

BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN OPTOMETRY

CONDENSED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD *SEPTEMBER 25, 2025*

THESE DRAFT MINUTES WERE PREPARED BY THE STAFF OF THE DIVISION OF CORPORATIONS, BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING. THEY HAVE NOT BEEN REVIEWED OR APPROVED BY THE BOARD.

Date:	September 25, 2025
Time:	09:00 AM
Location:	Teleconference (Zoom)
Attending:	Members: Kathleen Rice (Chair, OD), Pamela Steffes (OD), Ethan Arndt (OD), Sheryl Lentfer (OD), Charles Rudstrom (Public Member) Staff: Ashley Carabajal (Licensing Examiner), Reid Bowman (Program Coordinator), Melissa Dumas (Operations Manager), Josh Hardy (Investigator) Public Attendees: Dr. Michael Connors (OD)
Absent:	

1a. Call to Order: <u>Ethics Report</u>		
Brief Discussion:	<i>Each member of the board confirmed they had no ethical conflicts to disclose.</i>	
1b. Call to Order: <u>Review/Approve Agenda</u>		
Brief Discussion:	<i>No discussion to amend the agenda.</i>	
	<i>Dr. Lentfer joined the meeting at 9:05 but had technical difficulties.</i>	
Motion:	<i>Motion to approve the agenda as written. (First: Dr. Steffes; Second: Mr. Rudstrom)</i>	
Recorded Votes:	<i>Dr. Rice – Y</i>	<i>Dr. Lentfer – Absent</i>
	<i>Dr. Steffes – Y</i>	<i>Dr. Arndt – Y</i>
	<i>Mr. Rudstrom - Y</i>	
Action Items:	<i>The board will follow the agenda as written unless amended later in the meeting.</i>	
	<i>Dr. Lentfer joined the meeting and was present at 9:15.</i>	
2. <u>Public Comment</u>		
Brief Discussion:	<i>Ms. Carabajal informed the board that a member of the public was present in the meeting to propose a change in regulations regarding the continuing education requirements for</i>	

	<p>renewal. Dr. Connors explained his reasoning to the board and asked that they consider allowing optometrists to complete more hours online rather than in person. The board considered Dr. Connors' statement and reasoning. Dr. Rice stated there is a huge advantage to attending in-person courses vs. online courses. Dr. Connors disagrees and brought up the financial burden of traveling out of state to attend in-person courses, as Alaska only offers so many in-person conferences for continuing education. Dr. Rice mentioned the board is not here to make it easier for Alaska optometrists or to protect optometrists, but that they were there to protect the public.</p> <p>Mr. Rudstrom paused public comments to get back on track with the agenda and mentioned we have another section later in the agenda to discuss continuing education. Dr. Lentfer suggested the board discuss this at a later time after doing some research regarding continuing education.</p>	
	<p>Dr. Steffes made a public comment to suggest the board add the following items to an agenda at a different meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting a waiver for a regulation change to address passing the practical exam for licensure - For the board to review the Ocular Esthetics Procedures to ensure the topics addressing procedures are covered under regulations 	
Action Items:	<p>Ms. Carabajal will make sure the suggested topics are included in the next meeting agenda.</p> <p>The board will continue to the next agenda item.</p>	
3. Division Update: <u>Fiscal Report</u>		
Brief Discussion:	<p>Ms. Dumas went over the Fiscal Year 2025 Quarter 3 fiscal report with the board.</p>	
4a. Investigations Update: <u>Investigative Report</u>		
Brief Discussion:	<p>Investigator Hardy presented the Investigative Report to the board. The report consists of three open cases and two closed cases. The board had no questions regarding the investigative report.</p>	
4b. Investigations Update: <u>Annual Board Member Investigations Training</u>		
Brief Discussion:	<p>Investigator Hardy conducted the public portion of the Annual Board Member Investigations Training.</p>	
Motion:	<p>Motion for the Alaska Board of Examiners in Optometry to enter into executive session in accordance with AS 44.62.310(c), and Alaska Constitutional Right to Privacy Provisions, for the purpose of discussing matters which by law, municipal charter, or ordinance are required to be confidential. (First: Dr. Arndt; Second: Mr. Rudstrom)</p>	
Recorded Votes:	Dr. Rice – Y	Dr. Lentfer – Y
	Dr. Steffes – Y	Dr. Arndt – Y
	Mr. Rudstrom – Y	
Action Items:	<p>The board entered executive session for the remainder of the Annual Board Member Investigations Training.</p> <p>Off the Record: 09:58AM On the Record: 10:36AM</p> <p>The board agreed to a short break before continuing to the next agenda item.</p>	

