

Physical Therapy Patient Access in Louisiana

2015 Legislation authored by Senator Freddie Mills SCR 19 mandated a study to investigate the potential benefits of removing the current restrictions tied to patient access. The committee consisted of 25 members.

The committee passed a motion (with only 3 opposing votes) that there is a clear and obvious benefit to “remove the current restrictions tied to patient access to a physical therapist's services by allowing direct patient access to a physical therapist's services without restrictions.”

Physical Therapists are allowed to evaluate a patient without a referral, however, we must have a referral to initiate treatment. 43 states, DC and the Virgin Islands have Direct Access.

- 18 states have unrestricted patient access
- 27 states have direct access with treatment provisions
- 7 states (including Louisiana) have restricted patient access

Physical therapists in the United States Military successfully practice in a direct patient access model.

All licensed physical therapists (including the physical therapists trained in Louisiana, those in the military and those that practice in a current direct patient access states) are educated under the same model of a Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) accredited program at a doctorate level and pass a national licensure exam.

HPSO, the largest professional liability carrier for physical therapists in the United States, has concluded there is no increased risk to the public when patients access physical therapy without a referral. Insurance premiums are NOT different based on the level of access.

Removing the unnecessary barrier for patients to access physical therapy services is NOT an expansion of scope in practice for physical therapists. This simply addresses how care is accessed.

In Louisiana, each licensed physical therapist is obligated to the law and rules of the Louisiana Physical Therapy Practice Act AND rule 303c at all times: “...if during evaluation, reassessment, or screening, the PT finds that treatment is outside the scope of his knowledge, experience, or expertise, the PT shall notify the patient or client and provide a referral to an appropriate healthcare practitioner.”

Evidence clearly demonstrates unrestricted patient access is safe.

Unrestricted patient access is cost effective and NOT a mandate for reimbursement or payment from private insurance.

The purpose of this legislation is to give patients the access to choose the provider of their choice.

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