

A SUMMARY OF DIRECT ACCESS LANGUAGE IN STATE PHYSICAL THERAPY PRACTICE ACTS

DIRECT ACCESS TO PHYSICAL THERAPY LAWS
June 2010

STATE & Year Obtained	Unlimited/ Provisions	Practice Act Language Summary
AL		No Direct Access
AK- 1986	Unlimited	No Restrictions to Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • License revocation or suspension when failure to refer a patient to another qualified professional when the patient's condition is beyond PT training.
AZ- 1983	Unlimited	No Restrictions to Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A physical therapist shall refer a client to appropriate health care practitioners if the PT has reasonable cause to believe symptoms or conditions are present that require services beyond the scope of practice and if PT is contraindicated.
AR- 1997	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires physician referral for bronchopulmonary hygiene, debridement and wound care.
CA- 1968	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibits diagnosis of disease. Attorney General ruled that an initial diagnosis by a physician or other licensed diagnostician is required before physical therapy can commence. • Requires referral and certification to perform tissue penetration.
CO- 1988	Unlimited	No Restrictions to Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary action when failure to refer a patient to another qualified professional when the patient's condition is beyond PT training. • Prohibits diagnosis of disease.
CT - 2006	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earned a bachelor's degree and has practiced physical therapy for at least four out of the most recent six years or earned a master's degree or higher, • Must refer any person receiving such treatment to an appropriate licensed practitioner of the healing arts if, upon examination or reexamination, the same condition for which the person sought physical therapy does not demonstrate objective, measurable, functional improvement in a period of thirty consecutive days or at the end of six visits, whichever is earlier.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade V spinal manipulation, such treatment shall only be performed upon the referral or by a licensed physical therapist who (i) earned a bachelor's degree prior to January 1, 1998, and has practiced physical therapy for at least four out of the most recent six years of his or her clinical practice, or earned a master's degree or higher in physical therapy from an accredited institution of higher education, and (ii) holds a specialist certification in orthopedic physical therapy from the American Physical Therapy Association, or proof of completion of forty hours of course work in manual therapy, including Grade V spinal manipulation. • Prohibits diagnosis of disease.
DC - 2007	Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must refer patient to primary care provider if no reasonable progress is made within 30 days.
DE- 1993	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits treatment with or without referral by a licensed medical or osteopathic physician. • Must refer patient if symptoms are present for which treatment is outside scope of PT. • May treat a patient for up to 30 days after which a physician must be “consulted.” • Prohibits substantial modification of prescriptions accompanying a patient.
FL- 1992	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must refer patient or consult with health care practitioner if the patient’s condition is outside scope of PT. • If PT treatment is required beyond 21 days for a condition not previously assessed by a practitioner of record, the PT shall obtain a practitioner of record who will review and sign the plan. • Prohibits PTs from implementing plan of treatment for patients in acute care settings including hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, and mobile surgical facilities.
GA - 2006	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services are provided for the purpose of fitness, wellness, or prevention that is not related to the treatment of an injury or ailment. • Patient was previously diagnosed and received treatment or services for that diagnosis and the patient returns to physical therapy within 60 days of discharge from physical therapy for problems and symptoms that are related to the initial referral to the physical therapist. In such a situation the physical therapist shall notify the original referral source of the return to physical therapy within five business days. • The physical therapist holds a master or doctorate degree and has completed at least two years of practical experience as a licensed physical therapist. • If after 90 days of initiating physical therapy services the physical therapist determines that no substantial progress has been made with respect to the primary complaints of the patient, the physical therapist shall refer the patient to an appropriately licensed practitioner of the healing arts.

