



ARIZONA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Final Pass: 26-0-4-0

SB 1267: physical therapy assistants; students; supervision

Sponsor: Senator Shope, LD 16

Transmitted to the Governor

Overview

Requires physical therapy assistants to be licensed rather than certified. Defines and revises terms related to the *practice of physical therapy*.

History

[Laws 1952, Chapter 36](#) created the Arizona State Board of Physical Therapy (Board) to regulate the practice of physical therapy in Arizona, certify qualified applicants and take enforcement action and disciplinary action as necessary. Board responsibilities include: 1) evaluating, licensing and certifying qualified applicants; 2) providing national examinations and determining passing scores for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants; 3) establishing mechanisms to assess continued professional competence of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants; 4) maintaining a current list of all persons regulated by the Board; 5) publishing final disciplinary actions taken against a licensee or certificate holder; 6) entering into contracts for services as necessary to carry out the Board's duties; and 7) providing information to the public regarding the Board, its processes and consumer rights ([A.R.S. § 32-2003](#)).

The *practice of physical therapy* means examining, evaluating and testing persons with mechanical, physiological and developmental impairments, functional limitations and disabilities or other health and movement related conditions in order to determine a diagnosis, a prognosis and a plan of therapeutic intervention and to assess the ongoing effects of intervention, including ordering musculoskeletal imaging consisting of plain film radiographs. It includes alleviating impairments and functional limitations by managing, designing, implementing and modifying therapeutic interventions as outlined in statute.

Physical therapy means the care and services provided by or under the direction and supervision of a licensed physical therapist. *Physical therapy assistants* are individuals who meet certification requirements and perform physical therapy procedures and related tasks that have been selected and delegated by the supervising physical therapist. *Assistive personnel* consist of: 1) physical therapist assistants; 2) physical therapy aides; and 3) other assistive personnel who are trained or educated health care providers who perform specific designated tasks related to physical therapy under the supervision of a physical therapist. *Assistive personnel* does not include personnel assisting other licensed health care professionals in performing delegable treatment responsibilities within the personnel's scope of practice ([A.R.S. § 32-2001](#)).

A physical therapist is responsible for patient care given by assistive personnel under the physical therapist's supervision. A physical therapist may delegate to assistive personnel and supervise selected acts, tasks or procedures that fall within the scope of physical therapy practice but that do not exceed the education or training of the assistive personnel ([A.R.S. § 32-2043](#)).

Provisions

1. Replaces the term certification with licensure as it relates to physical therapy assistants. (Sec. 1-14 and 16-20)
2. Modifies the term *physical therapist assistant* to mean a person who meets the requirements for licensure, rather than certification, and performs physical therapy procedures according to the physical therapy care plan under the on-site supervision of the supervising physical therapist. (Sec. 1)
3. Modifies the *practice of physical therapy* to include ordering any imaging, rather than musculoskeletal imaging consisting of plain film radiographs. (Sec. 1)
4. Modifies the definition of *on-site supervision* to mean a supervising physical therapist is on site and is present in the facility or on the campus where a student physical therapist or a student physical therapist assistant is performing services. (Sec. 1)
5. Defines *student physical therapist* as a person enrolled in a Doctor of Physical Therapy Program that is accredited by or has candidate status by the Commission Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (Commission). (Sec. 1)
6. Defines *student physical therapist assistant* as a person enrolled in an academic physical therapist assistant program that is accredited by or has candidate status by the Commission. (Sec. 1)
7. Specifies that *assistive personnel* do not include student physical therapists or student physical therapist assistants. (Sec. 1)
8. Specifies that *general supervision* includes supervision provided through telehealth. (Sec. 1)
9. Asserts that a physical therapist is responsible for patient care given by student physical therapists and student physical therapy assistants under the physical therapist's supervision. (Sec. 15)
10. Removes the requirement that a licensed physical therapist must determine the use of physical therapist assistants and other assistive personnel for each patient on each date of service. (Sec. 15)
11. Allows a certified physical therapist to retain their certification until renewal. (Sec. 21)
12. Requires the Board to issue a license to a certified physical therapist assistant on the date of their certification renewal. (Sec. 21)
13. Removes the definition of a *restricted certificate*. (Sec. 1)
14. Makes technical and conforming changes. (Sec. 1-3, 5, 7, 10-13, 15, 17-20)

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