

Occupational Analysis – Acupuncturist

I. Overview

The California Acupuncture Board has contracted with the Office of Professional Examination Services (OPES) to conduct an Occupation Analysis (OA) of the Acupuncturist profession. An Occupational Analysis is generally updated every 5-7 years, depending on the type and complexity of the occupation and the propensity for significant changes to the practice. The purpose of this OA is to define practice for Acupuncturists in terms of actual job tasks that new licensees must be able to perform safely and competently.

OPES staff will initiate the OA by:

1. Gathering information from a literature review of current laws, rules, and regulations, reference books and documents, journal articles, examination specifications, and other relevant data to develop an understanding of the profession. Following the literature review process, California-licensed Acupuncturists must serve as subject matter experts (SMEs) for the practice and must participate in further information-gathering activities of this OA, such as interviews and focus group workshops.
2. Conducting OA interviews both by telephone (in which SMEs will describe their job tasks and the knowledge required to perform them) and onsite (at SME's practice location). Information from the interviews will be used to develop a task and knowledge statement document.

OPES will obtain critical information from SMEs by:

1. Conducting three separate focus groups in which the task and knowledge statements can be modified, deleted, or additional statements added, to ensure that the task and knowledge statements are comprehensive and accurate descriptions of what is necessary to the practice.
2. Distributing a questionnaire containing the task and knowledge statements to a sample of licensed California Acupuncturists. The sample of Acupuncturists will rate each of the task statements on how important they are and how often they are performed. The sample of Acupuncturists will also rate the knowledge statements on how important they are for successful performance of the tasks.

OPES will conclude the study by:

1. Analyzing OA questionnaire data and developing a preliminary description of the practice once sufficient questionnaire data has been collected.
2. Convening additional focus groups to:
 - a. Review the data from the OA questionnaire and confirm the criticality of the task and knowledge statements.
 - b. Define content areas for the task and knowledge statements, and thus confirm and endorse the accuracy of the description of the practice.

The results of the OA will be used to:

1. Provide a comprehensive description of current Acupuncturist practice as a resource for the Acupuncture Board.

2. Provide the documentation necessary to develop a legally defensible licensing examination.
3. Determine the weight of various content areas of the licensing examination.
4. Provide specific task and knowledge statements to assist SMEs with writing examination questions.

II. Step by Step Process and Target Timelines

Major phases of the Acupuncturist OA project will be as follows:

1. **Literature Review – November 2013 to December 2013***
 - a. OPES staff will review current laws, rules, and regulations, reference books and documents, journal articles, examination specifications, and other relevant data in order to develop an understanding of the profession.
 - b. A preliminary list of tasks and knowledge expected for the practice will be developed using the findings from the literature review.
2. **Interviews – January 2014 to February 2014***
 - a. OPES staff will conduct interviews with a sample of California-licensed Acupuncturist SMEs both by telephone and onsite (at the SME's practice location) to further refine the task and knowledge lists.
3. **Task and Knowledge Statement Workshops – April 2014 to June/July* 2014**
 - a. OPES staff will convene three focus groups (one focus group workshop per month) with a sample of California-licensed Acupuncturist SMEs to review task and knowledge statements created from the literature review and SME interviews.
 - b. During each focus group, SMEs will determine the accuracy of the statements and decide whether to edit, delete, or add statements to the lists of tasks and knowledge.
4. **OA Questionnaire Distribution – June 2014 to July/August 2014***
 - a. OPES staff will develop an OA Questionnaire utilizing the finalized task and knowledge statements from the three task and knowledge statement focus group workshops.
 - b. The OA Questionnaire will be administered to a representative sample of California-licensed Acupuncturist SMEs via an online questionnaire tool.
 - c. In the OA Questionnaire, SMEs will be asked to rate task and knowledge statements.
 - d. The survey will be monitored to determine when a demographically representative response rate has been achieved.
5. **Analyze OA Questionnaire Data – August 2014 to September 2014***
 - a. OPES staff will analyze the data collected from the OA Questionnaire.
6. **Review of Results from OA Workshops – October 2014 to November 2014***
 - a. OPES staff will convene two focus groups (one focus group workshop per month) with a sample of California-licensed Acupuncturist SMEs to review OA Questionnaire data and finalize the description of practice.
7. **Prepare and Submit Validation Report – December 2014 to January/February 2015***
 - a. OPES staff will prepare a report of all OA processes and results and submit the report to the California Acupuncture Board in both bound and electronic format.

