

Guam Board of Allied Health Examiners
Regular Board Meeting June 6, 2025 at 12:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting:

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Meeting ID: 886 2470 2375

Passcode: 817695

MINUTES

Item		Discussion		Responsible Party	Reporting Timeframe	Status
I	Call to Order	Meeting Chaired by Dr. Balajadia		Chair	1202	Call to Order
	Proof of Publication	05/30/2025 and 06/04/2025 Guam Daily Post		Chair	1204	Confirmed
	Roll Call	GBAHE Members <u>Present at HPLO:</u> ☑Dr. Mamie Balajadia, Clinical Psychology, Chair ☑Nadine Cepeda, LPC, LMHC, LMFT, Secretary ☑Vince Pereda, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Vice-Chair ☑Rosalind S. Taitingfong, Occupational Therapist, Treasurer ☑Dr. Velma R. Harper, Veterinarian ☑Gregory J. Cruz, Respiratory Therapist ☑Dr. Dennis Triolo, Audiology ☑Dr. Sungwook “Steve” S. Kim, Podiatrist <u>Virtual Attendance:</u> ☑Dr. Richard Chong, ACOM ☑Dr. Gregory Miller, Chiropractic ☑Ray Tajalle, Physician Assistant ☑Catherine San Nicolas, Clinical Dietitian	Other Attendees <u>Present at HPLO:</u> Kaysie Lee, DPHSS/HPLO Don Sulat, DPHSS/HPLO <u>Virtual Attendance:</u> Breanna Sablan, DPHSS/HPLO PeterJohn Camacho, DPHSS Joaquin Blaz, DPHSS Hiroshi Ishii-Adajar, Public Julianne Hernandez, Pacific Daily News	Chair	1203	Quorum Established
II	Adoption of Agenda	Motion to Adopt the Agenda: N. Cepeda; 2 nd : R. Taitingfong.		GBAHE	1204	Unanimously Adopted Agenda
III	Approval of Minutes	Draft Minutes dated 05/02/2025 Motion to Approve: C. San Nicolas; 2 nd : Dr. Kim.		GBAHE	1205	Unanimously Approved
IV	Treasurer’s Report	No report		R. Taitingfong	1207	Noted
V	Administrator’s Report	B. Sablan reported that a FOIA request was received by HPLO on May 27, 2025. The office responded to the request on May 30, 2025, thereby remaining in compliance with the four-day response requirement outlined by the FOIA. An electronic copy of the response was also provided to all board members for their records. The next item was concerning an application for an MFT intern license and an application to sit for the		B. Sablan	1207	Noted

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	<p>MFT examination. It was noted that during the May 2025 meeting, the applicant had been listed on the agenda for consideration; however, upon further review, it was discovered that the individual did not meet the necessary coursework requirements, specifically lacking coursework in career development as stipulated by law. As a result of this oversight, an official letter was issued to the applicant, and the individual was invited to a meeting with the board chair, vice chair, secretary, and the acting administrator, but the applicant declined to attend. It was acknowledged that the issuance of the license had been in error due to this oversight. V. Pereda confirmed that the approval had been made in error and moved to negate both the MFT intern license LMFT I-002 and the application to sit for the MFT exam, as the applicant was deemed ineligible. Dr. Balajadia invited further discussion, emphasizing the importance of the matter and the need for it to be clearly recorded.</p> <p>Further clarification was provided by N. Cepeda regarding the legal requirements for obtaining licensure and eligibility to sit for the MFT exam. She emphasized that coursework requirements are clearly mandated by law and cannot be altered or substituted. Despite updates and repeals in certain subsections of the law, the core coursework requirements remain unchanged and are essential for both intern licensure and examination eligibility. These requirements differ based on specialization; for instance, LPC, LMHC, and LMFT each have distinct coursework and supervised hour requirements, with LMHC and LMFT demanding specific hours in their respective specialty areas.</p> <p>She underscored that individuals pursuing licensure must carefully review current statutes and regulations—available on the board’s website—to avoid misunderstandings, particularly in light of recent legislative updates, including those passed into law in January. It was reiterated that the board enforces national standards to ensure community protection and maintain the integrity of the profession.</p> <p>N. Cepeda confirmed that while it is permissible to directly pursue a specialty license without first obtaining a general LPC license, individuals must still meet all corresponding coursework and degree requirements. Furthermore, it was explained that anyone receiving compensation for their services in the field must be licensed as an intern and supervised according to regulation. Receiving payment without an appropriate license constitutes a violation, and the board encouraged reporting such infractions to uphold public safety and professional accountability.</p> <p>In closing, the board officially confirmed the retraction of the internship license issued to the individual in question and revoked their eligibility to sit for the MFT exam due to noncompliance with the legally mandated educational requirements.</p> <p><i>Motion to Negate License for LMFT I-001: V. Pereda; 2nd: N. Cepeda.</i></p>			
VI	GBAHE Complaints	A. GBAHE-CO-22-03 MFT Received 02/21/22 Need legal counsel to move forward.	Dr. Balajadia	1220 Ongoing, Pending Legal Counsel
		B. GBAHE-CO-23-02 Veterinarian Received 12/28/23 Need off-island consultant and legal counsel.	GBAHE	
		C. GBAHE-CO-23-03 Veterinarian Received 12/28/23 Need off-island consultant and legal counsel.	GBAHE	
		D. GBAHE-CO-24-03 SLP Received 08/06/24 More information is required for N. Cepeda to close the case.	GBAHE	

