

Treatment without Referral FAQs

For how long must a PT be licensed before qualifying to provide treatment without referral?

A PT must have been licensed to practice physical therapy for at least one year in order to provide treatment without referral.

How much professional liability insurance must a PT carry in order to treat patients without a referral?

A PT must have professional liability insurance before treating a patient without a referral effective September 1, 2019. The PT Board adopted a rule setting the amount of professional liability insurance coverage at \$100,000/claim and \$300,000/year.

(updated)

When must a PT be covered by professional liability insurance before treating a patient without a referral?

A PT must have professional liability insurance before treating a patient without a referral effective September 1, 2019. However, the PT Board's amendment to §322.1. (a)(2) Exceptions to referral requirement that sets the amount of professional liability coverage as \$100,000/claim and \$300,000/year aggregate will take effect November 1, 2019.

Will a PT with a doctoral degree be able to treat a patient without a referral beginning September 1, 2019?

Yes, as long as the PT has been licensed to practice physical therapy for at least 1 year, has coverage of professional liability insurance, and the treatment does not exceed 10 consecutive business days.

What doctoral degrees qualify a PT to treat a patient without a referral for not more than 10 consecutive business days?

A PT whose entry-level degree is a doctoral from a CAPTE-accredited program qualifies to treat a patient without a referral for not more than 10 consecutive business days. Additionally, a PT with a post-professional (transitional) DPT, a Doctor of Science in Physical Therapy, or a PhD in Physical Therapy qualifies as long as the program was from an accredited institution.

New Can a PT that has a clinical or terminal doctoral degree in a related field treat a patient without a referral for not more than 10 consecutive business days?

No, the statute as amended does not include other clinical or terminal doctoral degrees in a related field as qualifications sufficient to allow a physical therapist to provide not more than 10 consecutive business days of treatment without a referral.

How can a PT who has a Bachelor of Science or a Master of Science in Physical Therapy qualify to treat without a referral?

A PT with a BS or MS in Physical Therapy can qualify to treat without a referral by completing 30 CCUs in the area of differential diagnosis. Treatment without a referral under this qualifier cannot exceed 10 consecutive business days.

Do the 30 CCUs in the area of differential diagnosis need to be in 1 course/activity?

No, the 30 CCUs can be from several courses/activities and can be tickled out of a larger course as long as there is documented evidence supporting the number of CCUs in the area of differential diagnosis.

Does the differential diagnosis course/activity need to be approved through the Continuing Competence Approval Process (CCAP)?

No, any course/activity in the area of differential diagnosis or with differential diagnosis content can qualify toward the requirement. However, without CCAP approval, the CCUs cannot be used to meet the renewal requirement.

Does the differential diagnosis course/activity have to be taken after September 1, 2019?

No, a previously completed course/activity can qualify as long as there is documented evidence of CCUs in the area of differential diagnosis.

New How does a PT know if a course in the area of differential diagnosis is acceptable?

The PT Board will not publish a list of acceptable courses/activities in the area of differential diagnosis for PTs to choose from. A PT should use their professional judgement based on the course outline/content as to whether or not the course covers the area of differential diagnosis. And if so, how many CCUs can be attributed to differential diagnosis considering one (1) contact hour = one (1) CCU.

New Are specific courses for differential diagnosis required depending on the practice setting?

No, A PT should give consideration to the relevance to their practice setting when selecting the course(s).

New Do the CCU certificates of completion for the differential diagnosis course(s) need to be submitted to the PT Board once completed?

No, a PT needs to maintain documented proof that the 30 CCUs have been completed in the event that the PT Board requests that they be submitted.

What qualifies a PT to treat without a referral for 15 consecutive business days?

A PT with a doctoral degree in physical therapy who has completed a residency or fellowship can provide treatment without a referral for 15 consecutive business days.

Does the residency or fellowship need to be accredited?

No, a residency or fellowship completed prior to the implementation of accreditation standards qualify as long as there is documented evidence of completion.

New Does a specialty certification or other advanced practice licensure qualify a PT to treat a patient without a referral for 15 consecutive business days?