***The above dates represent completion targets; timelines may be changed due to SME availability or other unforeseeable circumstances.**

III. Frequently Asked Questions

What topics should be covered in an Occupational Analysis?

An Occupational Analysis of a licensed profession should include only content that is pertinent to the protection of public health, safety, and welfare. Content included should not pertain to a practitioner's business success. In addition, an Occupational Analysis must focus on what is necessary for minimally competent individuals within the practice of the profession, rather than on general business and recordkeeping skills or general communication skills. All activities in the analysis should be observable and have an impact on public health, safety and welfare (Chinn & Hertz, 2010).

Is an Occupational analysis conducted differently for occupational licensure or certification than for other purposes?

Yes. An Occupational analysis is designed to capture the tasks performed and competencies required at the time a person enters into the profession. This "entry level" perspective affects the decision of who to interview in terms of experience---for licensure and certification a goodly proportion of the interviewees should have been licensed five years or less. The tasks and knowledge identified, particularly those within licensed professions, should be those related to the protection of the public health, safety, and welfare. Performance of the tasks and knowledge does not guarantee success on the job. Rather, an analysis conducted for licensing and certification purposes relates to minimum competence for the credential (Chinn & Hertz, 2010).

We have been told that our Occupational Analysis is obsolete and that we should have a new one performed for our examination program to be considered content valid. What kind of standards should we apply to evaluate the quality of an Occupational Analysis?

The basis for the construction of a content-valid examination is the Occupational Analysis. An Occupational Analysis is a comprehensive survey of job tasks and knowledge required to perform the tasks.

First, the lists of tasks and knowledge that are developed by conducting interviews and/or focus groups should be comprehensive. The development of the list should continue until no new or additional information can be obtained. Second, the level of specificity should be consistent for all tasks and knowledge. Furthermore, the statements should provide sufficient detail so that they are useful during the construction of examination questions (Chinn & Hertz, 2010).

Generally, Occupational Analyses must be updated every 5-7 years depending on the type and complexity of the occupation and the propensity for significant changes to the practice.

What is the role of educators in the Occupational Analysis process?

Educators may be included but their role should be minimized. Educators may promote inclusion of specific academic subject matter rather than subject matter appropriate for licensing or certification purposes. However, in the context of a focus group of content experts, educators can provide valuable insights into the competencies (tasks and knowledge) necessary for practice (Chinn & Hertz, 2010).

What is the role of board members and professional associations?

An Occupational Analysis is not performed as a reaction to individual opinions, sentiments, or the whims of special interest groups. Therefore, the direct role of board members and professional associations should be minimized. An Occupational Analysis is an objective study of practice that should be free of influences from individuals or special interest groups. If an Occupational Analysis is done properly, the concerns of these groups should be addressed (Chinn & Hertz, 2010).

Who should be interviewed for the Occupational Analysis? How many people should be interviewed to make sure that all the information is covered?

Practitioners from a broad range of practice settings, geographic locations, and levels of experience can be interviewed. The purpose of the interviews is to provide the basis of the list of tasks and knowledge to be included on the survey questionnaire.

Interviewees should be assured that the information obtained from the interviews is not the sole source of data for the Occupational Analysis. Typically, data is obtained from a survey questionnaire and panels of subject matter experts who are representative of the profession. Even if the primary source of information is established by a focus group, a few practitioners should be interviewed to provide background information and insights into the profession.

The number of subject matter experts to be interviewed depends upon the complexity of the profession and the issues involved in practice. For technical-level professions, 10-15 interviews are usually sufficient. For those professions that require advanced degrees and supervised training programs, 20-30 interviews may be needed. The number of subspecialties or work settings may necessitate additional interviews (Chinn & Hertz, 2010).

IV. References

Chinn, R. N., & Hertz, N. R. (2010). *Job analysis: A guide for credentialing organizations*. Lexington, KY: The Council on Licensure, Enforcement, and Regulation.