

**Tennessee Board of Physical Therapy**  
**Position Statement**  
**Direct Access to Physical Therapy**

In order to provide physical therapy without a prior referral, a physical therapist must meet the requirements of Tenn. Code Ann. § 63-13-303(b), including being licensed in good standing and having current CPR certification, or its equivalent. The physical therapist must also either:

1. Hold a master's or doctorate degree from a professional physical therapy program that is accredited by a national accreditation agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and by the Board of Physical Therapy. The physical therapist must also have completed at least one (1) year of experience as a licensed physical therapist. (Tenn. Code Ann. § 63-13-303(b)(1))

or

2. Have successfully completed a residency or clinical fellowship in physical therapy at a program approved by the Board of Physical Therapy. (Tenn. Code Ann. § 63-13-303(b)(2)) The Board of Physical Therapy has approved fellowships and residencies approved by the American Physical Therapy Association and the Academy of Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapists.

or

3. Have completed at least three (3) years of experience as a licensed physical therapist and successfully completed a physical therapy screening course that is approved by the Board of Physical Therapy and offered by an accredited university that consists of at least fifteen (15) contact hours. (Tenn. Code Ann. § 63-13-303(b)(3)) The Board of Physical Therapy has approved the following courses:

- a. Any physical therapy screening course offered by an accredited university.
- b. Any physical therapy screening course that meets the following criteria:

- i. The course consists of at least fifteen (15) contact hours and is taught by health professionals who hold a regular or clinical faculty appointment in a physical therapy educational program.
- ii. The course identifies that signs and symptoms of systemic disease that are not appropriate for physical therapy intervention without prior examination by a primary health care practitioner, including the signs and symptoms of cancer and diseases of the cardiopulmonary, neurological, and musculoskeletal systems.
- iii. The course teaches participants the decision-making process for determining when patients/clients require further examination or consultation by a physical therapist or referral to another health care practitioner.
- iv. The course integrates the process of making an appropriate and timely referral to another health care provider into the physical therapy examination and evaluation.

Effective July 1, 2007, the Occupational and Physical Practice Act (Tenn. Code Ann. § 63-13-101 et. Seq.) was amended to provide for direct access to physical therapy without a prior referral from a licensed doctor of medicine, chiropractic, dentistry, podiatry or osteopathy. (Tenn. Code Ann. § 63-13-303(a)(4))

Adopted by the Tennessee Board of Physical Therapy on August 17, 2007 and

Ratified by the Board of Physical Therapy on November 14, 2008.