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	E. GBAHE-CO-25-01 LPC Received 03/17/25 Need legal counsel's advice before coming to the board to finalize.	Dr. Balajadia		Ongoing, Pending Legal Counsel Advice
	F. GBAHE-CO-25-02 CP Received 03/26/25 Under investigation.	Dr. Harper		Ongoing Under Active Investigation
	G. GBAHE-CO-25-03 Acupuncture Received 03/28/25 Dr. Chong raised concerns regarding the academic credentials of Dr. Ishii-Adajar, specifically questioning the legitimacy and structure of the degrees listed in his application. After reviewing his transcripts, it was noted that his coursework appeared to reflect only a master's-level program and did not clearly indicate completion of a doctoral curriculum. According to the speaker, the California-based program from which Dr. Ishii-Adajar graduated typically includes 260 units and over 3,000 hours of instruction for a master's degree in acupuncture or Oriental medicine. However, Dr. Ishii-Adajar's record showed only 198 to 250 units and approximately 3,579 hours, prompting further skepticism about how both a master's and a doctoral degree could have been completed in approximately three and a half years. Drawing on personal experience, Dr. Chong noted that completing similar degrees traditionally requires approximately eight years of study. As a result, Dr. Chong recommended a formal investigation into the validity of Dr. Ishii-Adajar's doctoral degree. In response, Dr. Balajadia noted that the licensee was present in the meeting via Zoom, and she acknowledged that a letter had already been written explaining Dr. Ishii-Adajar's credentials. However, further clarification was requested by Dr. Chong, and the board was asked to consider any comments the licensee might offer during the meeting. Dr. Ishii-Adajar responded to the concerns raised by clarifying that he had completed a dual-degree program which awarded both a master's and a doctoral degree in acupuncture. He explained that this relatively recent academic structure is now offered at accredited institutions across the United States, including in California, and is reflected on his transcript, which lists both degrees. Dr. Ishii-Adajar acknowledged that historically, such programs may have been limited to master's-level qualifications, but recent developments in the field have enabled schools to add supplemental coursework, thereby meeting the criteria for a doctoral designation. He noted that while the doctoral degree he earned may involve only additional coursework beyond the master's level—unlike older, separate multi-year doctoral programs—such pathways are now recognized within the field. Dr. Ishii-Adajar expressed understanding for concerns from practitioners who pursued the more extensive academic routes in previous years, acknowledging that some may view the newer structure as less rigorous. He emphasized that he pursued the degree as offered, without knowledge of the historical evolution of such programs, and used the "doctor" title because it was officially conferred upon him. He concluded by stating his willingness to comply with the board's decision regarding the use of the doctoral title in Guam, should it be determined that his credentials do not meet the jurisdiction's licensing or training standards. In the continued discussion regarding Dr. Ishii-Adajar's academic credentials, the board sought	Dr. Balajadia		Ongoing

