew the license, as applicable. If an exemption is denied, the Board will e-mail the applicant or licensee a notice notifying them of the need to either complete an approved course or, if warranted, to submit additional documentation in support of their request for an exemption.

**§ 45.409. Child abuse recognition and reporting course approval process.**

(a) An individual, entity or organization may apply for approval to provide mandated reporter training as required under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6383(b) (relating to education and training) by submitting the course materials set forth in subsection (b) simultaneously to the Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families, and to the Bureau at the following addresses:

(1) Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families, Health and Welfare Building, 625 Forster Street, Harrisburg, PA 17120; or electronically at RA-PWOCYFCPSL@pa.gov.

(2) Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs, 2601 North Third Street, P.O. Box 2649, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2649; or electronically at RA-stcpsl\_course\_app@pa.gov.

(b) Submissions shall include the following:

(1) Contact information, including mailing address, e-mail address and telephone number, for the agency/course administrator.

(2) General description of the training and course delivery method.

(3) Title of the course.

(4) Timed agenda and estimated hours of training.

(5) Learning objectives.

(6) Intended audience.

(7) Course-related materials, including as applicable:

(i) Handouts.

(ii) Narrated script or talking points.

(iii) Interactive activities or exercises.

(iv) Videos and audio/visual content.

(v) Knowledge checks, quizzes or other means of assessing participant's understanding of the material.

(vi) For online courses, a transcript or recording of audio training.

(8) Citation of sources, including written permission to use copyrighted material, if applicable.

(9) Anticipated credentials or experience of the presenter, or biography of presenter, if known.

(10) Printed materials used to market the training.

(11) Evaluation used to assess participants' satisfaction with the training.

(12) Sample certificate of attendance/participation, which shall include all of the following:

(i) Name of participant.

(ii) Title of training.

(iii) Date of training.

(iv) Length of training (2 hours or 3 hours).

(v) Name and signature of an authorized representative of the approved provider. An electronic signature is acceptable.

(vi) Statement affirming the participant attended the entire course.

(13) Verification of ability to report participation or attendance electronically to the Bureau in a format prescribed by the Bureau.

(c) The Bureau will notify the individual, entity or organization in writing upon approval of the course and will post a list of approved courses on the Bureau's web site and the Board's web site.

**Subchapter G. CONTINUING EDUCATION**

**§ 45.501. Credit hour requirements.**

(a) Each speech-language pathologist or audiologist shall have completed 20 clock hours of continuing education per license during each preceding biennial period, including at least 2 hours of approved courses in child abuse recognition and reporting in accordance with § 45.408(b) (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement). Excess clock hours may not be carried over to the next biennium.

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**§ 45.502. Exemption and waiver.**

(a) With the exception of the 2 hours of mandatory training in child abuse recognition and reporting required under § 45.408(b) (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement), a licensee is not required to complete continuing education during the biennial period in which the licensee was first licensed to renew for the next biennium.

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**§ 45.503. Continuing education requirement for re-activation of inactive and lapsed licenses.**

A licensee seeking to reactivate an inactive or lapsed license shall show proof of compliance with the continuing education requirement for the preceding biennial period, including at least 2 hours of approved courses in child abuse recognition and reporting in accordance with § 45.408(b) (relating to child abuse recognition and reporting—mandatory training requirement). Only continuing education obtained during the 24-month period immediately preceding application for reactivation may be used to justify reactivation. This continuing education is in addition to continuing education required to subsequently renew the license under § 45.501(c) (relating to credit hour requirements).

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