

CHAPTER 101

Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation— State Board of Physical Therapy Examiners

(Statutory Authority: 1976 Code § 40–45–10, et seq.)

ARTICLE 1 DEFINITIONS

101–01. Definitions.

Definitions found in Section 40–45–20 apply to this chapter.

(1) “Continuing education” means an organized educational program designed to expand a licensee’s knowledge base beyond the basic entry level educational requirements for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants. Course content must relate to patient care in physical therapy whether the subject is research, treatment, documentation, education, or management.

(2) “CEU” or “continuing education unit” means ten (10) contact hours of participation in Certified Activities and/or participation in Approved Activities as set forth herein.

(3) “Contact hour” means a minimum of fifty (50) minutes of instruction or participation in Certified Activities or Approved Activities.

(4) “Continuing competency” is the ongoing ability of a PT or PTA to learn, integrate, and apply the knowledge, skill and judgment to practice as a PT and/or PTA according to generally accepted standards and professional ethical standards as defined by the Board.

(5) “Certified Activities” are Board-approved activities for which a licensee may receive CEU credit. Certified Activities are measured in contact hours, with one (1) contact hour equaling one-tenth (.1) of an hour of CEU credit. A certified activity must be subject to an evaluative process to determine if the activity meets a minimal threshold of required criteria and how well that activity meets that criteria.

(6) “Approved Activities” are Board-approved activities for which a licensee may receive CEU credit, but which are not subject to a formal evaluative process. Approved Activities are assigned a set CEU value measured in contact hours based on the criteria established herein, with one (1) contact hour equaling one-tenth (.1) of an hour of CEU credit.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009; SCSR 43–5 Doc. No. 4856, eff May 24, 2019; SCSR 48–5 Doc. No. 5235, eff May 24, 2024.

ARTICLE 2 OFFICERS OF BOARD; MEETINGS

101–02. Officers of Board.

At the first meeting of each calendar year, the Board shall elect from among its members a chairman, vice-chairman, and other officers as the Board determines necessary.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009.

101–03. Meetings.

(1) The Board shall meet at least two (2) times a year and at other times upon the call of the chairman or a majority of the Board members.

(2) A majority of the members of the Board constitutes a quorum; however, if there is a vacancy on the Board, a majority of the members serving constitutes a quorum.

(3) Board members are required to attend meetings or to provide proper notice and justification of inability to do so. Unexcused absences from meetings may result in removal from the Board as provided in Section 1–3–240.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009.

ARTICLE 3 LICENSING PROVISIONS

101–04. General Licensing Provisions for Physical Therapists.

An applicant for licensure as a physical therapist must:

(1) be a graduate of a physical therapy educational program approved by the Board; or, if foreign educated, must have a credentials evaluation by a Board approved credentialing evaluation agency that determines the applicant's education is substantially equivalent to the education of physical therapists educated in an accredited entry level program as determined by the Board. To determine substantial equivalency, the approved credentialing evaluation agency shall use the appropriate Course Work Tool ("CWT") adopted by the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT). The appropriate CWT means the CWT in place at the time the foreign educated physical therapist graduated from their physical therapy program;

(2) submit an application on a form approved by the Board, along with the required fee; and

(3) speak the English language as a native language or demonstrate an effective proficiency of the English language in the manner prescribed by and to the satisfaction of the board; and

(4) pass an examination approved by the Board; and

(5) submit proof of not less than one thousand (1000) clinical practice hours under the on-site supervision of a licensed physical therapist on a form approved by the Board if the applicant is not a graduate of an approved school; and

(6) undergo a state criminal record check, supported by fingerprints, by the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) and a national criminal record check, supported by fingerprints, by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009; State Register Volume 36, Issue No. 6, eff June 22, 2012; SCSR 43–5 Doc. No. 4856, eff May 24, 2019.

101–05. General Licensing Provisions for Physical Therapist Assistants.

