

# OT/PT chapter update



## SPECIAL ISSUE ON CIVIL SERVICE EXAM

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT SENT BY EMAIL NOV. 13

### Dear Colleagues,

I am sending you this special, printed issue of our OT/PT Chapter Update to make sure that all of the more than 1,700 occupational and physical therapists in our chapter get the information they need on the civil service exam.

I hope you all received the email that UFT President Michael Mulgrew sent to our chapter Nov. 13 about the civil service exam. I have also sent several emails on this topic in recent weeks, including two with Q&As.

I know that some of you may have missed the emails, which is why this is coming to you in the mail.

**The most important thing to remember is that each of us must complete the exam by Dec. 31, 2013. That is the only way you will get on the civil service list.**

If you have any questions or concerns about the exams or this process of attaining permanent status, please send them to [OTandPTexamquestions@uft.org](mailto:OTandPTexamquestions@uft.org).

Sincerely,  
Leslie McDonnell  
Chapter Leader

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### CIVIL SERVICE Q&A

*We have put together the following Q & A to help answer any questions you may have about the civil service exam and the process for attaining permanent employee status at the Department of Education. This combines previous Q & As sent by email, and is also posted on our website at [www.uft.org/chapters/occupational-physical-therapists/you-should-know](http://www.uft.org/chapters/occupational-physical-therapists/you-should-know). Please check our chapter website frequently for updates.*

*Remember, the filing period to take the civil service exams for occupational therapist (Exam #4009) and physical therapist (exam #4015) began on Nov. 6 and will close on Dec. 31.*

*It is crucially important that all DOE-employed occupational and physical therapists, whether serving at the supervisory, senior or staff level, take the exam for their appropriate title. This is an online education and experience exam, which will credit you for both your educational achievements and service working in a school system.*

#### WHY THERE IS AN EXAM AND WHO HAS TO TAKE IT:

##### Why does civil service require an exam and hiring list?

Both New York State and the federal government adopted civil service rules in 1883 as a way to prevent political patronage in decisions on hiring and promotions in government jobs. Because civil service aims to base hiring on merit and fitness rather than favoritism, it requires the use of exams and a hiring list to maintain objectivity and fairness.

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### Dear OT and PT Colleagues,

I understand that many of you are concerned about information you just received from the Department of Education on civil service exams. As we informed you last spring, because of a court decision in New York State, there is an opportunity for the first time in the history of this union for physical and occupational therapists to achieve permanent status. Until now, your titles



only allowed you to be provisional employees, a status with limited job protections and benefits.

That's why the Department of Citywide Administrative Services is now required

to implement a process that gives you the right to become a permanent employee of the Department of Education. Your permanent appointment will give you all of the job protections and other benefits not afforded to provisional employees. For that reason, we encourage you to take the civil service examination that is part of the process toward achieving permanent status. All civil service examinations require a fee, and I can assure you that all UFT members in civil service titles have also had to pay an exam fee when moving from provisional to permanent status.

The timing of this is good. A change in status for occupational and physical

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### **The civil service exam instructions say something about a form I need to download and mail. What is that?**

Everyone who takes the exam needs to download an affirmation form, sign it and mail it to the address indicated. It would be a good idea to do this as soon as you start taking the exam so you don't forget.

### **Which DOE-employed therapists are eligible for permanent civil service status through this exam?**

All full-time and part-time occupational therapists, physical therapists, senior occupational therapists, senior physical therapists and supervisors of occupational therapy and physical therapy are eligible for permanent civil service status in the two titles of occupational therapist or physical therapist through this examination.

### **How will the exams affect supervisors of occupational and physical therapists?**

Supervisors need to take the civil service exam to have the opportunity to obtain permanent status in the lower titles of occupational therapist or physical therapist, which will entitle them to the rights and benefits of permanent employees. Supervisors will also at the same time retain their provisional status in their current supervisory titles. At some point in the future, exams

will be administered for supervisors of occupational and physical therapists to gain permanent status in those higher titles.

### **If I don't take the exam, will I lose my job?**

It is possible that you will be in danger of being replaced by someone who has taken the exam. Everyone needs to take the exam.

### **I'm currently on leave. Do I have to take the exam?**

Yes. The DOE has agreed to notify therapists who are on leave about the examination. Employees on leave must make sure that the DOE has their current mailing address.

