



## **AD HOC DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES January 15, 2025**

### Committee Members Present

Richard Bookwalter, OT, Board Member/Chair  
Hector Cabrera, Board Member  
Mary Evert, OT

### Board Staff Present

Marc Mason, Executive Officer  
Jody Quesada Novey, Manager  
Austin Porter, Analyst  
Karina Clark, Analyst

**Wednesday, January 15, 2025**

**9:00 am – Committee Meeting**

1. Call to order, roll call, establishment of a quorum.

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 am, roll was called, and a quorum was established.

2. Committee Chair's Opening Remarks.

Chair Richard Bookwalter expressed his gratitude that the committee was able to meet and his concern for those affected by the fires in Southern California and the severe weather in the Eastern United States.

Chair Bookwalter welcomed the CA Board of Occupational Therapy's (Board) new Executive Officer, Marc Mason, to the meeting.

3. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda.

There were no public comments for items not on the agenda.

4. Review and vote on approval of the April 29, 2024, committee meeting minutes.

- Mary Evert moved to approve the April 29, 2024, committee meeting minutes.
- Hector Cabrera seconded the motion.

There were no additional committee member remarks.

### Public Comment

There were no public comments regarding the minutes. However, Emily Balog, PhD, OTR/L, was invited to introduce herself to the committee. Emily shared that she is an occupational therapist, professor at Rutgers University in New Jersey, and former emergency manager in the Air Force.

### Committee Member Vote

Richard Bookwalter	Yes
Hector Cabrera	Yes
Mary Evert	Yes

The motion carried.

5. Discussion and review of the CA Board of Occupational Therapy's "Disaster Preparedness Resources" webpage and the Department of Consumer Affairs' "Disaster Help Center" webpage.

Chair Bookwalter pointed out that the Board's website was updated to include a separate Disaster Preparedness Resources page for consumers and for licensees. The pages were made separate to allow for a more thorough scope of resources on either page without displaying too much information that would not be pertinent to either group. Some resources appear on both pages, but the consumer-facing webpage contains more surface-level information.

The committee also expressed their approval and appreciation for the Board's inclusion on the DCA's Disaster Help Center webpage.

There were no committee member requests for changes regarding the webpages.

There was discussion about the various possible definitions of a First Responder according to different organizations and whether there were any that could encompass occupational therapy practitioners.

Chair Bookwalter brought up the idea of recommending to the Board to reach out to occupational therapy advocacy groups, such as AOTA and OTAC, about putting forth a definition of "First Responder" that includes occupational therapists.

Emily Balog drew the committee's attention to the differences between "First Responders" and "Emergency Response Providers," as defined by the Department of Homeland Security.

Staff was directed to find out the definition of who a first responder is with the Red Cross, at a national and state level.

There were no further committee member remarks.

#### Public Comment

Emily Balog thanked the Committee for the work put into gathering resources and presenting them on the website.

6. Discussion and review of the CA Board of Occupational Therapy's Disaster Preparedness and Response Survey results.

The committee discussed the survey's response rate and the helpfulness of the information within.

Mary Evert suggested making the survey shorter and narrowing down the questions to focus on the most important information for the committee.

### Public Comment

Emily Balog was invited to make public comment. She asked if the committee would be willing to share some of the survey questions and if they were interested in possibly conducting a nationwide survey in the interest of a larger response.

The committee ultimately decided that the survey results were insightful, but that the sample size was not large enough to take informed action. The committee decided to recommend to the Board to send out another, shorter survey in the near future that could generate a better response rate while disaster preparedness was on the profession's mind (in light of the current fires in Southern California).

The committee also discussed partnering with professional associations and sharing first-hand accounts of occupational therapy practitioner's experiences with disaster preparedness and response to drive engagement within the profession.

Emily Balog offered suggestions for specific and direct questions to be considered for a future survey.

Chair Bookwalter directed Staff to collect the information and resources shared by Emily Balog during the meeting in a document for the committee's review.

Emily Balog provided the committee with her contact information.

There were no further committee member remarks.

### 7. Discussion on scheduling time(s) for future meetings.

Chair Bookwalter suggested scheduling the next Disaster Preparedness and Response committee meeting after the March Board meeting.

The committee considered scheduling their next meeting for April 16<sup>th</sup> at 9am.

### Public Comment

There was no public comment.

### 8. New suggested agenda items for a future meeting.

Possible topics to be considered for future agenda items included:

- Promoting stories about occupational therapy practitioner's experiences with disaster preparedness and response in the media and press.
- Collaboration with Emily Balog and her efforts in disaster preparedness and response.
- Another survey to send to licensees.

There were no further committee member remarks.

### Public Comment

Emily Balog thanked the committee for having her and signed off from the meeting.

### **Meeting adjournment.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:08 a.m.