

POSITION STATEMENT

Physical Therapist Assistant Supervision for the MS State Board of Physical Therapy

The MS State Board of Physical Therapy is regularly and routinely asked to clarify supervisory standards of the physical therapist assistant by the physical therapist. This position statement interprets the requirements for supervision of the physical therapist assistant.

Scenario: Monday physical therapist visited nursing facility A where four (4) physical therapist assistants needed to be supervised on three new residents that the physical therapist had evaluated and placed on caseload. On Tuesday physical therapist evaluated four new home health patients and physical therapist was asked to supervise another physical therapist assistant to treat those patients. On Wednesday physical therapist goes to nursing facility B and is asked to supervise two more physical therapist assistants.

Query: Can the physical therapist supervise all of the physical therapist assistants in the above scenario?

Board Interpretation: This question, in various forms, has been posed to the Board. It is the opinion of the Board that under the MS Physical Therapy Law the supervising physical therapist of record may only supervise a total of four (4) physical therapist assistants. Physical therapist assistants may be at one or more facilities but the physical therapist of record may still only supervise a total of four physical therapist assistants. It is the responsibility of the physical therapist and the physical therapist assistant to document in the patient chart who the supervising physical therapist is for each date of service that care is rendered to the patient.

Reviewing the scenario above the physical therapist would be supervising a total of eight physical therapist assistants in three different settings. This is prohibited by the MS Physical Therapy Law.

Query: What if one of the supervised physical therapist assistants becomes unavailable and a replacement physical therapist assistant takes over the case load, can the physical therapist be the supervising physical therapist for the replacement physical therapist assistant?

Board Interpretation: Yes. Under these circumstances the replacement physical therapist assistant must document in the patient chart who the supervising physical therapist is for each date of service that care is rendered to the patient. However, it is the responsibility of the physical therapist to ensure that he or she supervises no more than a total of four (4) physical therapist assistants and/or physical therapy students.

Good physical therapy requires good communication.

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