An applicant for initial licensure as a physical therapist assistant must:

(1) be a graduate of a physical therapist assistant program approved by the Board; and

(2) submit an application on a form approved by the Board, along with the required fee; and

(3) pass an examination approved by the Board; and

(4) speak the English language as a native language or demonstrate an effective proficiency of the English language in the manner prescribed by and to the satisfaction of the board; and

(5) undergo a state criminal record check, supported by fingerprints, by the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED); and a national criminal record check, supported by fingerprints, by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009; State Register Volume 36, Issue No. 6, eff June 22, 2012; SCSR 43–5 Doc. No. 4856, eff May 24, 2019.

101–06. Reactivation of Inactive or Lapsed Licenses for individuals who do not meet the statutory criteria for active licensure in another state.

(1) A physical therapist (PT) or physical therapist assistant (PTA) whose license has lapsed for more than three (3) years may be granted a provisional license to obtain the appropriate supervised clinical

practice hours and must demonstrate one thousand (1000) hours of qualified supervised practice before the license can be reactivated.

(2) A PT or PTA whose license has lapsed for more than five (5) years must also demonstrate successful completion of seventy-five (75) hours of continuing education in organized programs of learning (to include a workshop or symposium) which contribute directly to the professional competency of the licensee and meet the criteria of Regulation 101-07(3).

(3) A PT or PTA whose license has lapsed for more than ten (10) years must also successfully pass an examination approved by the Board.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009.

101-07. Continuing Education and Competency.

An individual licensed as a PT or PTA is responsible for optimum service to the public and is accountable for maintaining evidence of high levels of skill and knowledge. Evaluation and assessment of current competence is critical for PTs and PTAs. The results of an evaluation or assessment should be used by the licensee to then select appropriate developmental activities.

(1) A licensed PT or PTA shall earn three (3.0) CEUs per biennium period (30 hours) and at least fifteen (15) contact hours of the thirty hours must be obtained through the completion of Certified Activities. PTs and PTAs licensed in South Carolina are not subject to this requirement for the first biennium renewal period in which they are initially licensed.

(2) A PT or PTA must complete three (3) contact hours of study in ethics, professionalism, and/or South Carolina jurisprudence per biennium as part of his/her CEU requirements. This requirement shall be obtained by participation in a Certified Activity and will count towards the licensee's required Certified Activity hours.

(3) At least fifteen (15) of the required thirty (30) contact hours shall be from Certified Activities. Certified Activities include:

(a) attendance at conferences and completion of continuing competency activities that meet the Standards of Continuing Competence (SCC) as set forth by the FSBPT. Credit for this item is applied as awarded by the provider, and a certificate of completion is required as evidence of compliance.

(b) attendance at conferences and completion of continuing competency activities provided by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), South Carolina Chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA-SC), other chapters and sections of the APTA, as well as other state boards of physical therapy. Credit for this item is applied as awarded by the provider, and a certificate of completion is required as evidence of compliance.

(c) completion of educational programs where CE credit is given and approved by accredited universities. Credit for this item is applied as awarded by the provider, and a certificate of completion is required as evidence of compliance.

(d) attendance at educational programs where CE credit is given and approved by APTA-SC. Credit for this item is applied as awarded by the provider, and a certificate of completion is required as evidence of compliance.

(e) completion of an APTA credentialed fellowship or residency. Licensees who are enrolled in a fellowship or residency will be considered as meeting the educational and competency requirements for the entire licensure biennium in which the certification or renewal is received. A letter from the director of the residency or fellowship program is required as evidence of compliance.

(f) certification or recertification of clinical specialization by the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS) or PTA advanced proficiency certification. A licensee who completes this certification or recertification will be considered as having met the CEU requirement for the entire licensure biennium in which the certification or recertification is awarded.

(g) completion of academic course work germane to the practice of physical therapy and conducted or sponsored by accredited institutions of higher education. Courses must be on the graduate level for PTs. Undergraduate courses are acceptable for PTAs. Ten (10) contact hours may be awarded for each credit hour awarded by the accredited institution of higher education. A

transcript from the institution which indicates a passing grade in the course is required as evidence of compliance.