No, only completion of a residency or fellowship can qualify a PT with a doctoral degree for treatment without a referral for 15 consecutive business days.

Does extensive clinical experience during an entry-level physical therapy program qualify as a residency or fellowship?

No, only completion of a post-professional residency or fellowship can qualify a PT with a doctoral degree for treatment without a referral for 15 consecutive business days.

Does a PT with a BS or MS in Physical Therapy who completed a residency or fellowship qualify for providing treatment without a referral for 15 consecutive business days?

No, only a PT with a doctoral degree who completed a residency or fellowship qualifies for providing treatment without a referral for 15 consecutive business days.

New Can a PT who is treating a patient without a referral delegate treatment to a PTA or an aide/tech?

Yes, the statute as amended authorizes a PT to treat without a referral in a manner described by Section 453.005 of the PT Practice Act which includes delegation of selective forms of treatment to support personnel while a physical therapist retains the responsibility for caring for the patient and directing and supervising the support personnel.

New If a PT evaluates and initiates treatment without a referral, can another PT treat the patient during that time period?

Yes, as long as the PT has the qualifications and meets the requirements to provide treatment without a referral.

New If a patient completes the treatment without a referral for the 10 or 15 consecutive business days, can another qualified PT in the same facility continue the treatment for an additional 10 or 15 consecutive business days?

No, at the conclusion of the initial 10 or 15 consecutive business days, a referral from a qualified healthcare practitioner must be obtained before continuation of treatment.

New *If a patient completes the treatment without a referral for the 10 or 15 consecutive business days and a referral is not received from a qualified healthcare practitioner, should the patient be discharged?*

Yes, a referral is required for treatment that exceeds the 10 or 15 consecutive business days. If a referral is not received, treatment cannot continue and the patient should be discharged.

New *If a patient starts treatment without a referral but does not complete the treatment within the 10 or 15 consecutive business days due to illness or any other reason, can the patient be readmitted to complete the remainder of treatment days?*

No, the statute as amended specifies that treatment without referral is authorized for not more than 10 or 15 consecutive business days and does not allow for flexibility.

New *If a patient has been treated by a PT without a referral for 10 or 15 consecutive business days, can the patient return for the same injury or condition and receive treatment without a referral at a later date?*

No, a PT must obtain a referral from a qualified healthcare practitioner before continuation of treatment that exceeds the initial 10 or 15 consecutive business days.

New *If a patient was previously treated without a referral for an injury or condition, can the patient be treated without a referral for a different injury or condition?*

Yes, a patient can be treated without a referral for an injury or condition that is unrelated to the previous injury or condition.

New *Can a PT accept a verbal order or a signed plan of care (POC) for continuation of treatment that exceeds the 10 or 15 consecutive business days?*

Yes, the provisions in §322.1(a)(3) relating to the methods of referral which includes receiving a referral verbally were not affected by the recent amendments to Practice Act. A signature by a qualified healthcare practitioner on a physical therapy POC is acceptable as a referral.

When does a PT who will be providing treatment without a referral need to obtain a signed disclosure?

The effective date in statute is November 1, 2019.

Can a PT use their own disclosure form for treatment without referral?

No, only the PT Board-approved **Physical Therapy Treatment without Referral Disclosure** form may be used. The form is available online at www.ptot.texas.gov and may be reproduced but not edited.

(updated)

New *Will a patient who is already receiving treatment without a referral need to sign a disclosure form?*

Yes, any patient who is receiving treatment without a referral from November 1, 2019 forward will need to sign a disclosure form.

New *Is a PT who treats students in the public school setting without a referral required to have the disclosure form signed?*

Yes, the PT Board is not authorized to exempt a practice setting from the signed disclosure requirement. The form does have a line for the name and signature of the legal representative.

Will a PT be able to provide physical therapy for twenty (20) treatment sessions or thirty (30) consecutive calendar to an established patient under a prior referral?

Effective September 1, 2019, treating a patient under a prior referral will no longer be an option for treatment without a referral.