HI	Evaluation Only	
ID- 1987	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibits the use of radiology, surgery or medical diagnosis of disease. • Must refer when patient condition is outside PT scope of practice.
IL- 1988	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must refer to a physician, dentist or podiatrist when patient condition is beyond scope of practice. • Must have documented referral or documented current and relevant diagnosis from a physician, dentist or podiatrist to treat. • Must notify physician, dentist or podiatrist that established the diagnosis that the patient is receiving physical therapy pursuant to that diagnosis.
IN		No Direct Access
IA- 1988	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits evaluation and treatment with or without a referral from a physician, podiatric physician, dentist or chiropractor, except that a hospital may require that PT evaluation and treatment provided in the hospital be done only upon prior review by and authorization of a member of the hospital's medical staff. • Prohibits PTs from practicing operative surgery or osteopathic or chiropractic manipulation or administering or prescribing drugs or medicine.
KS - 2007	Provisions	<p>May evaluate and treat a patient for no more than 30 consecutive calendar days without a referral under the following conditions:</p> <p>(1) The patient has previously been referred to a physical therapist for physical therapy services by a person authorized by this section to approve treatment;</p> <p>(2) the patient's referral for physical therapy was made within one year from the date a physical therapist implements a program of physical therapy treatment without a referral;</p> <p>(3) the physical therapy being provided to the patient without referral is for the same injury, disease or condition as indicated in the referral for such previous injury, disease or condition; and</p> <p>(4) the physical therapist transmits to the physician or other practitioner identified by the patient a copy of the initial evaluation no later than five business days after treatment commences. Treatment for more than 30 consecutive calendar days of such patient shall only be upon the approval of a person authorized by this section to approve treatment.</p> <p>Physical therapists may provide, without a referral, services which do not constitute treatment for a specific condition, disease or injury to: (1) Employees solely for the purpose of education and instruction related to workplace injury prevention; or (2) the public for the purpose of fitness, health promotion and education.</p>

		Physical therapists may provide services without a referral to special education students who need physical therapy services to fulfill the provisions of their individualized education plan (IEP) or individualized family service plan (IFSP).
KY- 1987	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must refer to a physician or dentist when patient condition is beyond scope of practice. • When basis for treatment is referral, the PT may confer with the referring physician, podiatrist, dentist or chiropractor.
LA - 2003	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May perform physical therapy services without a prescription or referral under the following circumstances: • To children with a diagnosed developmental disability pursuant to the patient's plan of care. • As part of a home health care agency pursuant to the patient's plan of care. • To a patient in a nursing home pursuant to the patient's plan of care. • Related to conditioning or to providing education or activities in a wellness setting for the purpose of injury prevention, reduction of stress, or promotion of fitness. • To an individual for a previously diagnosed condition or conditions for which physical therapy services are appropriate after informing the health care provider rendering the diagnosis. • The diagnosis shall have been made within the previous ninety days. The physical therapist shall provide the health care provider who rendered such diagnosis with a plan of care for physical therapy services within the first fifteen days of physical therapy intervention.
ME - 1991	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When treating a patient without referral from a doctor of medicine, osteopathy, podiatry, dentistry or chiropractic, the PT: (1) can not make a medical diagnosis; (2) must refer the patient to a licensed doctor of medicine, osteopathy, podiatry, dentistry or chiropractic if no improvement in the patient is documented within 30 days of initiation of treatment; (3) must consult or refer the patient to a licensed doctor of medicine, surgery, osteopathy, podiatry, dentistry or chiropractic if treatment is required beyond 120 days. • Without a referral PT may not apply manipulative thrust to the vertebrae of the spine or administer drugs. • Employers are not liable for charges under workers' compensation for services unless the employee has been referred to the PT. • Must make referral when beyond the scope of PT practice.
MD- 1979	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounds for license revocation if PT is practiced inconsistently with any written or oral order of a physician, dentist or podiatrist.

MA- 1982	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulation sets PT Code of Ethics as standard for referral relationships. PT will refer to a licensed practitioner of medicine, dentistry or podiatry if symptoms are present of which PT is contraindicated or which symptoms are indicative of conditions for which treatment is outside scope of PT practice. PT will also provide ongoing communication with the licensed referring practitioner. PT must disclose to patient any financial interest if the referring source derives income from the PT services.
MI		Evaluation Only
MN- 1988 Revised- 2008	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical diagnosis prohibited. patient may be treated by a physical therapist without an order or referral from a physician, chiropractor, dentist, podiatrist, or advanced practice nurse for up to 90 days. Allows a physical therapist, who has been licensed for less than one year, to provide physical therapy without referral when working in collaboration with a physical therapist who has more than one year of experience. Physical therapist must refer a patient to a licensed health care professional at any time during the care if the patient's medical condition is beyond the scope of a physical therapist; Allows direct access without a time limitation for patients being treated by a physical therapist for prevention, wellness, education, or exercise
MS - 2006	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To children with a diagnosed developmental disability pursuant to the patient's plan of care. <p>As part of a home health care agency pursuant to the patient's plan of care.</p> <p>To a patient in a nursing home pursuant to the patient's plan of care.</p> <p>Related to conditioning or to providing education or activities in a wellness setting for the purpose of injury prevention, reduction of stress or promotion of fitness.</p> <p>To an individual for a previously diagnosed condition or conditions for which physical therapy services are appropriate after informing the health care provider rendering the diagnosis. The diagnosis must have been made within the previous one hundred eighty (180) days. The physical therapist shall provide the health care provider who rendered the diagnosis with a plan of care for physical therapy services within the first fifteen (15) days of physical therapy intervention.</p>
MO - 1999	Provisions	<p>Educational resources and training, develop fitness or wellness programs for asymptomatic persons, or provide screening or consultative services.</p> <p>Treat any person with a recurring self-limited injury within one year of</p>