(h) completion of any appropriate physical therapy continued competency tools, including examinations and/or self-assessments, developed by the FSBPT and/or APTA. Credit for CEUs is applied as awarded. If no contact hours are awarded, a licensee may receive five (5) contact hours. A certification of completion is required as evidence of compliance.

(i) completion of courses relating to physical therapy approved by the American Medical Association (AMA). A certification of completion is required as evidence of compliance.

(4) A licensee may obtain up to fifteen (15) hours of CEU credit through Approved Activities per biennium. Approved Activities include:

(a) completion of continuing education courses and attendance at conferences that do not meet the requirements for Certified Activities. A licensee who completes such a course or attends such a conference will receive credit for: ten (10) contact hours for each course/conference that totals thirty-two (32) hours or longer; five (5) contact hours for each course/conference that totals a minimum of eight (8) but fewer than thirty-two (32) hours; and two (2) contact hours for each course/conference that totals fewer than eight (8) hours. A certification of completion is required as evidence of compliance.

(b) clinical instruction. Clinical instructors shall receive one (1) contact hour for every one hundred and sixty (160) hours of clinical internship, limited to a maximum of six (6) contact hours per instructor per biennium. Students must be enrolled in CAPTE accredited or eligible DPT or PTA programs. Clinical instructors must be credentialed by APTA to receive clinical continuing education credits. Verification of the clinical supervision agreement with the student's educational program and a log reporting supervision hours is required as evidence of compliance. A certificate of completion from the educational program may also be used as evidence of compliance.

(c) attendance at in-service education programs pertaining to safety, governmental regulation, clinical concepts, or CPR. One (1) contact hour per in-service program may be awarded for a maximum of three (3) contact hours per biennium. Learning objectives, program schedule, and verification of attendance from an employer are required as evidence of compliance.

(d) teaching a course on a subject germane to the practice of physical therapy at an accredited institution of higher education when that teaching is an adjunct responsibility and not the licensee's primary employment. CEU credit is based on didactic classroom/lab teaching time and may not exceed ten (10) contact hours per biennium. A letter from the institution documenting the licensee's completion of this activity is required as evidence of compliance.

(e) performing volunteer work. A licensee who renders physical therapy services voluntarily and without compensation or the expectation or promise of compensation and seeks no reimbursement from charitable and governmental sources may receive one (1) contact hour of continuing education for each hour of volunteer medical services rendered, up to a maximum of seven and one-half (7.5) contact hours per biennium. A letter from the organization/individual for whom the licensee is providing volunteer services documenting the licensee's completion of this activity is required as evidence of compliance.

(f) presentations made before physical therapists or other health care professionals and directly related to the profession of physical therapy. Three (3) contact hours per presentation/topic may be awarded. Documentation of the learning objectives presented and a presentation brochure or flyer are required as evidence of compliance. A licensee may obtain no more than six (6) hours of credit for this activity per biennium.

(g) self-study germane to the practice of physical therapy, which may be directed by a correspondence course, video, internet or satellite program by a provider not outlined in the Certified Activities listed above. One (1) contact hour per study topic may be awarded. Documentation of the study objectives, activities, and time spent to meet objectives, as well as reflection on learning achieved, is required as evidence of compliance. A licensee may obtain no more than two (2) hours of credit for this activity per biennium.

(h) conducting peer-reviewed research germane to the practice of physical therapy performed by the licensee. Credit for ten (10) contact hours may be awarded for principal and co-principal

investigators in research projects. The title of the research project and copy of the abstract, as well as the funding agency and grant period, if applicable, are required as evidence of compliance.

(i) writing a professional publication. Credit for eight (8) contact hours may be awarded for each peer-reviewed publication written by a licensee. Credit for four (4) contact hours may be awarded for each non-peer-reviewed publication. A copy of the article, book chapter, or other work product is required as evidence of compliance. A licensee may obtain no more than eight (8) hours of credit for this activity per biennium.

