

Remove Duplicative Unnecessary Clerical Exchanges Act, or REDUCE Act (H.R. 7279)



Position

APTA strongly supports the Remove Duplicative Unnecessary Clerical Exchanges Act, or the REDUCE Act (H.R. 7279). This bipartisan bill would streamline the current plan of care certification requirement under Medicare Part B to reduce administrative burden and paperwork for physical therapists and physicians. The REDUCE Act was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Reps. Don Davis, D-N.C., and Lloyd Smucker, R-Pa.

Background

Currently, Medicare Part B guidelines permit Medicare beneficiaries to access physical therapist services with or without a physician's order. The physical therapist may evaluate that patient, formulate a plan of care, and commence treatment. However, under current CMS plan of care certification requirements, physical therapists are required to send their plans of care to the referring physician, who has 30 days to sign off on the PT services that the referring physician ordered. If the 30-day deadline is approaching and the physician still hasn't returned the signed plan of care, the rules say it's up to the physical therapist to obtain that signature; without it, the PT is faced with the prospect of stopping patient treatment or not getting paid by Medicare, which can result in interruptions in care. The clerical signature requirement creates unnecessary paperwork and stress for physical therapists as they often struggle to track down signatures before the 30 days are up.

Given the current pressures on therapy providers, including recent year-over-year fee schedule cuts, Congress should seek opportunities to reduce red tape and administrative costs to mitigate the impact of these payment cuts to physical therapy. The time and resources spent by PTs in

procuring a timely signature adds unnecessary cost, potentially delays essential services, and fails to contribute to improved quality of care.

Solution

The REDUCE Act would reduce administrative burden by clarifying a new streamlined model such that in those cases when outpatient therapist services are provided under a physician's order, the plan of care certification requirement will be deemed satisfied if the physical therapist simply submits the plan of care to the patient's referring physician within 30 days of the initial evaluation; PTs would no longer need to obtain a signed plan of care within 30 days from the physician who referred the patient. However, the referring physician may amend the plan of care within 10 business days of receipt of it from the physical therapist.

An APTA survey of members found that nearly 75% of respondents believe that administrative burdens negatively impact patient outcomes. More than 8 in 10 said that administrative burden contributes to burnout. And unnecessary burden is costly: the survey found that more than 75% of facilities have added nonclinical staff to accommodate administrative burden.

The REDUCE Act is aimed at reducing an unnecessary administrative burden that increases costs and does nothing to improve outcomes. This small but critical change will save untold hours on an unnecessary regulatory mandate so that physical therapists can spend less time doing paperwork and more time doing what they do best – treating Medicare beneficiaries.

Facts About Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants



Who We Are

Physical therapists are movement experts who help to optimize people's physical function, movement, performance, health, quality of life, and well-being. Physical therapists evaluate, diagnose, and manage movement conditions for individuals, and they also provide contributions to public health services aimed at improving population health and the human experience. Physical therapist assistants are educated and licensed or certified clinicians who provide care under the direction and supervision of a licensed physical therapist. PTs and PTAs care for people of all ages and abilities.

What We Do

After performing an evaluation and making a diagnosis, physical therapists create and implement personalized plans based on best available evidence to help their patients improve mobility, manage pain and other chronic conditions, recover from injury, and prevent future injury and chronic disease. PTs and PTAs empower people to be active participants in their care and well-being. They practice collaboratively with other health professionals to ensure the best clinical outcomes.

Where We Practice

PTs and PTAs provide services to people in a variety of settings, including outpatient clinics or offices; hospitals; inpatient rehabilitation facilities; skilled nursing, extended care, or subacute facilities; education or research centers; schools; community centers; hospices; industrial, workplace, or other occupational environments; and fitness centers and sports training facilities.

The Economic Value of Physical Therapy in the United States

A September 2023 report from the American Physical Therapy Association outlines the cost-effectiveness and economic value of physical therapist services for a broad range of common conditions. "The Economic Value of Physical Therapy in the United States" reinforces the importance of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants in improving patient outcomes and decreasing downstream costs. Policymakers should use this report to inform legislative and regulatory efforts for health care delivery and payment under Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial payers. **Review the findings at [ValueofPT.com](https://www.valueofpt.com).**

Education and Licensure

As of 2016, all PTs must receive a doctor of physical therapy degree from an accredited physical therapist education program before taking and passing a national licensure exam that permits them to practice. Licensure is required in each state (or other jurisdiction, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) in which a PT practices. PTAs must complete a two-year associate's degree from an accredited physical therapist assistant program and pass a national exam. State licensure or certification is required in each state (or jurisdiction) in which a PTA works.

American Physical Therapy Association

The American Physical Therapy Association is a national organization representing more than 100,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Our mission is to build a community that advances the profession of physical therapy to improve the health of society.



Co-sponsor H.R. 7279 today!

For more information and contact info for APTA Government Affairs staff, scan here or visit apta.org/position-paper.

