

A GUIDE FOR:  
SUPERVISING PHYSICIANS  
& PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS



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# Oregon

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Dear Oregon Physician and Physician Assistant:

Thank you for expanding medical care to Oregonians through your collaborative health care team.

This Guide for Supervising Physicians & Physician Assistants has been created for an easy, quick reference to some of the laws related to physician assistants and supervising physicians. Understanding these laws will help ensure your successful practice.

For complete regulations on licensure and supervisory relationships, please review the current laws online. Links are provided at the end of this booklet. We welcome you to contact the Board with additional questions.

On behalf of the Board, we wish you the best with your newly established health care team.

Sincerely,

Nicole Krishnaswami, JD  
Executive Director

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## INTRODUCTION

The physician assistant (PA) profession is founded on the principle of collaborative, team practice with physicians. PAs may provide many medical services. For example, PAs perform physical examinations, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret lab tests, perform procedures, and assist in surgery. As a result, PAs increase patient access to quality medical care.

The Oregon Medical Board (OMB or Board) is responsible for PA licensure and practice regulations. These regulations are set forth to encourage the appropriate use of PAs to extend high quality medical care to more people throughout Oregon. (ORS 677.500, OAR 847-050-0005)

### Definitions (ORS 677.495, OAR 847-050-0005)

- (1) Physician assistant (PA): A person qualified by education, training, experience, and personal character to provide medical services under the direction and supervision of a physician.
- (2) Supervising physician: A physician licensed to practice medicine in Oregon who supervises a PA.
- (3) Supervising physician organization (SPO): A group of supervising physicians that collectively supervises a PA.
- (4) Agent: A physician designated in writing by the supervising physician who provides direction and regular review of the medical services of a PA when the supervising physician is unavailable for short periods of time, such as but not limited to when the supervising physician is on vacation.

## SUPERVISING PHYSICIANS

### **Applying to be a Supervising Physician** (ORS 677.510, OAR 847-050-0027, 847-050-0037)

Prior to using the services of a PA, a physician must be approved as a supervising physician. To apply, a physician must submit an online application, pass a 20-question open-book exam on supervising physician requirements and responsibilities, and submit the application fee. This is a one-time application; physicians do not need to renew this approval.

In most cases, the Board approves or rejects an application within seven (7) working days. However, a decision may be delayed if the physician is under a Board investigation.

Apply to be a supervising physician at <http://omb.oregon.gov/login>

### **Responsibilities** (ORS 677.495, OAR 847-050-0005, 847-050-0010, 847-050-0035, 847-050-0037, 847-050-0040)

The supervising physician provides direction and regular review of the medical services provided by the PA and is responsible for the medical services provided by the PA at all times. A PA's performance of unauthorized medical services is a violation of the Medical Practice Act; both the supervising physician and the PA may be subject to disciplinary action. The supervising physician must furnish reports, as required by the Board, on the performance of the PA. These responsibilities are personal and cannot be transferred to a corporation or partnership. See also, "Supervision."

**Competence and Scope of Practice** (ORS 677.510, 677.515, OAR 847-050-0035, 847-050-0040)

The supervising physician must ensure that the PA is competent to perform the duties. The duties must be within the scope of practice of the PA.

**Supervision** (ORS 677.495, 677.510, 677.515, OAR 847-050-0010, 847-050-0037)

Supervision requires overseeing and accepting responsibility for the medical services provided by a PA, including regular and routine oversight and chart review. The proximity of the supervising physician and the means of supervision must be appropriate for the medical services provided and the competency of the PA. The level of supervision should be indicated in the practice agreement:

- (1) General Supervision: The supervising physician is not on-site with the PA, but is available for direct communication, either in person, by telephone or by other synchronous electronic means.
- (2) Direct Supervision: The supervising physician is in the facility while the PA is practicing.
- (3) Personal Supervision: The supervising physician is at the PA's side, personally directing the action of the physician assistant.

Supervision also requires the supervising physician to:

- Be available for direct communication at all times (in person, by phone, or through other synchronous electronic means).
- Review a percentage of patient charts.