		<p>diagnosis by an approved health care provider or a chronic illness that has been previously diagnosed by an approved health care provider. The physical therapist shall:</p> <p>(1) Contact the patient's current approved health care provider within seven days of initiating physical therapy services under this subsection;</p> <p>(2) Not change an existing physical therapy referral available to the physical therapist without approval of the patient's current approved health care provider;</p> <p>(3) Refer to an approved health care provider any patient whose medical condition at the time of examination or treatment is determined to be beyond the scope of practice of physical therapy;</p> <p>(4) Refer to an approved health care provider any patient whose condition for which physical therapy services are rendered under this subsection has not been documented to be progressing toward documented treatment goals after six visits or fourteen days, whichever first occurs;</p> <p>(5) Notify the patient's current approved health care provider prior to the continuation of treatment if treatment rendered under this subsection is to continue beyond thirty days. The physical therapist shall provide such notification for each successive period of thirty days.</p>
MT- 1987	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law states that PT evaluation and treatment procedures may be performed by a licensed PT without referral. • License revocation if PT practices beyond the scope and limitation of training and education.
NE- 1957	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing procedures outside of the scope of PT practice constitutes unprofessional conduct.
NV- 1985	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical therapy does not include the diagnosis of physical disabilities, the occupation of a masseur who massages only the superficial soft tissues of the body, and chiropractic adjustment.
NH- 1988	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A physical therapist shall refer a patient or client to appropriate health care practitioners when: • The physical therapist has reasonable cause to believe symptoms or conditions are present that require services beyond the scope of practice; or • Physical therapy is contraindicated; or • There is no documented improvement within 25 calendar days of the initiation of treatment.

NJ - 2003	Provisions	<p>Statute: 45:9-37.18 (14) Within 180 days of the effective date of P.L.2003, c.18, establish standards in accordance with the provisions of section 22 of P.L.2003, c.18 (C.45:9-37.34c), in collaboration with the State Board of Medical Examiners and other appropriate professional licensing boards established pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes, setting forth the conditions under which a physical therapist is required to refer an individual being treated by a physical therapist to or consult with a practitioner licensed to practice dentistry, podiatry or medicine and surgery in this State, or other appropriate licensed health care professional.</p> <p>Pending adoption of the standards: (a) a physical therapist shall refer any individual who has failed to demonstrate reasonable progress within 30 days of the date of initial treatment to a licensed health care professional; and (b) a physical therapist, not more than 30 days from the date of initial treatment of functional limitation or pain, shall consult with the individual's licensed health care professional of record as to the appropriateness of the treatment, or, in the event that there is no identified licensed health care professional of record, recommend that the individual consult with a licensed health care professional of the individual's choice.</p> <p>Board of PT Regulations (adopted standards related to direct access):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A physical therapist shall refer a patient to a health care professional licensed to practice dentistry podiatry or medicine and surgery in this State or other appropriate licensed health care professional: • When the physical therapist doing the examination evaluation or intervention has reason to believe that physical therapy is contraindicated or symptoms or conditions are present that require services outside the scope of practice of the physical therapist; or • When the patient has failed to demonstrate reasonable progress within 30 days of the date of the initial treatment. • (b) Not more than 30 days from the date of initial treatment of functional limitation or pain, a physical therapist shall inform the patient's licensed health care professional of record regarding the patient's plan of care. In the event there is no identified licensed health care professional of record, the physical therapist shall recommend that the patient consult with a licensed health care professional of the patient's choice. In a school setting, the schedule of physical therapy services shall be reported to tile child study team by the physical therapist within 30 days of the date of initial treatment.
NM- 1989	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A PT shall not accept a patient for treatment without an existing medical diagnosis for the specific medical or physical problem made by a licensed primary care provider except for children in special education programs and for acute care within the scope of PT practice. • Must communicate to the patient's primary health care provider PT diagnosis and plan of treatment every 60 days unless otherwise indicated by the primary care provider.