### **Do I need to be an American citizen to take this exam?**

If you are licensed and currently registered as a therapist in New York State, you can take the exam

### **Do therapists who have completed their education in another country have to supply documentation of their education to DCAS?**

No. The only credential you need is a New York State license to practice occupational or physical therapy and to be currently registered. If you have any further questions about this aspect, contact DOE's Division of Human Resources & Talent at [AskAQuestionAboutCivil](mailto:AskAQuestionAboutCivil)

[ServiceExaminations@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:ServiceExaminations@schools.nyc.gov).

### **Is this exam limited to DOE employees or can non-DOE therapists take the exam?**

The examination is not limited to DOE-employed therapists.

### **If I don't take the exam this round, will I be able to take it later?**

DCAS will not schedule another exam until it exhausts the civil service list of those who took this exam. Any of us who don't take this exam will not be on this list, and our positions may be offered to others who are on the list. Civil service rules require DCAS to hire from the list. Each of us must take this exam or risk losing our current positions.

### **How often will I be required to take an exam?**

Once permanently appointed to the title, you will not be required to take the exam again.

### **How is the DOE notifying therapists about the exam?**

The DOE has sent an email to every therapist's DOE email address. The DOE is also mailing a letter to every therapist, including those who are on leave. If you know a therapist who did not receive the email, please have them email: [AskAQuestionAboutCivilServiceExaminations@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:AskAQuestionAboutCivilServiceExaminations@schools.nyc.gov).

## **TAKING THE EXAM:**

### **Can the deadline for completing the exam, Dec. 31, 2013, be extended?**

No. The deadline is set by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) and cannot be extended.

### **What is an "education and experience" exam?**

An education and experience exam only asks for information about your education and experience in the field. If you are a licensed therapist employed by the DOE, you will automatically meet the education requirement for the exam. You will need to provide information about your work experience as a therapist. Experience working in any school

### *Letter from the President continued from page 1*

therapists from provisional to permanent can only help in our contract negotiations for you. Your representatives on the UFT contract negotiating committee have made your concerns crystal clear.

We've also received some questions about the DOE's plan to create a new position for speech teachers who have a speech and language pathology license. You should know that the DOE created this position without any negotiation with us. This position requires a new probationary period, which puts tenure at risk and creates new duties and responsibilities. The DOE only took this step to circumvent real bargaining over the Medicaid reimbursement process. We are taking immediate legal action to stop this.

Working under this administration has been challenging for all who work in the schools. January 1 cannot come soon enough. We will, for the first time in years, have a mayor who respects the women and men working in the public schools, and we look forward to working out the issues that have frustrated us for so long.

Sincerely,



Michael Mulgrew

setting will be given greater weight.

## **What kinds of questions can I expect?**

The questions on the exam ask you to detail your education (license) and work experience. There are no multiple choice questions or essays on this type of exam.

## **Are there any documents that I will need to refer to or any information that I will need to have available when I take the exam?**

You should have available your license number, the date that your license was originally issued and the current registration status of your license. This is available on the New York State Education Department's Office of Professions website. You should also have available a detailed history of your work experience.

## **Does it cost anything to take the exam? If so, who pays for the exam?**

You will have to pay a one-time fee of \$68 to take the exam. The fee is set by DCAS and will not be reimbursed by the DOE.

## **When and where will I take the exam?**

You will take the exam between Nov. 6 and Dec. 31 (the time period specified in the Notice of Exam) at your home on your own computer after your workday. Alternatively, you can take the exam at one of the exam centers specified in the Notice of Exam.

## **Are there particular Internet browsers I need to use for the test or any technical requirements for my home computer?**

Yes, the best browsers to use on the exam site are Microsoft Internet Explorer 8, 9 and 10 or Firefox 17, 18 and 19. The site is also best viewed with a computer resolution of 800 x 600 or higher.

## **How long will it take to complete the exam?**

It is not a timed examination. It will take as long as it takes you to provide the requested information. You must complete the entire exam by midnight on Dec. 31.

## **Do I have to complete the exam at the time I start it or can I save my work and return to it later?**

You can save your work on the exam and

complete it later. However, once you submit it you will not be able to make any changes. Follow the directions and complete and review your entries carefully prior to submitting. Be sure to submit before the Dec. 31, 2013 deadline.

## **Can I fail the exam?**

If you are a current employee and you provide the information requested, you will not fail the exam.

## **Assuming I pass the exam, does it matter where my name appears on the list?**

Given the shortage in these areas, it is likely that every DOE therapist will be appointed.