## PRACTICE AGREEMENTS

**Establishing a Practice Agreement** (ORS 677.495, 677.510, 677.515, OAR 847-050-0010, 847-050-0037, 847-050-0040)

A practice agreement is a written agreement that describes the supervisory relationship between the supervising physician and the PA, including a description of duties the PA may perform. A PA may not practice medicine until a practice agreement is in place. Medical services provided by the PA must be:

- (1) Outlined by the supervising physician in the practice agreement;
- (2) Within the PA's competence and scope of practice; and
- (3) Provided under the supervision of the supervising physician.

The practice agreement should indicate the level of supervision for the medical services. See also, "Supervision." The practice agreement must include the settings and licensed facilities where the PA will provide services. However, additional, intermittent practice settings such as schools, sporting events, health fairs and long term care facilities do not need to be included.

**Within 10 days of establishing a practice agreement, the supervising physician must submit the practice agreement to the Board online at <http://omb.oregon.gov/login>.** A copy must be kept at the practice location. Although the Board does not approve or deny practice agreements, the Board may request a meeting with a supervising physician or a PA to discuss a practice agreement.

### **Practice Descriptions (ORS 677.510, OAR 847-050-0010, 847-050-0040)**

A "practice description" is a written description of the duties and functions of the PA, which was subject to Board approval prior to January 1, 2012. A PA practicing under a practice description may continue to practice in accordance with the practice description and is not required to enter into a practice agreement unless changes are made to the supervisory relationship.

### **Maintaining a Practice Agreement (ORS 677.510, OAR 847-050-0040, 847-050-0042)**

If a change is made to the practice agreement, an update must be submitted to the Board within 10 days. Modify a practice agreement at <http://omb.oregon.gov/login>. During the biennial license renewal process, the supervising physician and the PA will each be asked to verify that the practice agreement is still current and no updates are needed.

**Practice agreements on file with the Board can be viewed online through the PA's license verification at <http://omb.oregon.gov/verify>.**

### **Ending the Supervisory Relationship (OAR 847-050-0050)**

Within 15 days of a supervisory relationship ending, both the supervising physician and the PA must notify the Board of the reason(s) for termination. Terminate a practice agreement online at <http://omb.oregon.gov/login>.

## **AUTHORITY TO PRESCRIBE, ADMINISTER & DISPENSE**

### **Prescribing (ORS 677.515, OAR 847-050-0041)**

All prescriptions issued by a PA must include the name, office address, and telephone number of the PA. The PA's signature on the prescription must be followed by the letters "P.A." The PA's DEA number must be shown on prescriptions for controlled substances.

*Schedule III-V* prescribing may be allowed by the supervising physician in the practice agreement or Board-approved practice description.

*Schedule II* prescribing may be allowed by the supervising physician in the practice agreement or practice description if the PA is maintaining certification with the National Commission for the Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).

### **Administration (ORS 677.515, OAR 847-015-0025)**

A PA may administer medication directly to the patient in the office or clinic setting, if the practice agreement includes this allowance.

**Dispensing** (ORS 677.510-677.515, OAR 847-015-0025, 847-050-0041)

A PA must register with the Board for dispensing authority, <https://www.oregon.gov/omb/OMBForms1/mddo-dispensing-physician-application.pdf>.

A PA will only be approved to dispense medications that the PA is authorized to prescribe. Dispensing authority must be provided in the practice agreement or the practice description. The PA must dispense medications personally. Any dispensed medication must be pre-packaged, and the PA must maintain records of receipt and distribution. There are two types of dispensing authority:

*“Underserved Dispensing”* authority allows a PA to dispense in areas where patient access to a pharmacy is restricted because of geographic or financial restraints. The practice agreement application must explain the need for this authority, including accessibility to the nearest pharmacy.

*“General Dispensing”* authority allows a PA to dispense regardless of clinic location or patient population. However, the clinic must be registered with the Board of Pharmacy as a dispensing location.

The PA may not dispense Schedule II through IV controlled substances.

