



NCBPT E Updates

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THE NORTH CAROLINA BOARD OF PHYSICAL THERAPY EXAMINERS

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Regulatory Spotlight

Is it appropriate for a PT to delegate suctioning, either oropharyngeal or tracheal, to a PTA?

Recent meetings of both the Public Protection Task Force (February 28, 2024) and the Board (March 6, 2024) considered this question. Research into the topic included:

- Review of Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) curriculum requirements for PTA Education Programs (Standard 7 and more specifically 7A2, 7D1-8);
- Discussion with CAPTE accredited PTA programs in NC, along with Board-Certified Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Clinical Specialists in NC who are subject matter experts;
- Examination of the 2022 Academy of Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Physical Therapy publication: [Entry-Level Physical Therapist Competencies in Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Physical Therapy](#); and
- Consultation with rehab managers in long-term acute care settings regarding current practice.

Since this question incorporates the appropriate delegation and supervision of the PTA by the PT, a scope of practice analysis is necessary. As with all scope of practice considerations, the Board reviewed and applied NC Physical Therapy Board **Rule 21 NCAC 48C .0101 PERMITTED PRACTICE** (a) Physical therapy is presumed to include any acts, tests, procedures, modalities, treatments, or interventions that are routinely taught in educational programs or in continuing education programs for physical therapists and are routinely performed in practice settings.

The APTA Academy of Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Physical Therapy publication, [Entry-Level Physical Therapist Competencies in Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Physical Therapy](#), differentiates oropharyngeal suctioning (airway suctioning) and tracheal suctioning (deep, inline suctioning) when

defining entry-level physical therapist competencies. Since the opinions of the NC Board-Certified Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Clinical Specialists and the experiences of the rehab managers surveyed in long-term acute care settings aligned with these categories of suctioning, oropharyngeal and tracheal suctioning were the operational definitions utilized by the Board.

After review, the Board determined both oropharyngeal and tracheal suctioning fall within the scope of practice for PTs who have the requisite training, education, and competency. The skill and knowledge required of PTs performing tracheal suctioning are considered advanced and would not be appropriate for an entry-level licensee to perform. Additionally, levels of complexity (both patient and the setting), as highlighted in the Academy of Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Physical Therapy 2022 publication noted above, should be considered as PTs assess their own personal level of proficiency and competence when practicing suctioning. Advanced training may be required for more complex patients and settings. The Board defines "[advanced training](#)" as "beyond entry-level" for the skill level or training required.

Since the clinical skills required to perform oropharyngeal and tracheal suctioning range from entry-level to advanced, a PT student should only perform these skills under the supervision of a trained, educated, and competent PT. Similarly, PTAs always work under the supervision of a PT. The supervising PT is responsible for determining the competence of a PTA to perform any delegated activity. Delegated activities must be deemed safe and effective for the patient and within the PT patient care plan. It is the responsibility of the PTA to perform only those delegated activities within their scope of practice, and for which the individual PTA has the education and training to perform, ensuring compliance with Board Rule 21 NCAC 48C .0101.

Annual Nominations for the NC Board of PT Examiners Needed

The North Carolina Board of Physical Therapy Examiners is composed of eight members, appointed by the Governor for a three year term.

There are four physical therapists, two physical therapist assistants, one medical doctor, and one public member.

Nominations for one physical therapist and one physical therapist assistant board member will be collected by the APTA North Carolina from mid May to mid June.

All North Carolina NC PT/PTA resident licensees will soon receive an email from APTA North Carolina explaining the process with a nomination form attached.

Introducing New Board Member -- Tiffany Needham (Term: 2024-2026)



Tiffany Needham received her B.S. degree from UNC-Greensboro in Exercise Sports Science/Sports Medicine as well as an Associate in Applied Science from Guilford Technical Community College in Physical Therapist Assistant. She's also earned a Master of Science from South University in Leadership, and a Graduate Certificate in Teaching, Training, and Technology from NC State University.

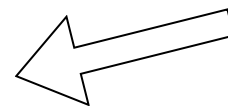
She is a seasoned PTA with over 20 years of experience in many physical therapy settings with specialties in ergonomics, education, functional training, wound care, sports medicine, and geriatrics. Tiffany has also been a physical therapy educator for over 16 years for PT and PTA programs and currently serves as the Department Chair for a developing PTA program.

As a member of the Board, Tiffany sees her role as one of providing insights, guidance, and expertise in areas relevant to the mission and goals of the NC Board of PT Examiners. "I contribute by offering perspectives on emerging trends, best practices, and potential challenges that may impact public protection," notes Tiffany. "My part in public protection involves advocating for policies and practices that prioritize the safety and well-being of individuals and communities."

Tiffany views herself as a proactive voice for ensuring that the Board's decisions are informed by a thorough understanding of the latest developments in the field and grounded in ethical principles. "By participating in discussions, sharing knowledge, and collaborating with fellow board members," she continues, "I strive to contribute to the formulation of effective strategies and initiatives aimed at safeguarding the public interest."



PT · COMPACT



Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

The Physical Therapy Compact Commission is requesting public comment on the proposed amendments to the Compact Commission rules that will be considered at the special meeting of the PTCC on June 17, 2024. Click [HERE](#) to read the summary and texts of the proposed rules or amendment to existing rules.