	<p><i>Off the Record: 10:36AM</i></p> <p><i>On the Record: 10:45AM</i></p>
<p>5a. New Business: <u>CE Clarification</u></p>	
<p>Brief Discussion:</p>	<p><i>Before continuing with the agenda, Ms. Carabajal did roll call to ensure a quorum was met. The board maintained a full quorum.</i></p>
	<p><i>Ms. Carabajal made the board aware that she had seen an increase in late renewal applicants completing all or most of the hours of continuing education required for renewal online. The board allows up to 10 hours of CE to be done online; where the remainder of the CE must be in-person.</i></p>
	<p><i>Dr. Rice presented a sheet that broke down the difference between in-person synchronous, virtual, etc. Ms. Carabajal asked Dr. Rice if she would email the sheet to the board to review.</i></p>
	<p><i>Dr. Lentfer believes the CE requirements will need to be adjusted in the future. Dr. Rice mentioned Mr. Hardy stated CE is the most common investigative issue. Dr. Steffes also believed there's an opportunity to review the regulations.</i></p> <p><i>Dr. Arndt asked if the board would like to continue discussing this topic now or later in the meeting before adjourning. Mr. Rudstrom mentioned splitting the CE to 20 hours in-person and 20 hours online; Dr. Lentfer and Dr. Steffes were not opposed to that idea.</i></p> <p><i>Dr. Rice does not think this is something the board needed to submit a waiver to start a regulation project. She did not feel comfortable voting on the topic during the meeting and would like to take time to research different states' requirements. Dr. Arndt suggested setting a future meeting date and the board agreed.</i></p>
<p>Action Items:</p>	<p><i>Dr. Rice will email the board and staff the sheet she presented to the board. Ms. Carabajal will post the sheet to OnBoard for review and suggestions, if any. If approved, it will get posted to the board's website.</i></p>
<p>5b. New Business: <u>Telehealth Discussion</u></p>	
<p>Brief Discussion:</p>	<p><i>Dr. Lentfer informed the board of receiving complaints from ODs in Juneau because they have to take in a telehealth ODs patients because they are not present in Alaska. Dr. Lentfer wanted to confirm if the telehealth regulations were up to date or if they need to be updated to ensure this telehealth OD is following telehealth regulations. Mr. Rudstrom believed this is a violation of telehealth regulations.</i></p> <p><i>Dr. Rice mentioned the board discussed this topic in a prior meeting and that it was not solely based on telehealth because there was some in-person testing done. Dr. Steffes confirmed. Dr. Steffes mentioned she works in Juneau and supervises a clinic there and it is problematic.</i></p> <p><i>The board spent time discussing telehealth regulations (12 AAC 48.370). Dr. Arndt asked if the board could get a waiver to start a regulation project to update the regulations. Dr. Rice mentioned this would take time to come up with regulations and have the board agree on the regulations for a project.</i></p>
	<p><i>The board discussed potential wording for updated telehealth regulations. Dr. Steffes mentioned the American Optometric Association (AOA) came out with new updated telemedicine standard and that it had good points that would be relevant to the board if they decided to change regulations. Dr. Lentfer believed the board should review the statement from the AOA.</i></p> <p><i>Dr. Arndt suggested changing 12 AAC 48.370(b)(6) to remove "based solely on an examination conducted through telehealth" from the wording. Dr. Rice argued Dr. Arndt's suggestion and brought up situations where this would not work, but Dr. Arndt argued that</i></p>

	<p><i>the situation mentioned doesn't need to be considered in this case because they are not determining a prescription based on an examination.</i></p>
	<p><i>Dr. Rice mentioned some states require an in-person eye exam before an OD can use telehealth to dispense a prescription. Dr. Arndt suggested requiring the doctor and patient to be present in Alaska. Dr. Lentfer mentioned that it could cause problems if their patients were in another state and asked if the board wanted to restrict working with them. Dr. Arndt mentioned just having the doctor present in the state.</i></p> <p><i>Dr. Lentfer said the board will need to look at updating regulations and ODs should submit complaints to the division's investigations team. Dr. Rice mentioned that it could be costly and that harm done could be hard to prove.</i></p>
	<p><i>Dr. Rice said the board would not be changing or starting a regulation project at this meeting. She said the board should look at the CE and compare it to other states while keeping in mind that Alaska has one of the broadest scopes of practices for optometry in the country. She also mentioned telehealth and research how other states regulate it and discuss this topic at a later meeting. The board discussed another meeting prior to the upcoming holidays.</i></p>

Next Meeting:	November 05, 2025, at 09:00 AM
Adjournment:	12:03 PM