## **How do I indicate my work hours and status on the exam? The notice of exam says 35 hours is full-time and 34 or fewer hours is part-time. But I work something between 34 and 35 hours.**

It is important to understand that this exam is used for many civil service titles and some parts of it don't fit our titles, which is why some questions like this one are confusing. You should put exactly how many hours you work each week. We have been assured that whether you report your service as full- or part-time, it will not affect your employment status as a DOE therapist, your pension or any other rights and benefits.

## **The exam requires me to enter an "end date" for my experience. I am currently employed and expect to continue working. How do I answer this question?**

Enter the date on which you complete the exam. DCAS will assume that every occupational and physical therapist who indicates the end date as the date they apply for the exam as being employed at least through the exam deadline, Dec. 31, 2013.

## **I worked in schools as a contract agency therapist before coming to work for the DOE. Can I record this as school service or does only service as a DOE employee count?**

All service in schools, whether directly for the DOE or for a contract agency, counts as school experience.

## **I have worked for the DOE during two different periods. How do I report this on the exam?**

You should record each period of time separately. Example: Start date: 9/5/2000, end date: 7/1/2004, and then a new entry for the next time period as if it were a new job: Start date: 9/3/2010, end date: 11/15/2013 (use date you file for the exam to indicate that you are currently still working).

## **I worked as a therapist in other settings, such as a hospital, before working for the DOE. Should I list this other experience?**

Yes, you should include all "therapist" experience regardless of whether or not it is in a school setting.

## **Last year, people from the city's Department of Citywide Administrative Services observed a number of therapists doing their jobs. How was this information used in developing the exam?**

The information gathered during the observations was used to generate an inventory of tasks typically performed by school-based therapists and therapists working in other settings. To receive credit for satisfactory experience as a licensed therapist, you will be required to identify a certain number of the tasks listed in either the school setting inventory or the non-school setting inventory.

## **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE EXAM:**

### **Is there any benefit to attaining permanent civil service status?**

Yes. This is a good thing. Physical and occupational therapists working for the DOE have always been provisional employees. As permanent employees, we will have job protections and other benefits not afforded to provisional employees, including greater rights to certain types of leave, such as extended sick leave.

### **What happens after I take the exam?**

Following the Dec. 31, 2013 deadline, DCAS will score the exams and create a list of names of those eligible for consideration for permanent civil service appointment.

### **Is it possible that after completing the exam I will not get a permanent appointment?**

It is possible, but highly unlikely. Remember, you work in a shortage area. But you must complete the exam by Dec. 31, 2013 to get on the list.

### **How will the exam be scored, and how will those scores be used to create the civil service list?**

Civil service appointments are made from the list. People whose names appear higher on the list are likely to be appointed sooner than those lower on the list. It is anticipated that DCAS will sort our exam results into scoring bands, for example, all applicants that scored 100 will be in one band, all applicants that scored 99 and so on. Within each scoring band, the ordering of names will be random based upon an algorithm that DCAS will apply to those people's social security numbers. Because we are in a shortage area, it is likely that all DOE therapists will be reached for appointment.

### **When will the list be issued?**

No date has been set yet but civil service lists are typically issued six to nine months after the closing date for the exam.

### **How will part-time therapists be appointed?**

Part-time therapists and full-time therapists will both be on the same list and will be appointed in list order.

### **Will my salary and work location change when I am appointed?**

No. Your salary and work location will stay the same.

### **Will I have to serve a new probationary period after I am appointed?**

Under civil service rules, appointees serve a one-year probationary period before they become permanent. We anticipate that therapists now employed by DOE will not be required to serve a new probationary period but this is one of the issues that the DOE and UFT will discuss before the civil service list is established.

### **What will happen to the title of senior therapist?**

The senior therapist title will be replaced by level 2 status under civil service. Therapists will move to level 2 status automatically after two years of employment. No processing fee will be required for the move to level 2.

### **If I have already paid an application fee to become a senior therapist will that fee be refunded?**

No, application fees already paid for becoming a senior therapist will not be refunded.

### **If I am eligible for level 2 but I haven't applied, will I be moved automatically to level 2 without a fee?**

In all likelihood, yes.

### **Does "permanent" mean the same as teacher "tenure"?**

No. Tenure is granted to pedagogical personnel under the state Education Law.

### **The DOE has a Q & A on its website about the New York State court decision in the Long Beach case that says occupational and physical therapists are not affected because we are noncompetitive employees under civil service. If that is the case, why do we now have to take the exams?**

The information on the DOE website has been updated and no longer reflects that the titles of occupational and physical therapists are noncompetitive. The decision to place our titles in the competitive class was made by the State Civil Service Commission. These titles are already in the competitive class elsewhere in the state.

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