

# Who we are

The Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA Private Practice) represents almost 4,000 physical therapists (PTs) and physical therapy assistants (PTAs) who are licensed and provide care in independent businesses. Their businesses are both large and small, some with single locations, some with many locations across multiple states and regions.

Physical therapists should be the point of entry for the treatment of movement disorders. PTs and PTAs care for patients across the health continuum from providing preventative and wellness programs to specializing in neuromusculoskeletal interventions.

## Legislative & Advocacy Priorities, 118<sup>th</sup> Congress

APTA Private Practice is committed to ensuring that every American has access to physical therapist services—this requires sustainable payment policies, removing arbitrary limits to care, and a stable workforce. We advocate for policies that build healthy communities through sustainable economic policy that empowers physical therapists in business to provide accessible, cost-effective, high-quality care to their neighbors. As small business owners who are physical therapists in private practice we support:

1. Ensuring patients have timely access to physical therapy by protecting the financial viability of physical therapists in small businesses who provide crucial community-based care.
2. Utilizing physical therapy first and early to improve outcomes while reducing healthcare spending and downstream economic costs.
3. Enabling reliable patient access to care by ensuring that the therapy workforce is robust enough to meet patient needs in every community.

Therefore, APTA Private Practice advocates for the following legislative and regulatory priorities:

### PAYMENT AND ACCESS

- Pursue legislation that promotes patient access to therapy, patient choice of providers and settings, quality of care, transparency, and eliminates administrative barriers such as provider enrollment and prior authorization delays to optimize Medicare and Medicare Advantage beneficiaries' access to physical therapists.
- Influence payment reform proposals that demonstrate patient benefit and total cost-of-care savings when physical therapy is the entry point to care. Protect patient access to community-based care by ensuring adequate and sustainable payment for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants in private practice across the healthcare continuum.
- Prevent interruptions in patient care by pursuing expansion of the locum tenens\* provision of Medicare to include physical therapists practicing in all communities; seeking standardized Medicare supervision requirements of assistive personnel across all physical therapy practice settings. \*also known as substitute billing privileges.
- Achieve legislation that allows physical therapists to privately contract with Medicare beneficiaries in order to improve access while lowering the federal government's cost of covering Medicare beneficiaries.
- Pursue policy changes that enable Medicare beneficiaries to access physical therapist care directly in support of patient choice and timely access to physical therapy.
- Pursue legislation to require physical therapist services to be a covered service under Medicaid and Medicaid PPO and Medicaid Managed Care Organization (MCO) programs.

## SMALL BUSINESS ISSUES

- Support sustainable payment for physical therapist services provided by a physical therapist in private practice.
- Advocate for standardized processes to promote administrative simplification.
- Pursue policies, including support for workforce development, which enable physical therapists to enter into private practice and sustain their small businesses while supporting the economic vitality of their community.
- Monitor, respond to, and participate in tax policy updates to support physical therapists in private practice.

## ACCESS TO COMMUNITY-BASED THERAPY SERVICES

- Empower patients to access medically necessary physical therapist services from the providers of their choice by promoting physical therapy as an essential health benefit in all insurance plans.
- Ensure patient access to physical therapy in rural and underserved areas.
- Pursue elimination of arbitrary limits that unreasonably restrict patient access and choice, obstruction for payment, and negative effects of market control for services provided by physical therapists.
- Support consumer opportunity and choice by increasing transparency of physical therapy coverage across all payers and healthcare provider pricing.
- Promote policies that increase opportunities for Veterans and their dependents to receive direct access to outpatient services provided by physical therapists and physical therapist assistants in private practice.

## POPULATION HEALTH

- Seek opportunities to educate policy makers of the cost savings and value to beneficiaries of timely access to a physical therapist as a primary care provider for neuromusculoskeletal dysfunction and promote the physical therapy profession as a primary point of entry for movement disorders.
- Promote recognition of physical therapists as essential health care workers who provide preventive and wellness services, evaluate and support healthy and independent lifestyles, and manage chronic pain and disease.
- Support legislation that promotes the cost-effective use of physical therapist services as non-pharmacological treatment options in response to the opioid crisis.

## TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL HEALTH

- Push for policies that allow for permanent supervision of physical therapist assistants via telecommunications.
- Safeguard patients from misleading or disingenuous care by ensuring the term “physical therapy” and the title “physical therapist” may only be used by a licensed physical therapist.
- Protect patient access to quality care by promoting the use of a hybrid model such that in-person physical therapy visits are offered to all patients receiving care via telehealth.
- Pursue telehealth legislation that allows patients to receive physical therapy services provided by a physical therapist and physical therapist assistant, with parity in coverage and payment under Medicare or other federally funded health plans.
- Protect patient access and the viability of the private practice physical therapist business from the burdensome requirement to utilize costly EHRs which include features irrelevant to physical therapy.