NY- 2006	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treatment can be rendered by a Licensed PT without a referral for 10 visits or 30 days, whichever comes first. • Licensed PT must have practiced PT on a full-time basis for no less than three years; be of at least twenty-one years of age. • PT must provide written notification that services without a referral might not be covered by the patient's health plan or insurer; notification must state that said services might be covered by health plan or insurer with a referral. Must keep a copy of the written notification in the patient's file.
NC- 1985	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulation of the spine must be prescribed by a physician. • Medical diagnosis of disease prohibited. • Unlawful practice when failure to refer to a licensed medical doctor or dentist when patient's condition is beyond scope of PT practice.
ND- 1989	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • License revocation when failure to refer to a licensed health care professional any patient whose medical condition is beyond the scope of PT practice.
OH -2004	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must have a master's degree or two year's experience. • If no progress in 30 days, must refer back to appropriate health care provider. • PT shall inform the patient's health care provider within 5 days of initial evaluation • If orthotics are needed, PT is limited to certain applications of orthotic devices
OK	Evaluation Only	
OR- 1993 (Revised 2005, 2007)	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To practice without referral a licensed PT must refer a patient when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a patient when signs and symptoms are present that would require treatment beyond the scope of PT practice, or • if PT is contraindicated, or • The physical therapist continues therapy and 60 days have passed since the initial physical therapy treatment has been administered, unless: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The patient is a child or student eligible for special education. b) The patient is a student athlete seeking treatment in the role as athlete. c) The patient is a resident of a long-term care facility, a residential facility, an adult foster home or an intermediate care facility for mental retardation. d) Personal injury protection benefits are not required to be paid for PT treatment of a person covered by the applicable insurance policy unless the person is referred to a PT.
PA - 2002	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensee may apply to the board for a certificate of authorization to practice physical therapy under this act

		<p>without the required referral.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A certificate of authorization to practice physical therapy without a referral under subsection (a) shall not authorize a physical therapist either to treat a condition in any person which is a nonneurologic, nonmuscular or nonskeletal condition or to treat a person who has an acute cardiac or acute pulmonary condition unless the physical therapist has consulted with the person's licensed physician, dentist or podiatrist regarding the person's condition and the physical therapy treatment plan or has referred the person to a licensed physician, dentist or podiatrist for diagnosis and referral. • The certificate of authorization shall be issued only to licensed physical therapists practicing physical therapy. • The certificate of authorization shall be displayed by the certificate holder in a manner conspicuous to the public. • The renewal of the certificate of authorization shall coincide with the renewal of the license of the licensee.
RI- 1992	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must disclose to the patient in writing the scope and limitations of the practice of physical therapy and shall obtain their consent in writing. • Must refer the patient to a doctor of medicine, osteopathy dentistry, podiatry or chiropractic within 90 days after the treatment commenced (unless the treatment has concluded). • Must have 1 year clinical experience to practice without referral.
SC- 1998	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the absence of a referral, must refer the patient to a licensed medical doctor or dentist if providing PT services beyond 30 days after the initial evaluation. • Must refer patient to a licensed medical doctor or dentist if patient's condition is beyond scope of PT.
SD- 1986	Unlimited	No Restrictions to Access

<p>TN- 1999 (Revised 2007)</p>	<p>Provisions</p>	<p>The physical therapist shall, upon the consent of the patient, inform the patient's physician, doctor of chiropractic, dentist, podiatrist, or osteopath not later than five (5) business days after the evaluation. If the patient presents to the physical therapist for a problem for which the patient has been seen by a physician within the past twelve (12) months, the consent of the patient is not necessary to inform.</p> <p>If the patient has no physician then the physical therapist shall make a suggestion from list of available providers and shall inform the patient of the thirty (30) day limitation in subdivision (C) below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (B) If no substantial progress has been within fifteen (15) calendar days or six (6) visits, whichever occurs first, immediately following the date of the patient's initial visit, the physical therapist shall refer the patient to a licensed physician. If the patient previously was diagnosed with chronic, neuromuscular, or developmental and the evaluation, treatment, or services are being provided for problems or symptoms associated with one (1) or more of those previously diagnosed conditions, then the provisions of this subdivision (B) do not apply. • If a patient returns to the physical therapist within ninety (90) days of treatment with the same complaint, then the physical therapist shall make an immediate referral to the appropriate health care provider; • (C) When a patient's licensed doctor has not been notified of the physical therapy services, under no circumstances should therapy services continue beyond thirty (30) days immediately following the date of the patient's first visit. • (D) Considered unprofessional conduct for a physical therapist to knowingly initiate services for the same complaint for which a patient: (i) Has reached the fifteen (15) day and six (6) visit limit imposed by subdivision (B) of this subsection where no substantial progress has been made from another physical therapist; or (ii) Where the patient has reached the forty-five (45) day limit imposed by subdivision (C).
<p>TX- 1991</p>	<p>Provisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibits the diagnosis of disease. • After holding a license for 1 year, physical therapists may treat a patient for an injury or condition that was the subject of a prior referral if the following conditions are met: • The PT notifies the referring licensed practitioner within 5 business days of the commencement of therapy. • Must confer with the referring practitioner after 20 treatment sessions or 30 consecutive calendar days, whichever comes first. • Treatment is commenced within 1 year of the referral. • May provide physical assessments or instructions to an asymptomatic person without referral.

