



HB 2446 / SB 6425

Modernizing the Use of Assistive Personnel in Physical Therapy Practice and Increasing Access to Healthcare

- Like many other healthcare professions, the current demand for physical therapy continues to exceed supply in many settings. The shortage is especially pronounced in rural areas. We expect this shortage to increase as conservative care instead of surgery or pain medication becomes more common for patients, among other factors.
- Physical therapist assistants (PTAs) are licensed, skilled professionals whose education and experience allows them to provide physical therapy under indirect supervision of a physical therapist.
 - Other skilled providers who sometimes serve on a physical therapy team include licensed athletic trainers (ATCs) and licensed massage therapists (LMTs).
 - Additionally, unlicensed but formally educated exercise physiologists and unlicensed aides sometimes serve on the team as well.
 - All of these team members are supervised by the physical therapist.
- Current law allows a physical therapist to supervise two assistive personnel at any one time. This requirement in the law was not updated after PTAs and ATCs became licensed in 2008 and 2007 respectively.
- In the current law, physical therapists must use their clinical judgement to choose whether to include assistive personnel on their team based on the needs of an individual patient. The proposed revisions to the law would not change this.
- Proposed revisions to the law would also allow the physical therapist to reevaluate patients every 30 days or every fifth visit, whichever is later.
 - Current law requires PTs to reevaluate patients every fifth visit regardless of the time that passes between visits. Adding the additional option of “every 30 days” provides greater flexibility for diverse practice settings and patient plans of care.
- Several patient protections were included in this bill:
 - a provision allowing the use of only one aide if supervising three assistive personnel,
 - the current limit of two assistive personnel will continue to apply in nursing home and public schools to insure protection for the more vulnerable patients in those settings,
 - other assistive personnel must function under direct supervision with the supervising physical therapist onsite and available for consultation and
 - physical therapy aides may directly assist in the delivery of care, but may not modify or alter planned therapeutic interventions.