

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 2446

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning physical therapist supervision of assistive personnel.

Sponsors: Representatives Graves, Jinkins, Cody, Macri, Robinson, Riccelli and Kloba.

House Committee on Health Care & Wellness
Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care

Background:

Physical therapy is based on movement science and includes a variety of functions and services such as examining, evaluating, and testing individuals with health and movement-related conditions to determine a diagnosis, prognosis, plan of therapeutic intervention, and to assess and document the ongoing effects of intervention; alleviating impairments and functional limitations in movement; training for, and the evaluation of, the function of a patient wearing an orthosis or prosthesis; performing certain wound care services; reducing the risk of injury, impairment, functional limitation, and disability related to movement; and engaging in administration, consultation, education, and research.

Generally only licensed physical therapists and physical therapist assistants may practice physical therapy. However, assistive personnel may provide patient care if adequately supervised. A physical therapist is professionally and legally responsible for care given by assistive personnel under his or her supervision.

Assistive Personnel.

Physical therapists may utilize three types of assistive personnel in patient care, which require varying levels of supervision:

- A licensed physical therapist assistant performs physical therapy procedures and related tasks that have been selected and delegated by the supervising physical therapist.
- A physical therapy aide is a person who is involved in direct physical therapy patient care, does not meet the definition of a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant, and receives on-the-job training.
- Other assistive personnel are those who are trained or educated health care professionals other than physical therapists and physical therapist assistants that

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perform designated tasks related to physical therapy such as licensed massage therapists, athletic trainers, and exercise physiologists, and may be identified by the title of their training or education.

Supervision Requirements.

Physical therapy aides may only provide patient care under direct supervision, which requires that the supervisor is continually on-site and present, is immediately available to assist the person being supervised, and maintains continued involvement in each treatment session. If assistive personnel are providing patient care, the supervising physical therapist must perform a patient reevaluation every fifth visit, or if treatment is performed more than five times per week, at least once a week.

A physical therapist may supervise a total of two assistive personnel at any one time, in addition to two individuals who are pursuing a degree or course of study as a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant.

Summary:

Assistive Personnel.

The definition of a physical therapy aide is modified to include only an unlicensed person who receives on-the-job training and assists a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant in providing physical therapy care. Instead of being involved in direct patient care, physical therapy aides are allowed to assist in the implementation of therapeutic intervention, but may not modify the therapy plan or perform any task or procedure that only a physical therapist is allowed to perform.

The definition of other assistive personnel is modified to indicate that other assistive personnel may only perform tasks that are related to physical therapy that are within the individual's license, scope of practice, or formal education. If not otherwise prohibited by law and at the direction of the supervising physical therapist, other assistive personnel may be identified by the title specific to their license, such as a licensed massage therapist, in addition to their training or education.

Supervision Requirements.

When patient care is provided by a physical therapist assistant or other assistive personnel, a physical therapist must perform a patient reevaluation the later of every fifth visit or ever 30 days if the physical therapist has not treated the patient in those five visits or 30 days. When other assistive personnel are treating a patient under a physical therapy plan of care, they must function under direct supervision.

The maximum number of assistive personnel a physical therapist may supervise is increased to three, unless the physical therapist is working in a nursing home or public school, in which case the physical therapist may only supervise two assistive personnel. If a physical therapist is supervising three assistive personnel at any one time, only one of the assistive personnel may be a physical therapy aide.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	95	3
Senate	49	0

Effective: June 7, 2018