(j) participation in a formal mentorship (as mentor or protégé). Credit for five (5) contact hours may be awarded per biennium for a licensee's participation in a formal mentorship program. Documentation of the objectives and action plans, as well as documentation of the activities completed are required as evidence of compliance.

(5) Notwithstanding any provision in this Chapter to the contrary, no contact hours or CEUs may be awarded for a licensee's:

- (a) attendance at staff meetings, or involvement in presentations or publications directed at lay groups;
- (b) participation in non-educational entertainment or recreational meetings or activities;
- (c) participation or attendance at case conferences, grand rounds, informal presentations, etc.;
- (d) participation in self-directed studies other than those specifically allowed for herein;
- (e) routine teaching, research, or orientation duties as part of a job requirement;
- (f) CEUs or contact hours carried over from one licensure period to another; or
- (g) attendance at exhibits or poster presentations.

(6) Reporting Requirements:

(a) reports shall be submitted in a manner prescribed by the Board. By signing the biennial report of continuing education, the licensee signifies that the report is true and accurate.

(b) Licensees shall retain original documentation of all Certified Activities and Approved Activities completed as required herein for no less than three (3) years from the beginning date of the licensure period.

(7) Audit of continuing competency:

(a) each licensee shall be responsible for maintaining sufficient records in a format determined by the Board; and

(b) these records shall be subject to a random audit by the Board to assure compliance with this section; and

(c) the Board may audit a percentage of the continuing education reports.

(8) In the event of denial, in whole or part, of credit for purposes of meeting the requirements of this Section, the licensee shall have the right to request a hearing in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009; State Register Volume 36, Issue No. 6, eff June 22, 2012; SCSR 43-5 Doc. No. 4856, eff May 24, 2019; SCSR 48-5 Doc. No. 5235, eff May 24, 2024.

ARTICLE 4 FEES

101-08. Fees.

(A) The Board may charge fees as shown in South Carolina Code of Regulations Chapter 10-30 and on the South Carolina Board of Physical Therapy Examiners website at <http://lhr.sc.gov/POL/PhysicalTherapy/>.

(B) A check which is presented to the Board as payment for a fee which the Board is permitted to charge under this chapter and which is returned unpaid may be cause for denial of a license or for imposing a sanction authorized under this chapter or Section 40-1-50(G).

(C) The Board may direct applicants to pay an examination fee directly to a third party who has contracted to administer the examination.

(D) Fees are nonrefundable and may be prorated in order to comply with a biennial schedule.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009; State Register Volume 36, Issue No. 6, eff June 22, 2012; State Register Volume 39, Issue No. 6, Doc. No. 4512, eff June 26, 2015.

ARTICLE 5 SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

101–09. Supervision Guidelines.

It is recommended that a physical therapist should not concurrently supervise more than three (3) full-time equivalent physical therapist assistant positions. The Board, in its discretion, may permit supervision of more than three (3) full-time equivalent physical therapist assistant positions, for a short, defined period of time, if a situation arises in a physical therapy treatment setting that makes compliance impossible. Relief from this supervision ratio is allowable if there is no immediate risk to public health or safety as determined by the Board.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009; State Register Volume 36, Issue No. 6, eff June 22, 2012.

ARTICLE 6 STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

101–10. Use of Aides in the Practice of Physical Therapy.

Aides are non-licensed personnel who assist the physical therapist or physical therapist assistant but whose duties do not require an understanding of physical therapy or formal training in anatomical, biological, or physical sciences. Education or training of the physical therapy aide shall not exceed the scope of activities described in Section 40–45–290. Aides are not to be assigned duties that may be performed only by a licensed physical therapist or licensed physical therapist assistant. When aides are utilized in the treatment of patients, the following guidelines shall apply:

(1) when applying hydrotherapy, heat or cold treatments, a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant may allow an aide to assist patients in dressing and undressing, drape and position the patient in preparation for treatment, clean and fill the whirlpool, attend the patient during treatment, wrap the patient's extremities after a paraffin bath, and place the hot packs on the patient; and

