



NCBPTE Updates

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THE NORTH CAROLINA BOARD OF PHYSICAL THERAPY EXAMINERS

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Regulatory Spotlight

Updated Position Statements: Direct Access, and Use of Clinical Designators

The Board carefully applies the standards specified in Board Rule 21 NCAC 48C .0101 when developing responses to scope of practice questions and updating position statements. Position statements are usually created by the Board in response to scope of practice questions and fact patterns that are commonly encountered by licensees. The purpose of a position statement is to provide guidance, direction and clarity to everyday clinical and administrative situations in the practice of physical therapy using the rubric of the NC PT Practice Act and Board rules. Position statements are not exhaustive and do not have the force of law; rather they apply the existing law and rules to a specific situation. The Board's position statements can be found on the Board website ([Position Statements](#)).

Position statements are routinely reviewed every two years by the Board to ensure continued relevance and accuracy. At its June 2024 quarterly meeting, the Board reviewed and updated several position statements to reflect prevailing standards of physical therapy practice. Additional position statements identified as requiring updates will be reviewed by the Board at a future meeting and updates posted on the website. These position statements were revised June 5, 2024.

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North Carolina has allowed **direct access** (practice without the legal requirement of a physician's referral) since 1985 when the Practice Act was revised by the NC General Assembly.

As defined by both Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy and the American Physical Therapy Association, direct access means physical therapists can provide evaluation and treatment services without the need for an order or referral from a licensed medical doctor or other healthcare professional in accordance with state law.

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In North Carolina, the required **clinical designator** for physical therapist is PT and for physical therapist assistant is PTA.

Can a licensed physical therapist with a doctoral degree use the designation "Dr." with their name?

The North Carolina Physical Therapy Practice Act and Board rules do not specifically address this question; however, licensed physical

therapists should not mislead or misrepresent their role to patients or the general public. Whether intentional or not, it is the responsibility of licensed physical therapists to ensure that patients clearly understand that a licensed physical therapist is not a medical doctor.

To the extent that a physical therapist can distinguish the doctoral degree in physical therapy when communicating with others, that is permitted. However, it is problematic if a DPT is using terms or acronyms with patients or the general public that are confusing or misleading. A DPT should carefully choose words and language so as to not to mislead the public about whether the DPT is a medical doctor.

The term "Graduated" as defined in 21 NCAC 48A .0105 is used in the context of the application process for obtaining a PT or PTA license. The clinical designator is appropriate to use only after the degree has been conferred and the individual is licensed to practice physical therapy in the state of North Carolina.

NC Department of Revenue no longer requires a yearly privilege license for physical therapy providers

Effective July 1, 2024, certain professions and business -- including physical therapists - are no longer required to obtain a yearly privilege license from the NC Department of Revenue. The [NC Gen. Stat. § 105-41](#) was repealed pursuant to [Session Law 2023-134, s. 42.7\(a\)](#) (pages 614-15) that required an individual to obtain “a statewide license for the privilege of practicing the profession or engaging in the business.”

The chart below identifies the professions or businesses that are no longer required to obtain a yearly privilege license. The chart may not reflect all specific professions and businesses.

Accountant	Engineer	Physician/Surgeon
Certified Public Accountant	Registered Land Surveyor	Podiatrist
Assistant Accountant	Landscape Architect	Psychologist
Architect	Naturopath	Real Estate Broker/Agent
Art of Healing	Ophthalmologist	Veterinarian
Attorney	Optician	Licensed Home Inspector
Chiropracist	Optometrist	Funeral Director

Did you know?



As of July 1, 2024, NC Board of PT Examiners offers Self-Service License Verification - at no charge to the licensee.

If you are applying for a license in another state and need a License Verification or Letter of Good Standing, that state should visit the home page of the Board website and follow the prompts within the Licensee Lookup/License Verification button to print the required document.

PT Compact Commission adopts rule changes

Below are summaries of rules the PT Compact Commission amended in June 2024.

- Rule 1.1 -- “Expired” is defined as “the status of a license or compact privilege that is not active and includes a license with a status of ‘lapsed’ or ‘non-renewed.’ A compact privilege that is not renewed before the expiration date automatically expires on that date without any grace period.
- Rule 2.3 and 3.5 – An individual’s compact privilege expires on the same date as the individual’s home state license. The home state license expiration date is the date in effect on the

date the compact privilege was purchased. The fee paid to the member state for a compact privilege covers the period the individual has remaining on the home state license. Renewal of the home state license does not automatically extend the expiration date of the compact privilege.

- Rule 3.1 – Compact privilege holders must report a change in their home state within 60 days.

Current versions of the PTCC Rules, Bylaws and Policies and Procedures are posted on the [PT Compact website](#).