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	<p>clarification on whether the dual-degree program he completed awarded an official doctorate diploma. He confirmed that he received two separate diplomas—one for the master's and one for the doctorate—which had been submitted to HPLO for verification.</p> <p>Board members then debated the standards and definitions applicable to doctoral degrees, with Dr. Harper emphasizing that unless the law clearly defines the number of units or the duration required for a Ph.D. or professional doctorate, such determinations must rely on accreditation and institutional legitimacy. An analogy was made to dual-degree programs in veterinary schools, where students may obtain a DVM and a Ph.D. in a condensed time frame without disqualifying the academic legitimacy of either degree.</p> <p>Dr. Ishii-Adajar reiterated that while he could not specify the exact number of unit hours assigned solely to the doctoral component of his program, the dual-degree structure largely overlapped with the master's coursework, supplemented by a few additional classes that met the criteria for awarding the doctoral title. He acknowledged the distinction between a Ph.D. and a professional doctorate, emphasizing that the title "doctor" was conferred by an accredited institution offering a dual-degree program.</p> <p>Skepticism remained from Dr. Chong who questioned the academic rigor, pointing out that in California, doctoral degrees typically require four years—two years of coursework and two years of research. However, Dr. Harper responded by stressing that unless the board's regulations explicitly outline required durations or coursework amounts for such degrees, the legitimacy of a degree must be assessed through its accreditation status rather than traditional academic expectations.</p> <p>The consensus began to form around the principle that if the issuing institution is properly accredited and the program meets recognized educational standards, then the degrees conferred—including the doctorate—should be considered valid. The discussion concluded with a call for consistency and clarity in the board's approach to recognizing evolving educational models, especially those that have gained broader acceptance across regulated professional fields.</p> <p>Dr. Miller asked whether the degree was a traditional Ph.D. or a different type of doctoral credential, to which Dr. Ishii-Adajar clarified that his diploma is for a Doctorate of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Dr. Balajadia confirmed that the institution, Five Branches University, is accredited by the U.S. Department of Education and that it conferred both a Master of Traditional Chinese Medicine and a Doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine in April 2023.</p> <p>Discussion followed regarding the precise language used on the diploma, with particular concern that the term "Doctor" does not equate to a "Ph.D.," which is explicitly referenced in the board's rules and regulations. Dr. Chong emphasized that while some institutions now offer dual-degree programs combining a master's and doctorate, the coursework submitted by Dr. Ishii-Adajar appeared to reflect a master's-level curriculum. The concern centered on whether such a program meets the advanced academic rigor traditionally associated with doctoral degrees, especially within the standards set by California and mirrored in Guam's licensing expectations.</p> <p>Other board members acknowledged the evolving nature of professional titles and degree</p>			

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	<p>structures, noting that this may be a matter of semantics. They pointed out that terms like Doctor of Acupuncture, Doctor of Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine, and Doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine may represent different program structures, even though they all carry the "doctor" title. This variability raised further questions about whether these different degrees allow for uniform practice under Guam's licensing laws.</p> <p>Ultimately, the board recognized a need for greater clarity on the equivalency and legitimacy of the degree held by Dr. Ishii-Adajar in relation to the statutory requirement for a Ph.D. or its defined equivalent, as well as how such degrees are recognized for licensure in Guam. The matter remained unresolved pending further review of academic standards, legal definitions, and practice scope for the various doctoral-level acupuncture degrees.</p> <p>N. Cepeda recommended to table the matter and Dr. Balajadia proposed that Dr. Ishii-Adajar submit a written summary of the explanation he provided during the meeting for formal review, allowing Dr. Chong and other board members to reassess the documentation on file.</p> <p>Dr. Miller emphasized the need for the board to establish a clear threshold for academic and unit-based requirements that justify the use of the doctoral title, particularly as institutional practices evolve. It was suggested that while current law allows for the use of the title from accredited institutions, the board should consider future revisions to rules and regulations to define more rigorously when the title "doctor" is appropriate, ensuring both public trust and professional integrity. Dr. Balajadia agreed, noting the point was well taken.</p>			
	<p>H. GBAHE-CO-25-04 CP Received 03/31/25</p> <p>R. Taitingfong informed that efforts to schedule a meeting with the individual named in the complaint have been unsuccessful due to scheduling conflicts. Multiple proposed meeting dates were offered, but the individual was unable to accommodate them. As a result, the matter remains unresolved and the investigation is still in progress.</p>	R. Taitingfong		Ongoing
	<p>I. GBAHE-CO-25-05 LMHC, LPC Received 03/31/25</p> <p>Still under investigation.</p>	Dr. Harper		Ongoing
	<p>J. GBAHE-CO-25-06 LPC Received 04/02/25</p> <p>Still under investigation.</p>	Dr. Balajadia		Ongoing
	<p>K. GBAHE-CO-25-07 PA Received 04/14/25</p> <p>The board addressed a matter involving a physician assistant who had issued referrals for hearing evaluations, one of which was made to an individual not licensed as an audiologist in Guam. The referral, intended for diagnostic and management services related to hearing loss, included two options—one being a licensed professional practicing on island, and the other being an unlicensed individual whose listed address corresponded to a private residence, not a recognized medical facility. Upon learning of the issue, the board chair contacted the SDA clinic to clarify that the individual in question was not a licensed audiologist and should not be listed as such in</p>	Dr. Balajadia		Case Closed as Resolved