(2) when applying electrotherapy, a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant may allow an aide to prepare the area to be treated and to prepare equipment and apply electrodes as specified by the physical therapist and physical therapist assistant; and

(3) when applying traction, a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant may allow an aide to prepare the patient for treatment, position the patient, and apply the cervical or pelvic harness; and

(4) when applying therapeutic exercise, a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant may allow an aide to set up the patient's exercise equipment, prepare the equipment, and give the patient established amount of weights for resistive exercise; and

(5) when applying gait training, a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant may allow an aide to prepare equipment such as crutches, walkers, parallel bars, and braces and to assist the physical therapist or physical therapist assistant in gait training of the patient.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009; State Register Volume 36, Issue No. 6, eff June 22, 2012.

101–11. Referral.

For purposes of S.C. Code Section 40–45–110(4), "referral" is defined as a writing communicating to the patient the importance of seeing the licensed medical doctor or dentist, a copy of which is placed in the patient's treatment records.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009; SCSR 48–5 Doc. No. 5235, eff May 24, 2024.

101–12. Practice of Physical Therapy.

The practice of physical therapy will be considered to occur in the licensing jurisdiction where the patient is physically located at the time that the services are rendered.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009.

ARTICLE 7 CODE OF ETHICS

101–13. Code of Ethics for Physical Therapists.

Principle 1: Physical Therapists respect the rights and dignity of all individuals.

Principle 2: Physical Therapists comply with the laws and regulations governing the practice of physical therapy.

Principle 3: Physical Therapists accept responsibility for the exercise of sound judgment.

Principle 4: Physical Therapists maintain and promote high standards for physical therapy practice, education, and research.

Principle 5: Physical Therapists seek remuneration for their services that is deserved and responsible.

Principle 6: Physical Therapists provide accurate information to the consumer about the profession and about those services they provide.

Principle 7: Physical Therapists accept the responsibility to protect the public and the profession from unethical, incompetent, or illegal acts.

Principle 8: Physical Therapists participate in efforts to address the health needs of the public.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009.

101–14. Code of Ethics for Physical Therapist Assistants.

Standard 1: Physical Therapist Assistants provide services under the supervision of a physical therapist.

Standard 2: Physical Therapist Assistants respect the rights and dignity of all individuals.

Standard 3: Physical Therapist Assistants maintain and promote high standards in the provision of services, giving the welfare of patients their highest regard.

Standard 4: Physical Therapist Assistants provide services within the limits of the law.

Standard 5: Physical Therapist Assistants make those judgments that are commensurate with their qualifications as physical therapist assistants.

Standard 6: Physical Therapist Assistants accept the responsibility to protect the public and the profession from unethical, incompetent, or illegal acts.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009.

101–15. Sexual Misconduct.

Engaging in sexual misconduct constitutes grounds for disciplinary action. Sexual misconduct for the purposes of this section includes, but is not limited to, the following:

(1) Engaging in or soliciting sexual relationships, whether consensual or non-consensual, while a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant/patient relationship exists.

(2) Making sexual advances, requesting sexual favors, or engaging in other verbal conduct or physical contact of a sexual nature with patients or clients.

(3) Intentionally viewing a completely or partially disrobed patient in the course of treatment if the viewing is not related to patient evaluation or treatment under current practice standards.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 24, Issue No. 5, eff May 26, 2000. Amended by State Register Volume 33, Issue No. 2, eff February 27, 2009; SCSR 48–5 Doc. No. 5235, eff May 24, 2024.

ARTICLE 8
PHYSICAL THERAPY COMPACT RULES AND AMENDMENTS

101–16. Physical Therapy Compact Commission Rules and Amendments.

All rules and amendments adopted by the Physical Therapy Compact Commission are incorporated by reference herein and shall be binding upon the Board and its licensees as of the date specified in each rule or amendment. These rules and amendments are available on the Physical Therapy Compact Commission's website, www.ptcompact.org.

HISTORY: Added by SCSR 43–5 Doc. No. 4856, eff May 24, 2019.