UT- 1985	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibits diagnosis of disease, surgery, acupuncture or x-ray for diagnostic or therapeutic uses.
VT- 1988	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p>
VA – 2001 (Revised 2007)	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A physical therapist who has obtained a certificate of authorization pursuant to Section 54.1-3482.1 may evaluate and treat a patient for no more than 14 consecutive business days after evaluation without a referral under the following conditions: • the patient at the time of presentation to a physical therapist for physical therapy services is not being currently cared for, as attested to in writing by the patient, by a physician, chiropractor, etc. for the symptoms giving rise to the presentation. • the patient identifies a practitioner from whom the patient intends to seek treatment if the condition for which he is seeking treatment does not improve after evaluation and treatment by the physical therapist during the 14 day period of treatment; • the patient gives written consent for the physical therapist to release all personal health information and treatment records to the identified practitioner; and • the physical therapist notifies the practitioner identified by the patient no later than three days after treatment commences and provides the practitioner with a copy of the initial evaluation along with a copy of the patient history obtained by the physical therapist. • Evaluation and treatment may not be initiated by a physical therapist if the patient does not identify a licensed doctor of medicine, osteopathy, chiropractic, podiatry, etc. • A physical therapist may contact the practitioner identified by the patient at the end of the 14-day period to determine if the practitioner will authorize additional physical therapy services until such time as the patient can be seen by the practitioner. • A physical therapist shall not perform an initial evaluation of a patient under this subsection if the physical therapist has performed an initial evaluation of the patient under this subsection within the immediately preceding three months. • Provides for direct access with no restrictions for students athletes in a school setting; workplace ergonomics; IEPS of special education students; wellness, fitness, and health screenings; and prevention of disabilities, impairments, and functional limitations.

WA- 1988	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A physical therapist may only provide treatment utilizing orthoses that support, align, prevent, or correct any structural problems intrinsic to the foot or ankle by referral or consultation from an authorized health care practitioner. • No restriction on the ability of any insurance entity or any state agency or program from limiting or controlling the utilization of physical therapy services by the use of any type of gatekeeper function. • Must refer patients when symptoms or conditions are beyond scope of PT practice.
WV- 1984	Unlimited	<p>No Restrictions to Access</p> <p>Prohibits electromyography examination and electrodiagnostic studies other than the determination of chronaxia and strength duration curves except under the supervision of a physician electromyographer and electrodiagnostician.</p> <p>Referral requirement removed from practice act in 1984 session. However, due to an oversight, language remains that considers practice without referral grounds for license revocation. Despite this oversight, the State Board of Physical Therapy operates under the assumption that the legislative intent of the bill was to permit direct access.</p>
WI- 1989	Provisions	<p>Written referral of a physician, chiropractor, dentist or podiatrist required except if a PT provides services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In schools to children with exceptional education needs. • As part of a home health care agency. • To a patient in a nursing home pursuant to the patient's plan of care. • Related to athletic activities, conditioning or injury prevention. • To an individual for a previously diagnosed medical condition after informing the individual's physician, chiropractor, dentist or podiatrist who made the diagnosis. <p>Physical Therapy Examining Board Regulations</p> <p>Written referral is not required for the following services related to the work, home, leisure, recreational and educational environments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditioning • Injury prevention and application of biomechanics • Treatment of musculoskeletal injuries with the exception of acute fractures or soft tissue avulsions. <p>Must refer a patient to a physician, chiropractor, dentist, podiatrist, or other appropriate health care practitioner if services needed are beyond the scope of physical therapy.</p> <p>Physical therapists providing services pursuant to a referral shall communicate with the referring physician, chiropractor, dentist or podiatrist as necessary to ensure continuity of care.</p>

WY-2003	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Master's degree OR 5 years experience• no children under 12 years unless under IDEA or IFSP• limited to 12 visits or 30 days• treatment for chronic/recurring must have been diagnosed and treated within the past year.
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