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	any official referral documentation. It was confirmed that the clinic subsequently removed the unlicensed individual from its referral options. A licensed audiologist later verified that this corrective action had been taken, and the matter was considered resolved. <i>Motion to Close Case as Resolved: N. Cepeda; 2nd: Dr. Kim.</i>			
	L. GBAHE-CO-25-08 Veterinarian Received 04/28/25 New complaint assigned to Dr. Harper	Dr. Harper		Assigned Complaint
	M. GBAHE-CO-25-09 LPC Received 04/29/25 Dr. Balajadia met with the complainant, she wrote a follow-up letter, and the investigation is still ongoing.	Dr. Balajadia		Ongoing
VII	NEW Business			
	A. Initial/New Applications		1248	
	i. Davis, Samantha (Veterinarian) (Harper) <i>Motion to Approve: Dr. Harper; 2nd: Dr. Miller.</i>	GBAHE		Unanimously Approved
	ii. Finely-Vaquera, Gabrielle (Veterinarian) (Harper) <i>Motion to Approve: Dr. Harper; 2nd: Dr. Miller.</i>			Unanimously Approved
	iii. Gray, Cara (SLP) (Triolo) <i>Motion to Approve: Dr. Harper; 2nd: Dr. Miller.</i>			Unanimously Approved
	iv. Barnes, Chandler (SLP) (Triolo) <i>Motion to Approve: Dr. Harper; 2nd: Dr. Miller.</i>			Unanimously Approved
	v. Berruete, Esmeralda (SLP) (Triolo) <i>Motion to Approve: Dr. Harper; 2nd: Dr. Miller.</i>			Unanimously Approved
	vi. Gadinis, Isabella (SLP-A) (Triolo) <i>Motion to Approve: Dr. Harper; 2nd: Dr. Miller.</i>			Unanimously Approved
	vii. Magistre-Legend, Rachel (PA) (CPA) (Tajalle) <i>Motion to Approve: Dr. Harper; 2nd: Dr. Miller.</i>			Unanimously Approved
	viii. Morrison, Nikki (PA) (CPA) (Tajalle) <i>Motion to Approve: Dr. Harper; 2nd: Dr. Miller.</i>			Unanimously Approved
	ix. Waller, Dion (RRT) (Cruz) <i>Motion to Approve: Dr. Harper; 2nd: Dr. Miller.</i>			Unanimously Approved
	B. Renewal Applications			
	i. Kallingal, George – CP (Balajadia) <i>Motion to Approve: Dr. Balajadia; 2nd: Dr. Harper.</i>	GBAHE		Unanimously Approved
VII	Next Board Meeting	GBAHE	1251	Set Date
IX	Adjournment	GBAHE	1252	Adjourned

Minutes Drafted by: FLAME TREE Freedom Center, Inc.

Date Submitted:

Submitted by the GBAHE Secretary:

Date:

Approved by the GBAHE with or without changes: Manie Chalopadha

Date: 08/01/2025

Certified by or Attested by the Chairperson: _____

Date: _____