



Support HB21-1184 (Reps. Lontine and Will & Sen. Winter) Physician Assistant Collaboration & Reimbursement

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Physician Assistants (PA) are nationally certified, state Medical Board licensed health care professionals that practice in a collaborative relationship with other members of a patient's health care team.

HB21-1184 updates the term used to describe the PA-physician relationship from "supervision" to "collaboration." It also eliminates the legal requirement that an **experienced** PA be supervised by a physician after their first three years (5,760 hours) of practicing as a PA, and after an additional two years of supervised clinical practice when changing specialties. Employers will retain the ability to require additional supervision. The bill also allows PAs to be eligible for direct reimbursement from insurers. PAs will continue to be held to the same strict professional and ethical standards required of all regulated professionals by the state Medical Board.

HB21-1184 will strengthen the health care team, expand access to care, and reduce health care costs by removing burdensome PA administrative constraints while ensuring access to safe, quality patient care.

Strengthened health care team - When a PA is not required to have a specific relationship with a physician, health systems and hospitals can be more flexible in creating health care teams, which allows them to more effectively meet patient needs and reduce provider burnout. Health care teams are stronger when administrative burdens are reduced. PAs will be required to collaborate with, consult with, or refer to the appropriate member of the health care team as indicated by the condition of the patient, and the education, experience, and competence of the PA.

Access to care - Currently only 13% of Colorado PAs practice in rural areas¹, likely due to the existing restrictive laws and regulations. Eliminating the requirement for a PA to have a specific relationship with a physician will make it easier for PAs to practice in rural and medically underserved communities. It will also allow PAs to more easily provide volunteer medical services and respond to disasters and emergencies.

Reduced health care costs – Increasing practice flexibility will help ensure that patients are seen in the right setting, by the right provider, at the right time—which can reduce the overall cost of health care. A study on the cost-effectiveness of PAs found that when the cost (and time) of a PA's education and salary are considered alongside the medical tasks a PA may perform, PAs are "one of the most cost-effective health care clinicians to employ."² Another study found that by making even modest improvements to practice laws for PAs (and NPs), the state of Alabama could see \$729 million in health care savings over ten years.³

For further information, contact Diana Protopapa at 303.810.3708; diana@frontlinepublicaffairs.com

Physician Assistants

- PAs have master's level degrees, with the typical PA program averaging 27 months and including at least 2,000 hours of clinical rotations.
- PA educational curriculum is modeled on medical school curriculum and PAs are trained as medical generalists.
- PAs diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medication, and often serve as patient's principal health care provider.
- PAs are nationally certified and state licensed. As part of certification PAs are required to complete 100 hours of continuing medical education (CME) every two years and recertify every 10 years through an exam that evaluates general medical knowledge.
- PAs are regulated by the state medical board which in Colorado includes two designated PA seats.

¹ American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) 2019 Salary Survey

² Roderick S. Hooker, *The Economic Basis of Physician Assistant Practice*, 24 PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT 51 (2000).

³ Roderick S. Hooker & Ashley N. Muchow, *Modifying State Laws for Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants Can Reduce Cost of Medical Services*, NURSING ECONOMIC\$ (2015), <http://www.nursingeconomics.net/necfiles/14ND/Hooker.pdf> (last visited Nov. 23, 2020).