

Regulatory Requirements for Educators Recommendations

Regulatory Requirements for Educators Task Force Charge

The charge of the Regulatory Requirements for Educators Task Force was to make recommendations to the FSBPT Board of Directors regarding best practices for licensure of physical therapy program faculty for PT/PTA educational programs delivered in a variety of ways. CAPTE is in the process of revising standards and required elements, and the work of this task force may inform changes for licensure standards for faculty.

Education/Research is Active Practice

Consistent with the Model Practice Act (MPA), the task force unanimously agreed that engaging in education and research are active practice and require legal authorization to practice.¹ Many states have adopted definitions that include academics/education and research—primary responsibilities of professors and often times program directors—in the definition of practice of physical therapy. For those jurisdictions that don't include education in the definition of the practice of physical therapy, there is often a requirement for the person to hold a valid, unexpired, and unrevoked license issued to hold themselves out as a PT/PTA. Many educational institutions are unsure of requirements and how to advise members of program faculty.

Regardless of what other entities (e.g., employer, accrediting agencies, professional associations) require, professional licensure (certification) or a Compact Privilege is the authorization to provide physical therapy services in each state. Unless academia is specifically exempted, educators should assume an active, unrestricted license or Compact Privilege is required. With the advent of branch campuses², online teaching, virtual classrooms, and hybrid programs with limited in-person instruction, the question becomes where should the member of program faculty be authorized to practice?

Task Force Recommendations

Balancing the need for public protection and risk associated with education with creating unnecessary barriers to practice/work, the task force came to the following recommendations:

1. The practice of physical therapy includes engaging in education and/or research as a member of program faculty, and a PT/PTA engaging in either must possess a license to practice/work as a PT or PTA.
2. Every PT/PTA engaging in education and/or research as a member of program faculty must be authorized to practice/work in the jurisdiction where the physical therapy education program is authorized to operate by accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and/or Council for Higher Education Accreditation to provide that degree program.* Legal authorization to practice/work includes licensure (certification) or compact privilege where available.

¹ Legal Authorization to Practice = License or Compact Privilege

² Branch campuses- apply solely to expansion programs that are in the same jurisdiction

3. Every PT/PTA engaging in education and/or research as a member of program faculty by providing in-person instruction to students must be authorized to practice/work in the jurisdiction where the in-person course instruction occurs.* Legal authorization to practice/work includes licensure (certification) or compact privilege where available.
4. Every PT/PTA engaging in education and/or research as a member of program faculty may be eligible for licensure exemption provisions in the jurisdiction(s) from number 2 and 3 above.

**Instructors may need to be licensed at both locations if in-person teaching occurs in a different jurisdiction than where the physical therapy education program is authorized to provide that degree program.*