



Positions Statements Related to Physical Therapy Issued by the Physical Therapy Examining Board

CAN A PHYSICAL THERAPIST IN WISCONSIN EVALUATE AND TREAT A PATIENT WITHOUT A REFERRAL?

With regard to physical therapy referrals, Wisconsin is considered a Direct Access state. A written referral is not required for the following physical therapy services related to the work, home, leisure, recreational, and educational environments: conditioning, injury prevention, application of biomechanics, and treatment of musculoskeletal injuries, with the exception of acute fractures or soft tissue avulsions ([Ch. PT 6](#)). Per [Wis. Stat. s. 448.56](#), a written referral is also not required if a physical therapist provides services in schools to children with disabilities, as part of a home health care agency, to a patient in a nursing home, or to an individual for a previously diagnosed medical condition after informing the individual's health care practitioner who made the diagnosis.

MAY A PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT LICENSED IN WISCONSIN PERFORM JOINT MOBILIZATION AND MUSCLE ENERGY TECHNIQUES UNDER THE DIRECT SUPERVISION OF A LICENSED PHYSICAL THERAPIST?

Under [Wis. Admin. Code s. PT 5.01\(2\)\(g\)](#), a physical therapist may delegate appropriate portions of the treatment plan and program to the physical therapist assistant consistent with the physical therapist assistant's education, training, and experience. The physical therapist is responsible for managing all aspects of the physical therapy care of each patient under his or her care ([Wis. Stat. s 448.56\(4\)](#)).

HOW MANY PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS MAY PRACTICE UNDER THE GENERAL SUPERVISION OF A PHYSICAL THERAPIST IN WISCONSIN?

No physical therapist may at any time supervise more than two (2) physical therapist assistants (full-time equivalents) practicing under general supervision, see [Ch. PT 5.01\(2\)\(j\)](#). In addition, the total number of physical therapist assistants, unlicensed personnel, and those who have temporary licenses may not exceed a combined total of four (4) under supervision by a licensed physical therapist (See [Ch. PT 5.02\(2\)\(k\)](#)).

CAN A PHYSICAL THERAPIST PRACTICING IN A SCHOOL IN THE STATE OF WISCONSIN PROVIDE SERVICES AT A UNIVERSAL LEVEL (I.E., OFFER INTERVENTION STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS NOT IDENTIFIED AS STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR PROVIDING SERVICES RELATED TO PREVENTION, FITNESS AND WELLNESS)?

[Wis. Stat. s 448.50\(4\)\(a\)3.](#), in part, defines physical therapy as “reducing risk of injury, impairment, functional limitation, or disability, including by promoting or maintaining fitness, health, or quality of life in all age populations.” Written referral for physical therapy services for children with disabilities in schools is not required as stated in [Wis. Stat. s 448.56\(1\)](#).

WHO CAN SUPERVISE A PT /PTA WITH A TEMPORARY LICENSE?

[PT 3.01\(3\)](#) and [\(4\)](#) state that PTs or PTAs with a temporary license must be supervised by “a person validly holding a regular license as a physical therapist.”

WHAT ARE THE SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS OF A PT /PTA WITH A TEMPORARY LICENSE?

[PT 3.01\(3\)](#) and [\(4\)](#) state that PTs and PTAs with a temporary license must receive direct, immediate and on premises supervision by “a person validly holding a regular license as a physical therapist.” Direct supervision does not mean “line of sight,” but does require that the supervisor be on the premises when services are provided. The supervisor must be available for immediate intervention if intervention becomes necessary.

CAN A PTA WITH A TEMPORARY LICENSE WORK UNDER GENERAL SUPERVISION?

[PT 3.01\(3\)](#) and [\(4\)](#) state that PTs and PTAs with a temporary license must receive direct, immediate and on premises supervision by “a person validly holding a regular license as a physical therapist.” Direct supervision does not mean “line of sight,” but does require that the supervisor be on the premises when services are provided. The supervisor must be available for immediate intervention if intervention becomes necessary.