

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

DIRECT ACCESS TO PHYSICAL THERAPY LAWS
August 2003

STATE & Year Obtained	Omission/ Provisions	Practice Act Language Summary
AL		No Direct Access
AK- 1986	Omission	<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	Omission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawful practice- 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	Omission	<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		Evaluation Only
DC		Evaluation Only
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		Evaluation Only
HI		Evaluation Only
ID- 1987	Omission	<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	Provisions	<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		Evaluation Only
KY- 1987	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of "physical therapy" includes PT treatment performed upon referral by a licensed doctor of medicine, osteopathy, dentistry, chiropractic or podiatry. Law permits direct access to treatment. 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	<p>May perform physical therapy services without a prescription or referral under the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	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	Omission	<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- 1984	Omission	<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	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical diagnosis prohibited. • Must have order or referral by a physician, chiropractor, podiatrist or dentist to continue treatment after 30 days. • Must practice for 1 year under a physician's orders before treating without referral. • Must consult with patient's health care provider before altering provider's original written order. • Must refer to a licensed health care professional when condition is beyond scope of practice. • Must report other PT's who fail to comply with practice act. • Must submit reports to a licensed health care provider for periodic review at least every 2 years. • PT with more than 1 year of clinical experience may initiate treatment of a patient for a condition not previously diagnosed for up to 30 calendar days once within a 4 month period without referring to a licensed health care provider. Does not apply to patients initially referred by provider. • PT with more than one year of clinical experience may initiate treatment of a patient for a lifelong and ongoing previously

		diagnosed condition warranting physical therapy treatment. Verification of diagnosis must be obtained by licensed health care provider within 30 days of initial admission
MS		Evaluation Only
MO		Evaluation Only
MT- 1987	Provisions	<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	Omission	Performing procedures outside of the scope of PT practice constitutes unprofessional conduct.
NV- 1985	Omission	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The physical therapist has reasonable cause to believe symptoms or conditions are present that require services beyond the scope of practice; or (b) Physical therapy is contraindicated; or (c) There is no documented improvement within 25 calendar days of the initiation of treatment.
NJ - 2003	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A physical therapist shall refer a patient or client to appropriate health care practitioners when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (b) The physical therapist has reasonable cause to believe symptoms or conditions are present that require services beyond the scope of practice; or (b) after 30 days
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		Evaluation Only
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	Omission	<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		No Direct Access
OK		Evaluation Only
OR- 1993	Provisions	To practice without referral a licensed PT must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a Level C CPR certificate.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a course, of at least 18 hours, designed to enable the PT to identify signs and symptoms of systemic disease, particularly those that can mimic neurological or musculoskeletal disorders, and to recognize conditions which require timely referral to a medical doctor, osteopathic physician, chiropractic physician, podiatrist, dentist, licensed physician assistant or licensed nurse practitioner. • Within 3 years of compliance with the previous requirements a PT practicing without referral must complete at least 32 hours of continuing education. Thereafter the PT must complete at least 50 hours of continuing education every three years. • PTs qualified to practice without prior diagnosis or referral must refer a patient when signs and symptoms are present that would require treatment beyond the scope of PT practice, or if PT is contraindicated, or if 30 days have passed since the initial PT treatment; unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The patient is a child or student eligible for special education. • The patient is a student athlete seeking treatment in the role as athlete. • 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. <p>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.</p>
PA - 2002	Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensee may apply to the board for a certificate of authorization to practice physical therapy under this act without the required referral. • 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

		<p>consent in writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	Omission	No Restrictions
TN- 1999	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation permitted without referral. • PT may treat a patient for an injury or condition that was subject of a prior referral if all the following conditions are met: (1) within 4 days of the commencement of therapy the PT consults with the referring practitioner; (2) the PT must confer with the referring practitioner in order to continue treatment after 10 treatment sessions or 15 consecutive calendar days, whichever comes first; and (3) the PT commences any episode of treatment within one year of the referral by the referring practitioner. • PTs must be licensed for one year prior before utilizing the direct access provisions of the practice act. • A licensed PT may provide physical assessments or instructions including recommendation of exercise to an asymptomatic person without referral. • PTs may provide services without referral in emergency circumstances.
TX- 1991	Provisions	<p>Prohibits the diagnosis of disease.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>May provide physical assessments or instructions to an asymptomatic person without referral.</p>
UT- 1985	Omission	Prohibits diagnosis of disease, surgery, acupuncture or x-ray for diagnostic or therapeutic uses.
VT- 1988	Omission	No Restrictions
VA- 2001	Provisions	After completing a three-year period of active practice upon the referral and direction of a licensed doctor of medicine, osteopathy, chiropractic, podiatry or dental surgery, a physical therapist may

	<p>treat a patient for no more than fourteen consecutive calendar days without a referral under the following conditions: (i) the patient has previously been referred to a physical therapist for physical therapy services by a licensed doctor of medicine, osteopathy, chiropractic, podiatry or dental surgery; (ii) the patient's referral for physical therapy was made within two years from the date the physical therapist implements a program of physical therapy treatment without referral and direction; (iii) the physical therapy being provided to the patient without referral and direction is for the same injury, disease or condition as indicated in the referral of the licensed doctor of medicine, osteopathy, chiropractic, podiatry or dental surgery; and (iv) the physical therapist notifies the practitioner identified by the patient no later than three days after treatment commences. Treatment for more than fourteen consecutive calendar days of such patient shall only be upon the referral and direction of a licensed doctor of medicine, osteopathy, chiropractic, podiatry, or dental surgery.</p> <p>After completing a three-year period of active practice upon the referral and direction of a licensed doctor of medicine, osteopathy, chiropractic, podiatry or dental surgery, a physical therapist may conduct a one-time evaluation, that does not include treatment, of a patient who does not meet the conditions established in (i) through (iv) without the referral and direction of a licensed doctor of medicine, osteopathy, chiropractic, podiatry or dental surgery; if appropriate, the physical therapist shall immediately refer such patient to the appropriate practitioner.</p> <p>Invasive procedures within the scope of practice of physical therapy shall at all times be performed only under the referral and direction of a licensed doctor of medicine, osteopathy, chiropractic, podiatry or dental surgery.</p> <p>It shall be unlawful for any licensed physical therapist to fail to immediately refer any patient to a licensed doctor of medicine, osteopathy, chiropractic, podiatry, or dental surgery whose medical condition is determined, at the time of evaluation or treatment, to be beyond the physical therapist's scope of practice. Upon determining that the patient's medical condition is beyond the scope of practice of a physical therapist, a physical therapist shall immediately refer such patient to an appropriate practitioner.</p> <p>A licensed physical therapist may provide, without referral or supervision, physical therapy services to (i) a student athlete participating in a school-sponsored athletic activity while such student is at such activity in a public, private, denominational or parochial elementary, middle or high school, or public or private institution of higher education when such services are rendered by a licensed physical therapist who is certified as an athletic trainer by the National Athletic Trainers' Association Board of Certification or as a sports certified specialist by the American</p>
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		Board of Physical Therapy Specialties; (ii) employees solely for the purpose of evaluation and consultation related to workplace ergonomics; (iii) special education students who, by virtue of their individualized education plans (IEPs), need physical therapy services to fulfill the provisions of their IEPs; (iv) the public for the purpose of wellness, fitness, and health screenings; (v) the public for the purpose of health promotion and education; and (vi) the public for the purpose of prevention of impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities.
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	Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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.
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.
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.