



Physical Therapy Board of California

BUSINESS, CONSUMER SERVICES, AND HOUSING AGENCY - GOVERNOR EDMUND G. BROWN JR.

Physical Therapy Board of California

2005 Evergreen St. Suite 1350, Sacramento, California 95815

Phone: (916) 561-8200 Fax: (916) 263-2560

Internet: www.ptbc.ca.gov



Senate Bill 1485

by Donald Chu, PhD, PT – Board President

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Senate Bill 1485 was approved by the Governor on July 6, 2004 and was filed with the Secretary of State July 7, 2004. The provisions of Senate Bill 1485 became effective January 1, 2005. This bill was an act to amend Sections 2620 and 2622 of the Business and Professions (B&P) Code as they relate to the practice of Physical Therapy.

Section 2620 defines physical therapy. As amended by Senate Bill 1485 the definition of physical therapy now expressly includes “the promotion and maintenance of physical fitness to enhance the bodily movement related to health and wellness of individuals through the use of physical therapy interventions”. (Emphasis added) Now, with the changes to Section 2620, the physical therapist is clearly authorized to perform physical therapy interventions for the purpose of wellness and fitness.

Services related to wellness and fitness may include instruction in general flexibility, strength and conditioning exercise programs for home/clinical/health club settings, geriatric wellness exercise programs for individuals and groups and ergonomic or other educational programs for industry or private organizations.

Physical therapy interventions that are reasonably designed and intended, consistent with applicable professional standards, to promote or maintain physical fitness and not to treat or correct a medical condition may be employed by a physical therapist without any diagnosis by another health care practitioner. But if instead the intervention is for treatment or correction of a medical condition, the physical therapist must first obtain a diagnosis from a physician or other duly licensed practitioner. Nevertheless it may be possible to provide a wellness program without a diagnosis even for individuals with joint replacement or severe arthritis so long as the program is reasonably designed and intended solely to promote and maintain physical fitness.

The question has also arisen regarding the provision of massage services without a diagnosis. Once again, massage services can also be provided to clients if they are for wellness and fitness purposes and not for treatment of medical conditions. If massage is provided as an injury preventive, warm-up or cool down intervention, it would ordinarily be understood to be for purposes of wellness or fitness.

The question of reimbursement may well come up in any discussion of services provided. **In light of this, the billing codes used must accurately reflect the services actually provided.**

The other change made by Senate Bill 1485 was a relatively minor change to B&P Code Section 2622. Senate Bill 1485 revised the definition of physical therapist and “physical therapist technician” for the purposes of the practice act to mean a person who is licensed to practice physical therapy.

Please visit www.ptb.ca.gov to review the amended language for Section 2620 located under Laws and Regulations.

NOTE: This document is not a declaratory opinion of the Physical Therapy Board of California (PTBC).