



## **AD HOC DISASTER PREPAREDNESS/RESPONSE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**Committee Members Present**

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

**Board Staff Present**

Heather Martin, Executive Officer

**Committee Members Absent**

None

**Board Staff Absent**

None

**Thursday, February 8, 2024  
 9:30 am Committee Meeting**

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

President of the California Board of Occupational Therapy (Board) and Committee Chairman Richard Bookwalter call the meeting to order at 930 am. Role was called, and all Committee Members were present; a quorum was established.

2. Board President/Committee Chair’s Opening Remarks.

Chair Bookwalter welcomed those in attendance and said he looked forward to the Committee ‘s work and making some actionable recommendations to the Board.

3. Introductions by all Committee Members.

Committee Chairman Richard Bookwalter shared that he was an occupational therapist (OT), the Board’s current President, with 27 years of experience, mostly in geriatrics; he added that he has spent the last 15 years in wheelchair seating and mobility at Kaiser San Francisco.

Mr. Bookwalter announced the recent appointment of Mary Evert to the Committee. Mr. Bookwalter stated that Ms. Evert was an OT and not only a long-serving Member of the Board but past President of the Board as well. He added that Ms. Evert was a member of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and the Occupational Therapy Association of California (OTAC), and former delegate to the World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT). Mr. Bookwalter noted that Ms. Evert has presented

widely on the topic of disaster preparedness and response, and that he appreciated the expertise she would provide the Committee.

Ms. Evert thanked Mr. Bookwalter for asking her to join the Committee and was glad the Board was prioritizing disaster preparedness and response since it affects so many. She added that she looked forward to the Committee's work and presenting the Board with some solid and actionable recommendations.

Mr. Cabrera welcomed Ms. Evert and stated that he was a public Member of the Board, appointed by the Assembly Speaker's Office in 2022. Mr. Cabrera said that he looked forward to working with Mr. Bookwalter and Ms. Evert on this very important topic.

4. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda.

There was no public comment.

5. Committee discussion on services that occupational therapy practitioners can offer, such as disaster planning, risk reduction, environmental modification, and disaster response, and possible recommendation(s) to the Board.

The Committee discussed the phases of disaster and emergency is not just preparedness but included addressing the before, during, after phases, known as Preparedness, Response and Recovery.

Chairman Bookwalter referenced the meeting materials including many government resources. Ms. Evert advised the Committee that WFOT published a document in June of 2022 that might be a helpful resource, the Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction Manual. Ms. Martin agreed to provide that in the materials at the next meeting.

Mr. Bookwalter referenced the materials, including information from the California Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA) about the Disaster Medical Response Programs it oversees, including the California Health Corps (CAHC) Program and the California Medical Assistance Team (CAL-MAT) Programs. The CAHC is the State's response to an increased need for licensed medical professionals within healthcare facilities experiencing a medical surge due to a disaster such as the COVID-19 pandemic. A CAHC member becomes a paid temporary emergency hire State employee deployed to healthcare facilities provide patient care. The CAL-MAT medical professionals also become paid temporary emergency hire State employees deployed to support disasters statewide in California.

Mr. Bookwalter noted that neither the CAHC nor the CAL-MAT programs include OTs or occupational therapy assistants (OTAs) in the list of medical professionals utilized in disaster response despite published documents about the role of occupational therapy in disaster response.

Mr. Bookwalter referenced the physical therapist (PT) duty statement that followed the information on EMSA's Disaster Medical Response Program and noted inclusion of PTs in the CAL-MAT teams and asked how the PT duty statement was established.

Ms. Martin stated that duty statements are prepared by the hiring State agency; she elaborated that there are several State agencies that hire OTs so there are duty statements available if EMSA were to OTs and OTAs to their list of medical professionals hired to respond in the event of a disaster. He suggested that people, organizations, don't really know how the role of occupational therapy fits in with disaster response.

Ms. Evert pointed out that PTs don't address mental or social needs, which is important in disaster response. She added that the American Red Cross also does not recognize OTs as part of their disaster response team and felt it should be priority to get them to do so.

After further discussion on the meeting materials provided, including the Department of Consumer Affairs' Disaster Help Center webpage, the Committee expressed interest on having the Board be added.

Chairman Bookwalter recapped the Committee's discussion, including:

- Possibility of recommending requiring Professional Development units related to Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.
- Partnering with AOTA, OTAC, the Accreditation Council on Occupational Therapy and other organizations to promote the Board's interest in training related to disaster/emergency response for OTs and OTAs.
- Staff to find out more information on including OTs and OTAs in EMSA's CAHC and CAL-MAT programs and draft duty statement.
- Staff to draft information for inclusion on DCA's Disaster Help Center webpage.
- Review of national Disaster/Emergency Management education standards.
- Developing a survey to determine the licensing population's awareness of disaster/emergency preparedness and response.

6. Discussion on scheduling time(s) for future meetings.

The Committee agreed to meet April 10, 2024, via WebEx, rather than in person.

7. New suggested agenda items for a future meeting.

There were no items suggested.

8. Consideration of the Committee's next steps.

The Committee agreed there was more information to review before making recommendations to the Board.

**The Meeting adjourned at 11:02am.**