



S.B. 35

125th General Assembly
(As Introduced)

Sens. Nein, Mumper, Spada, Blessing, Miller, Dann, Fingerhut

BILL SUMMARY

- Permits a physical therapist to practice without the prescription of or the referral of a patient by a physician, chiropractor, dentist, or podiatrist under specified conditions.
- Establishes requirements that a physical therapist must satisfy if the physical therapist evaluates and treats a patient without the type of prescription or referral described above.
- Prohibits anything in the Physical Therapist's Licensing Law from being construed to require reimbursement from specified types of health care payment sources for any physical therapy service rendered without the type of prescription or referral described above.
- Prohibits persons not licensed as physical therapists from using the letters M.P.T., D.P.T., M.S.P.T., P.T.A.

CONTENT AND OPERATION

Practicing physical therapy without a prescription or referral

Under current law, a physical therapist may practice only pursuant to the prescription or referral of a person licensed to practice medicine or osteopathic medicine, chiropractic, dentistry, or podiatry (hereafter referred to simply as physician, chiropractor, dentist, or podiatrist). Violation of this provision is a second degree misdemeanor, which carries a penalty of not more than 90 days in jail, a fine of not more than \$750, or both.

The bill allows a physical therapist to practice without the prescription of or the referral of a patient by a physician, chiropractor, dentist, or podiatrist if either of the following conditions is met:

(1) The person holds a master's or doctorate degree from an accredited institution recognized by the Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Athletic Trainers Board;

(2) The person has completed at least two years of practical experience as a physical therapist. (Sec. 4755.48(F).)

The bill also establishes the following requirements that a physical therapist must satisfy if the physical therapist evaluates and treats a patient without the prescription of, or the referral of the patient by, a licensed physician, chiropractor, dentist, or podiatrist:

(1) The physical therapist must, upon consent of the patient, inform the patient's physician, chiropractor, dentist, or podiatrist of the evaluation within a reasonable period of time after the evaluation is made.

(2) If the physical therapist determines, based on reasonable evidence, that no substantial progress has been made with respect to that patient during the 30-day period immediately following the date of the patient's initial visit with the physical therapist, the physical therapist must consult with or refer the patient to a physician, chiropractor, dentist, or podiatrist, unless:

- the evaluation, treatment, or services are being provided for fitness, wellness, or prevention purposes; or
- the patient previously was diagnosed with chronic, neuromuscular, or developmental conditions and the evaluation, treatment, or services are being provided for problems or symptoms associated with one or more of those previously diagnosed conditions.

(3) If, at any time, the physical therapist has reason to believe that the patient has symptoms or conditions that require treatment or services beyond the physical therapist's expertise, the physical therapist must refer the patient to a "health care practitioner" with the appropriate expertise. (Sec. 4755.481(A).)

The scope of practice of a physical therapist is governed by the definition of physical therapy in the Physical Therapists' Licensing Law (R.C. sections 4755.40 to 4755.56). "Physical therapy" is defined as the evaluation and treatment of a person by physical measures and the use of therapeutic exercises and rehabilitative procedures, with or without assistive devices, for the purpose of preventing, correcting, or alleviating any disability. "Physical therapy" also includes various other activities and functions to aid in preventing, correcting, or alleviating any disability. The law specifically provides that "physical therapy" does *not* include certain activities. Among those activities is the diagnosis of a

patient's disability. The bill limits this exception by specifying that physical therapy does not include the *medical* diagnosis of a patient's disability. (Sec. 4755.01(A).)

Prohibition against misconstruing provisions in the Physical Therapist's Licensing Law as requiring reimbursement

The bill prohibits anything in the Physical Therapist's Licensing Law from being construed to require reimbursement under any health insuring corporation policy, contract, or agreement, any sickness and accident insurance policy, the Medical Assistance Program administered by the Department of Job and Family Services, or the Health Partnership Program or Qualified Health Plans established under the Workers' Compensation Law (R.C. Chapters 4121. and 4123.), for any physical therapy service rendered without the prescription of, or the referral of the patient by, a physician, chiropractor, dentist, or podiatrist. (Sec. 4755.481(B).)

Prohibition against using specified letters when a person is not a physical therapist

Current law prohibits a person without a valid license as a physical therapist from using the words or letters, physical therapist, physical therapy, physiotherapist, licensed physical therapist, P.T., Ph.T., P.T.T., R.P.T., L.P.T., physical therapy assistant, physical therapist assistant, physical therapy technician, licensed physical therapist assistant, L.P.T.A., R.P.T.A., or any other letters, words, abbreviations, or insignia, indicating or implying that the person is a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant. To this list of prohibited words and letters the bill adds: M.P.T., D.P.T., M.S.P.T., P.T.A. (Sec. 4755.48(C).)

HISTORY

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