## **OTHER AUTHORITY**

### **Informed Consent** (ORS 677.097, 677.515)

A PA may obtain informed consent for treatment that the PA will provide.

### **Death Certificates** (ORS 677.518)

A PA may complete and sign death certificates.

## **IDENTIFICATION**

### (OAR 847-050-0035, 847-050-0040)

When providing medical services, the PA must clearly identify himself or herself as a physician assistant and must not allow patients or other health care professionals to be misled into believing the PA is a physician or other type of health care provider. The PA must wear a name tag with the title “physician assistant” clearly displayed. Holding oneself out or allowing another person to represent the PA as a physician is grounds for discipline.

## **RATIOS**

### (ORS 677.510)

A supervising physician may supervise up to four (4) PAs, unless the Board approves a request to supervise additional PAs. A PA may be supervised by up to four (4) supervising physicians, unless the Board approves a request to be supervised by additional supervising physicians. See also “Supervising Physician Organization.”

## **SUPERVISING PHYSICIAN ORGANIZATION (SPO)**

(ORS 677.495, 677.510, OAR 847-050-0010, 847-050-0036)

A Supervising Physician Organization (SPO) is an alternative supervisory structure intended to provide flexibility to physician-PA teams. SPOs allow a group of supervising physicians to collectively supervise the PA(s). A SPO is composed of supervising physicians; PAs may be supervised by a SPO but are not members of the SPO. **All supervising physicians in a SPO must apply to the Board before supervising PAs.**

Ratios do not apply to SPOs. In other words, a SPO may be composed of any number of supervising physicians and may supervise any number of PAs. Supervising physicians within a SPO are subject to the same responsibilities, requirements, and supervisory duties as any other supervising physician except that the supervision may be shared.

### **Establishing and Maintaining a SPO**

To establish a SPO, a group must provide the Board with the SPO's name, the name of the primary supervising physician, and the names of all supervising physicians who will provide supervision as part of the SPO. The SPO must notify the Board when any changes are made.

### **Primary Supervising Physician**

The SPO must designate one "primary supervising physician," who is responsible for the administrative direction of the SPO. This physician may also provide clinical supervision.

## AGENTS

(ORS 677.510, OAR 847-050-0038)

A supervising physician may designate an agent to direct and supervise the PA when the supervising physician is unavailable for short periods of time. The agent must be an Oregon-licensed physician in good standing.

The supervising physician must ensure that the agent understands and accepts supervisory responsibility. An agent must sign an acknowledgement form, which is kept at the primary practice location with the practice agreement.

**NOTE:** Agents are not available to a Supervising Physician Organization (SPO).

## LOCUM TENENS ASSIGNMENTS

(QAR 847-050-0029)

Substitute supervising physicians and substitute PAs may take locum tenens assignments.

- The supervising physician of record must notify the Board of the upcoming locum tenens substitution within ten (10) days of the start of the locum tenens assignment.
- The substitute supervising physician must be a Board-approved supervisor and hold an Oregon license with active, locum tenens, or emeritus status.
- A substitute PA must be qualified to provide the same type of service as described in the practice agreement and hold an Oregon license with active, locum tenens, or emeritus status.
- The practice agreement may remain unchanged or may be modified.

## **PRECEPTORSHIPS – PA STUDENTS**

(ORS 677.515, OAR 847-050-0060)

A student enrolled in an accredited PA program may provide medical services in the course of the program.

- Oregon PA programs notify the Board of the enrolled students.
- For students enrolled in PA programs outside of Oregon, the physician supervising the student must notify the Board of the dates and location of the preceptorship if the school has not done so.

A physician supervising a PA student under a preceptorship does not need to file a practice agreement with the Board.

## **MEDICAL PRACTICE ACT**

Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) chapter 677:

<http://www.leg.state.or.us/ors/677.html>

## **ADMINISTRATIVE RULES**

Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) chapter 847 division 50:

[http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/rules/oars\\_800/oar\\_847/847\\_050.html](http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/rules/oars_800/oar_847/847_050.html)