

FAQ: Utilization of Assistants in Hand Therapy

When trying to determine the appropriate utilization of therapy assistants in the hand therapy specialty many resources are available to guide you. Information on scope of practice, documentation, physical agent modalities, and much more must be looked at. This document serves to guide you to some of the resources available.

What determines the appropriate utilization of assistants in the hand therapy clinic?

- Workplace policies
- State practice act
- Federal regulations
- Payer policies
- Professional association guidelines

What AOTA resources are available regarding utilization of assistants?

<https://www.aota.org/Practice/OT-Assistants.aspx>

- Guidelines for Supervision, Roles, and Responsibilities During the Delivery of Occupational Therapy Services
- Occupational Therapy Assistant Supervision Requirements (Statutes and regulations by state)

What APTA resources are available regarding utilization of assistants?

<http://www.apta.org/PTACareers/RoleofaPTA/>

- Role of a Physical Therapy Assistant

http://www.apta.org/uploadedFiles/APTAorg/About_Us/Policies/Practice/DirectionSupervisionPTA.pdf

- Direction and supervision of a Physical Therapy Assistant

What state resources are available regarding utilization of assistants?

For state regulations and policy refer to your state website. For example

New York: <http://www.op.nysed.gov>

California: <https://www.cde.ca.gov>

What federal resources are available regarding utilization of assistants?

For federal regulation, refer to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

<https://www.cms.gov>

Information on Medicare documentation requirements can be found in the Medicare Policy Manual Chapter 15 Section 220.3 - Documentation Requirements for Therapy Services (Rev. 194, Issued: 09-03-14, Effective: Upon Implementation of ICD-10, Implementation: Upon Implementation of ICD-10)

<https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Manuals/downloads/bp102c15.PDF>

An excerpt from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Servicemanual:

“Signature and professional identification of the qualified professional who furnished or supervised the services and a list of each person who contributed to that treatment (i.e., the signature of Kathleen Smith, PTA, with notation of phone consultation with Judy Jones, PT, supervisor, when permitted by state and local law). The signature and identification of the supervisor need not be on each treatment note, unless the supervisor actively participated in the treatment. Since a clinician must be identified on the plan of care and the progress report, the name and professional identification of the supervisor responsible for the treatment is assumed to be the clinician who wrote the plan or report. When the treatment is supervised without active participation by the supervisor, the supervisor is not required to cosign the treatment note written by a qualified professional. When the responsible supervisor is absent, the presence of a similarly qualified supervisor on the clinic roster for that day is sufficient documentation and it is not required that the substitute supervisor sign or be identified in the documentation” (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2017).

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2014). Guidelines for supervision, roles, and responsibilities during the delivery of occupational therapy services. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 68(Suppl. 3), S16-S23.

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2016). Occupational therapy assistant supervision requirements. Retrieved from <https://www.aota.org/Practice/OT-Assistants.aspx>

American Physical Therapy Association. (2016). Role of a physical therapist assistant. Retrieved from <http://www.apta.org/PTACareers/RoleofaPTA/>

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Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (2017). Medicare benefit policy manual. Retrieved from <https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Manuals/downloads/bp102c15.pdf>