

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2446

As of February 23, 2018

Title: An act relating to physical therapist supervision of assistive personnel.

Brief Description: Concerning physical therapist supervision of assistive personnel.

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

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/18, 95-3.

Committee Activity: Health & Long Term Care: 2/22/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the number of assistive personnel a physical therapist may supervise at any one time to three.
- Changes the frequency at which a supervising physical therapist is required to perform a patient evaluation.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG TERM CARE

Staff: Greg Attanasio (786-7410)

Background: Generally, only licensed physical therapists and physical therapist assistants can practice physical therapy. Physical therapist assistants can only perform procedures 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. Physical therapy aides can only provide patient care under direct supervision, which requires that the supervisor is continually on-site and present, immediately available to assist the person being supervised, and maintain continued involvement in each treatment session.

Other assistive personnel are those who are trained or educated health care professionals other than physical therapists and physical therapist assistants that 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.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Physical therapists are professionally and legally responsible for care given by assistive personnel under their supervision. A physical therapist can 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. 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.

Summary of Bill: A physical therapy aide is an unlicensed person who receives on-the-job training and assists a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant in providing physical therapy care and does not meet the definition of a physical therapist, physical therapist assistant, or other assistive personnel. Physical therapy aides are allowed to assist in the implementation of therapeutic intervention but cannot modify the therapy plan or perform any task or procedure that only a physical therapist is allowed to perform.

Other assistive personnel may perform designated tasks related to physical therapy that are within their license, scope of practice, or formal education.

When patient care is provided by a physical therapist assistant or other assistive personnel, a physical therapist must perform a patient reevaluation the latter of every fifth visit or every 30 days if the physical therapist has not treated the patient in those five visits or 30 days. Physical therapists must directly supervise other assistive personnel who are treating a patient under a physical therapy plan of care.

Physical therapists are permitted to supervise up to three assistive personnel, unless the physical therapist is working in a nursing home or public school, then 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The changes in the statute will allow better utilization of assistive personnel, while protecting vulnerable populations by continuing to limit the number of assistive personnel a physical therapist may supervise to two in schools and nursing homes. The bill also updates the restrictive reevaluation process, which has been in place for a long time.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Paul Graves, Prime Sponsor; Ben Boyle, Physical Therapy Association of Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.