



Information UPDATE

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent/P.O. Box 7841/ Madison, WI 53707-7841

BULLETIN NO. 04.03

May 2004

TO: District Administrators, CESA Administrators, CCDEB Administrators,
Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Other Interested Parties

FROM: Carolyn Stanford Taylor, Assistant State Superintendent
Division for Learning Support: Equity and Advocacy

SUBJECT: Physical Therapy Practice Act and Licensing Rules.

Changes in the Physical Therapy Practice Act and Licensing Rules

Wisconsin Statutes and Administrative Code that govern the practice of physical therapy and implement state licensure for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants changed, effective April 1, 2004. All physical therapists and physical therapist assistants who practice in Wisconsin, including those who work in schools, must practice in accordance with the statutes and must be licensed in accordance with these rules.

The new Physical Therapy Practice Act provides a contemporary definition of physical therapy. The Act requires that physical therapist assistants be licensed by the Department of Safety and Professional Services. In addition to the Department of Public Instruction license, school-based physical therapist assistants must obtain a license from the Department of Safety and Professional Services. Other changes of significance to school physical therapy include continued competency requirements for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants license renewal.

Definition of Physical Therapy

Physical therapy means:

- Examining, evaluating, or testing individuals with mechanical, physiological, or developmental impairments, functional limitations related to physical movement and mobility, disabilities, or other movement-related health conditions, in order to determine a diagnosis, prognosis, or plan of therapeutic intervention or to assess the ongoing effects of intervention.
- Alleviating impairments or functional limitations by instructing patients or designing, implementing, or modifying therapeutic interventions.
- Reducing the risk of injury, impairment, functional limitation, or disability, including by promoting or maintaining fitness, health, or quality of life in all age populations.
- Engaging in administration, consultation, or research that is related to any of the above activities.

Physical Therapist Assistant Licensure

Effective April 1, 2004, all physical therapist assistants must be licensed by the Department of Safety and Professional Services. Licensing rules are in Chapter PT 1 at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/pt/pt.html>. Physical therapist assistant licensure applicants must pass the National Physical Therapist Assistant Examination and an open book examination on Wisconsin Statutes and Administrative Code. Applicants may be required to complete an oral examination.

Grandfather provisions are included in the law if the physical therapist assistant meets certain requirements, including: the physical therapist assistant has worked at least two years between 1999 and 2004, the physical therapist assistant submits two letters of recommendation from licensed physical therapists, and the physical therapist assistant passes an examination on the Physical Therapy Practice Act.

Department of Public Instruction licensure requires graduation from a physical therapist assistant associate degree program accredited by the American Physical Therapy Association. In addition, school-based physical therapist assistants must have a license from the Department of Safety and Professional Services. The Department of Public Instruction licensure requirements are in administrative rules, Chapter PI 3.375 at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/tel/pi3sub7.html#pi3375> and Chapter 34.34(17), effective July 1, 2004, at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/tel/pi34.html#additionallicenses3434>.

The school-based physical therapist assistant works under the supervision of the school-based physical therapist. The supervision requirements are in the PI 11.24 administrative rules at http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/een/pi11_0701.html.

The Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association provided the following guidance regarding utilization of physical therapist assistants who are not currently licensed by the Department of Safety and Professional Services. The physical therapist assistant will now be considered “unlicensed personnel.” Supervision requirements of unlicensed personnel are found at Chapter PT 5 of the administrative rules (PT 5.02) at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/pt/pt.html>.

Physical therapist assistants may contact the Department of Safety and Professional Services at (608) 265-2112 or webmaster at <http://drl.wi.gov/section.asp?linkid=3&locid=0>.

Continuing Education Requirements

A physical therapist or physical therapist assistant that is granted a license from the Department of Safety and Professional Services must renew that license every two years. Department of Public Instruction licenses must be renewed every five years. School-based physical therapists and physical therapist assistants must have current licenses from both the Department of Safety and Professional Services and the Department of Public Instruction to practice in the public schools. Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants should be aware that the new Physical Therapist Practice Act requires continued competency for licensure renewal. The Chapter PT 9 administrative rules which implement this requirement are found at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/pt/pt.html>

School physical therapists, physical therapist assistants and their supervisors may find more information related to physical therapist assistants at <http://drl.wi.gov/profession.asp?profid=38&locid=0> and related to physical therapists at <http://drl.wi.gov/profession.asp?profid=37&locid=0>.

Or you may contact the Physical Therapists Affiliated Credentialing Board.

Physical Therapists Affiliated Credentialing Board
1400 E Washington Avenue
P.O. Box 89355
Madison, WI 53798
608-267-9377

Questions regarding this information update may be addressed to Sandra Corbett at 608-267-9181.

This information update can also be accessed through the Internet:
<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/een/bulindex.html>