



2019-2020

PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES



American Physical Therapy AssociationSM

More Movement, Better Health

Our nation is at a crossroads between health and the health care delivery system. Too many Americans are limited by chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Too many people with disabilities struggle to secure appropriate support services that allow them to live independently in the community. Too many lives have been shattered by opioid addiction.

Our health care system too often pays for treating illness rather than advancing wellness and prevention services necessary to achieve and support good health. The United States spends more per capita on health care than any other developed country, yet our citizens are limited by poor health.

This must change.

Physical therapists (PTs) and physical therapist assistants (PTAs) have much to contribute to the health of society. PTs and PTAs deliver quality services that empower children and adults to achieve good health and thrive. PTs also drive treatment strategies that ensure efficient and effective use of financial and personnel resources within the health care system.

The following represent APTA's public policy priorities and recommended solutions to meet these goals.

To learn more about these issues, or to contact APTA staff specializing in federal legislative and regulatory issues impacting physical therapy or the health care system, visit APTA's Policy Center: <http://policy.apta.org>.



APTA Public Policy Goals

APTA urges Congress and the Administration to:

- Enact policies that empower people to live healthy and independent lives.
- Eliminate barriers to health care services.
- Support efforts to increase efficiencies in the delivery of health services that reduce administrative burdens to providers and ensure transparency to patients.
- Prioritize research and clinical innovation to increase access to appropriate value-based health care services.

POPULATION HEALTH

APTA urges Congress and the Administration to enact policies that empower people to live healthy and independent lives.

To this end, APTA will advocate with federal policymakers and collaborate with stakeholders to:

- Guarantee access to essential health benefits for all Americans with no arbitrary limits placed on people with pre-existing conditions;
- Support programs that increase physical activity and exercise among individuals of all ages and/or support education on the importance of appropriate physical activity and exercise;
- Support funding for prevention and wellness services, including falls prevention initiatives, in public and commercial insurance programs;
- Support funding for public health initiatives that increase health literacy;
- Increase funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act state grant programs so that eligible children with special needs get the supports they need to learn and grow;
- Preserve and protect services provided via Medicaid;
- Advance efforts to create and sustain healthy communities and promote the use of active transportation; and
- Advance policies to increase knowledge of primary care services providers about nonpharmacological interventions for individuals of all ages who live with pain.

PATIENT CHOICE AND ACCESS

APTA urges Congress and the Administration to improve patient outcomes by eliminating barriers to health care services.

To this end, APTA will advocate with federal policymakers and collaborate with stakeholders to:

- Expand the definition of primary care services providers to include physical therapists;
- Expand opportunities in public programs for direct access to physical therapist services;
- Expand coverage and payment for rehabilitation services delivered via digital health and telehealth;
- Eliminate or reduce out-of-pocket costs for nonpharmacological services;
- Increase the health provider workforce in rural and medically underserved areas by adding physical therapists to federal student loan repayment programs;
- Secure regulations to implement the National Defense Authorization Act of 2017 policy that established physical therapist assistants as an authorized TRICARE provider;
- Advance policies to ameliorate the payment differential for physical therapist assistants to ensure access to essential services;
- Increase transparency to patients regarding costs of health care services and conflicts of interest in the delivery of health care services; and
- Advance policies to ensure that financial incentives for patients, providers, and payers align and incorporate the true costs of appropriate services necessary for patients to achieve their desired outcomes.

VALUE-BASED CARE AND PRACTICE

APTA urges Congress and the Administration to improve patient outcomes by supporting efforts to increase efficiencies in the delivery of health services that reduce administrative burdens to providers and ensure transparency to patients.

To this end, APTA will advocate with federal policymakers and collaborate with stakeholders to:

- Support demonstration projects to validate alternative payment models in public and commercial insurance that increase administrative efficiency, effective patient outcomes, and collaboration among health care providers including physical therapists;
- Advance policies that reduce administrative burden in Medicare, Medicare Advantage, and commercial insurance; and
- Enact legislation to allow physical therapists to opt out of Medicare and privately contract with Medicare beneficiaries.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

APTA urges Congress and the Administration to prioritize research and clinical innovation to increase access to appropriate value-based health care services.

To this end, APTA will advocate with federal policymakers and collaborate with stakeholders to:

- Increase funding for rehabilitation research across federal agencies including the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Defense, the Department of Education, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;
- Ensure parity for the physical therapy profession with physicians and hospitals regarding the use, certification, and interoperability of electronic health records; and
- Support use of the Physical Therapy Outcomes Registry in both public and commercial payment programs to drive the delivery of quality, effective, and efficient rehabilitation services.



About PTs and PTAs

Physical therapists are movement experts who optimize quality of life through prescribed exercise, hands-on care, and patient education. Physical therapists receive a clinical doctorate degree (DPT) before taking a national physical therapy licensure exam. Physical therapists are licensed in all US jurisdictions. Physical therapist assistants work under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist, must complete a 2-year associate's degree, and are licensed or certified in all US jurisdictions.

To learn more about how lives can be transformed by the care of physical therapist and physical therapist assistant teams, visit MoveForwardPT.com.

The American Physical Therapy Association represents more than 100,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Learn more about the types of conditions physical therapists can treat, and find a physical therapist in your area, by visiting **MoveForwardPT.com**.



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