



Alabama Physical Therapy Survey

Scope of Practice

How is the practice of Physical Therapy defined in state?

The treatment of a human being by the use of exercise, massage, heat, cold, water, radiant energy, electricity, or sound for the purpose of correcting or alleviating any physical or mental condition or preventing the development of any physical or mental disability, or the performance of neuromuscular-skeletal tests and measurements to determine the existence and extent of body malfunction; provided, that physical therapy shall be practiced only upon the referral of a physician licensed to practice medicine or surgery, a dentist licensed to practice dentistry, a licensed chiropractor, a licensed assistant to a physician acting pursuant to a valid supervisory agreement, or a licensed certified registered nurse practitioner in a collaborative practice agreement with a licensed physician.

Services specifically excluded from the scope of practice

Physical therapy does not include radiology or electrosurgery

Other services addressed by the board or regulations

N/A

Telehealth

The Alabama Board of Physical Therapy does not address telehealth.

Referral Requirement

Is a referral required to provide PT services?

Yes. physical therapy shall be practiced only upon the referral of a physician licensed to practice medicine or surgery, a dentist licensed to practice dentistry, a licensed chiropractor, a licensed assistant to a physician acting pursuant to a valid supervisory agreement, or a licensed certified registered nurse practitioner in a collaborative practice agreement with a licensed physician

Exceptions to the referral requirement?

Without prescription or referral, a licensed physical therapist may perform an initial evaluation or consultation of a screening nature to determine the need for physical therapy and may perform the physical therapy and other services. Implementation of physical therapy shall otherwise be based on the referral of a person licensed to practice medicine, surgery, dentistry, chiropractic, licensed assistant to a physician acting pursuant to a valid supervising agreement, or a licensed certified registered nurse practitioner in a valid collaborative practice agreement with a licensed physician.

The physical therapy and other services which may be performed without prescription or referral, include and are limited to the following:

- To a child with a diagnosed developmental disability pursuant to the plan of care for the child.
- To a patient of a home health care agency pursuant to the plan of care for the patient.
- To a patient in a nursing home pursuant to the plan of care for the patient.
- Related to conditioning or to providing education or activities in a wellness setting for the purpose of injury prevention, reduction of stress, or promotion of fitness.
- To an individual for a previously diagnosed condition or conditions for which physical therapy services are appropriate after informing the health care provider rendering the diagnosis. The diagnosis shall have been made within the immediately preceding 90 days. The physical therapist shall provide the health care provider who rendered the diagnosis with a plan of care for physical therapy services within the first 15 days of physical therapy intervention.

Responsibilities of the Physical Therapist

The roles and responsibilities of a person licensed by this Board to practice physical therapy in the State of Alabama generally are:

1. To interpret a practitioner's referral.
2. To perform and document the initial evaluation, as well as the physical therapy plan of care which may include:
 - Diagnosis rendered by the referring or previously diagnosing health care provider
 - Diagnosis for physical therapy
 - Presenting problems
 - Past medical history including, but not limited to, conditions for which patient is taking medication and conditions which are currently being treated by a physician
 - List of medications being taken by the patient
 - Objective findings of the physical therapy evaluation
 - Assessment as to what the current problem(s) is/are that require physical therapy intervention
 - Goals, both short-term and long-term if appropriate
 - Physical therapy plan of treatment including frequency and duration

3. A Physical Therapist will not be disciplined for accepting a referral from a licensed assistant to a physician acting pursuant to a valid supervisory agreement or a licensed certified registered nurse practitioner in a valid collaborative practice agreement with a licensed physician as long as the physical therapist has a reasonable good faith belief that the assistant to a physician is acting pursuant to a valid supervisory agreement or the nurse practitioner is in a valid collaborative practice agreement with a licensed physician.

4. To identify and document precautions, special problems, contraindications, anticipated progress, and plans for reevaluation.

5. To implement and supervise that program.

6. To select and delegate the appropriate portions of the treatment plan and program.

7. To delegate only those patient care duties to supportive personnel who are qualified under the provisions of these rules to perform such duties.

8. To reevaluate the patient and adjust the treatment plan, perform the final evaluation of the patient and discharge planning.

9. To designate or establish channels of written and oral communication.

10. To maintain adequate records of the case and report to appropriate sources.

11. To direct no more than four licensed physical therapist assistants at one time.

12. To refuse to carry out treatment procedures that they believe to be not in the best interest of the patient.

13. To provide supervision of physical therapist and/or physical therapist assistant students who are on clinical experiences approved by their school as part of their Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) approved educational program.

Physical Therapy Assistants

Which services are PTAs allowed to practice?

The roles and responsibilities of a person licensed to practice as a physical therapist assistant in the State of Alabama generally are:

- To practice only under the direction of a physical therapist licensed to practice in the State of Alabama.
- To assist with but not perform patient disability evaluations.

- To perform treatment procedures as delegated by the physical therapist but not to initiate or alter a treatment plan.
- To supervise other supportive personnel as charged by the physical therapist.
- To notify the physical therapist of changes in patient's status, including all untoward patient responses.
- To discontinue immediately any treatment procedures which in their judgment appear to be harmful to the patient.
- To refuse to carry out treatment procedures that they believe to be not in the best interest of the patient.
- To provide supervision of physical therapist assistant students who are on clinical experiences approved by their school as part of their CAPTE approved educational program.

Are there specific services that PTAs are prohibited from practicing?

See above for role and responsibilities of the physical therapist.

What type of supervision is required?

Direction means the action of the physical therapist in delegating duties to a physical therapist assistant, maintaining close communication with the physical therapist assistant, and overseeing the physical therapist assistant's activities on a frequent regularly scheduled basis.

Does the supervising physical therapist need to co-sign documentation created by the PTA?

N/A

Physical Therapy Aides

What can an aide do?

The roles and responsibilities of physical therapy aides in physical therapy care are to perform patient related support duties that do not require decision making skills of a licensee.

What is an aide expressly prohibited from doing?

N/A

What type of supervision is required?

Supervision means the direct onsite overseeing of the performance of assigned or delegated duties or functions.

Continuing Education

How many CE hours are required for therapists?

Each physical therapist and physical therapist assistant licensed to practice by this Board shall complete for each compliance period, a minimum of ten (10) hours of continuing education activities.

How long is the continuing education period?

One year. October 1 through September 30 of the next year shall constitute a compliance period.

Due date for CE requirements

September 30th.

Are there any specific course requirements?

Beginning with the compliance period starting October 1, 2015, licensees complete at least two (2) hours of continuing education every fifth year on the topic of Alabama physical therapy jurisprudence, covering both the Practice Act and the Administrative Code. Both PTs and PTAs will be required to fulfill this requirement when renewing their license in years ending in zero (0) or five (5) (i.e., 2020, 2025, 2030, etc.). Individuals licensed without examination shall also complete this expectation within 30 days of initial licensure.

Can extra CE credits be carried over to the next period?

Continuing education hours earned by a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant in excess of ten (10) hours during a compliance period, may be carried forward into the next compliance period; but, no more than ten (10) hours may be carried forward.

How long to CE records need to be maintained?

Five years.

References

Ala. Code § 34-24-191

Ala. Code § 34-24-210.1

Ala. Admin. Code §700-X-3-.03

Ala. Admin. Code § 700-X-2-.08