

State Board of Physical Therapy Examiners

consumer**brief**

Physical therapists work to alleviate pain and improve movement in patients who have an impairment or injury that is limiting normal body movement.

THE HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF THE BOARD

Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are licensed by the State Board of Physical Therapy Examiners, which was established by the Physical Therapy Licensing Act of 1983. The Board comprises 11 members: six licensed physical therapists, one physical therapist assistant, one physician licensed by the State of New Jersey, one employee of the executive branch of State government and two members of the public. Each Board member, appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the State Senate, serves for three years and for not more than two consecutive terms.

Licensed physical therapists may examine and evaluate patients, develop a diagnosis and prognosis, develop and/or modify a plan of care, or independently engage in physical therapy instruction. The instruction can include the recommendation of assistive devices and modifications of the patient's physical environment.

Physical therapist assistants, who may practice **only** under the direction of a licensed physical therapist, may document treatments ordered and cosigned by a licensed physical therapist, in addition to participating in the collection of data for the examination of the patient. However, a licensed physical therapist assistant may **not** initiate physical therapy treatment upon the direction of a licensed physician or other health care provider without the **direct** supervision of a licensed physical therapist.

The scope of practice for a physical therapist licensed by the State of New Jersey includes treatment by means of:

- manual therapy techniques and massage;
- electro-therapeutic modalities;
- the use of physical agents, mechanical modalities, hydrotherapy, and therapeutic exercises with or without the use of assistive devices;
- neurodevelopmental procedures;



- joint mobilization;
- movement-related functional training in self-care;
- providing assistance in community and work integration or re-integration;
- providing training in techniques for prevention of injury, impairment, or movement-related functional limitation or dysfunction;
- providing consultative, educational or other advisory services; and
- collaboration with other health care providers with patient care.

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CHECKING A LICENSE OR FILING A CONSUMER COMPLAINT- IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

The State Board of Physical Therapy Examiners' Web site, www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov/pt/, is the right place to visit to learn more about the Board and its licensees.

If you are told by a physician or surgeon that the services of a licensed physical therapist would benefit you, choose a few names of physical therapists who practice in your area. (A recommendation from a friend or family member is a good idea, but you also can check your local phone book for a listing of these professionals in your area.) Then, go to the Board's Web site and select the link Licensee Information. Choose the link Physical Therapist Licensee Directory. This will allow you to type in the name and practice location of one physical therapist at a time to find out if the individual has a current license in good standing, and whether there has ever been disciplinary action taken against that licensee. You may also enter the name of a town to find a list of all the licensees who are located there.

The Licensee Information page allows you to enter the name and practice location of physical therapist assistants; but remember, these licensees may only practice under the direct guidance of a licensed physical therapist.

Anyone who wishes to be licensed as a physical therapist in New Jersey must obtain a master's degree in physical therapy from an accredited college or university or, if the applicant graduated before January 1, 2003, a bachelor's degree and a certificate in physical therapy from an accredited college or university. Applicants also must complete all of the clinical education requirements of an approved physical therapy program, as well as passing a written examination. To learn more about the requirements to become a licensed physical therapist or physical therapist assistant, go to the Board's Web site and select the link Laws and Regulations. The requirements for physical therapists can be found at N.J.A.C. 13:39A-5.1 and those for physical therapist assistants can be found at N.J.A.C. 13:39A-5.2.

Once an applicant has met all of the educational requirements, he/she will be approved to take the National Physical Therapy Examination or the National Physical Therapy Assistant Examination. Once the applicant has passed one of these exams, he/she must then take the State Jurisprudence Examination (an open-book exam).

If a consumer should have a problem with one of this Board's licensees, a complaint form (which can be found under the Consumer Information link on the Board's Web site) can be downloaded and filled out legibly by hand and mailed to the Board along with photocopies of any pertinent documents (please **do not** send original documents).

IN CONCLUSION

The State Board of Physical Therapy Examiners tirelessly focuses on serving the consumers of New Jersey when the Board's licensees are called upon to intervene in a patient's life to alleviate pain and to treat a physical impairment and/or a movement-related functional limitation by means of physical therapy intervention. The Board investigates every complaint it receives after carefully reviewing the detailed account of the situation in the complaint. The Board then gives the licensee an opportunity to respond to the allegations. The Board has the power to order that a licensee's professional activities be monitored and, when necessary, to suspend or revoke a license. The protection of New Jersey's consumers, especially at a time when those in need of the services of a licensed physical therapist or physical therapist assistant are at their most vulnerable, is the Board's overriding goal.

New Jersey Office of the Attorney General DIVISION OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

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