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November 2024

# School Physical Therapy and Telehealth V.6

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## Introduction

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The Oregon Department of Education is providing this FAQ in response to questions from school districts related to Physical Therapy service provision via telehealth. The scope of practice for Physical Therapists (PTs) is defined by the Oregon Board of Physical Therapy. The Board has verified the accuracy of the statements included herein as it pertains to Board rules. Nothing in this document should be interpreted as guidance that PTs are permitted to operate outside of their appropriate scope of practice.

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## School Physical Therapy Telehealth FAQs

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### The Provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require that school districts and programs provide health services if needed by a student to access their education. The requirement for school districts and programs to ensure every student access to a free appropriate education (FAPE) provides a guarantee that every student can learn regardless of ability or health need. The services listed in a child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), Individual Education Program (IEP), or Section 504 plan must be provided, and teams should work with students and families to determine the methodology for delivering the services. The provision of health services via Telehealth is one methodology that may be utilized to help ensure a FAPE.

### The Provision of Telehealth

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#### Can Physical Therapists provide Telehealth services as part of a child's education?

**Yes.** The Oregon Physical Therapist Board allows for telehealth delivery of services. The Board defines telehealth [OAR 848-040-0100](#) as:

(13) "Telehealth service" means a physical therapy intervention, including assessment or consultation, that can be safely and effectively provided using synchronous two-way interactive video conferencing, or asynchronous video communication, in accordance with generally accepted healthcare practices and standards. For purposes of these rules, "telehealth service" also means, or may be referred to, as "telepractice, teletherapy, or telerehab."

In addition, Telehealth services provided by a licensed Physical Therapist must follow requirements outlined in [OAR 848-140-0180](#). They include requirements that:

- A Licensee may provide telehealth services to a patient who is domiciled or physically present in the state of Oregon at the time the services are provided. An aide may not provide telehealth services.
- Telehealth services provided must conform to the scope and standards of practice and documentation as provided in Oregon Revised Statutes 688.010 through 688.201 and these Division 40 rules. Telehealth services must be at least equivalent to the quality of services delivered in-person.
- Prior to the initiation of telehealth services, a Licensee shall obtain the patient's consent to receive the services via telehealth. The consent may be verbal, written, or recorded and must be documented in the patient's permanent record.
- When providing telehealth services, a Licensee shall have procedures in place to address remote medical or clinical emergencies at the patient's location.
- The application and technology used to provide telehealth services shall meet all standards required by state and federal laws governing the privacy and security of a patient's protected health information.

### **Can a Physical Therapist Assistant provide services via telehealth?**

**Yes.** A licensed Physical Therapist Assistant may provide telehealth services under the supervision of a licensed Physical Therapist as defined in [Division 15 and 40](#) of the Board rules. However, as per [OAR 848-040-0180\(1\)](#), Physical Therapist aides may not provide telehealth services.

### **Can a PT/PTA in another state provide services via telehealth to a student in Oregon?**

Oregon PT Board rules only allow a PT or PTA to provide care to a student domiciled in Oregon if that provider is licensed in Oregon or holds a [compact privilege](#) to practice in Oregon. If the student lives in another state, the Oregon licensee cannot treat that individual even if they attend school in Oregon. If the student lives in Oregon but is temporarily located in another state, the PT or PTA can provide telehealth to the student while the student is out of state.

### **Can a PT with Oregon licensure provide services via telehealth to an Oregon-enrolled student who is temporarily located in another state? For example, can a PT with Oregon licensure provide services via telehealth to a student at a grandparent's house in Washington during the day while their parents are at work?**

Yes. Per [OAR 848-040-0180\(1\)](#), a Licensee may provide telehealth services to a patient/student who lives in Oregon and is temporarily located out of state. However, a Licensee providing telehealth services to a person who is domiciled in another state and physically present in that state at the time the telehealth services are being provided, may be required to be licensed in the state where the services are being rendered ([OAR 848-040-0180\(6\)](#)).

## **Consent Related to Telehealth**

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Prior to the initiation of telehealth services, a Licensee shall obtain the patient's consent to receive the services via telepractice. The consent may be verbal, written, or recorded and must be documented in the patient's permanent record ([OAR 848-040-0180](#)).

### **If we cannot get a response to our consent to telepractice, can PTs still provide materials for parents to work on with their child?**

Consent is required prior to the initiation of the provision of services via telehealth. This does not prohibit a PT from providing resources to parents outside of direct therapy.

### **If a PT is uploading learning materials on an online platform, but not meeting with the student or family members (via phone, video conferencing, etc.), is consent required?**

Same as above. Consent is required prior to the initiation of the provision of services via telehealth. This does not prohibit a PT from providing resources to parents outside of direct therapy.

### **If two PTs are providing services via telehealth to the same student in separate sessions, do they both need to obtain consent?**

No. The rules state that, prior to the initiation of telehealth services, "a" Licensee shall obtain the patient's consent to receive the services via telehealth. However, it is best practice to ask

for consent if a Licensee is new to the patient/student in order to support a positive relationship with the patient/student/parent and to ensure compliance in the event that the initial Licensee did not obtain or document consent.

### **When would a new telehealth consent need to be obtained?**

Board rules are not specific about this. School districts may choose to adopt policies to support proper and efficient documentation.

### **What is considered consult in relation to telehealth and would necessitate consent?**

[OAR 848-040-0180](#) states that services provided via telehealth must conform to the scope and standards of practice and documentation as provided in Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) [688.010 through 688.201](#) as well as Division 40 rules. In regards to consultation, [ORS 688.010\(5\)\(d\)](#) states that the practice of physical therapy includes consulting or providing educational services to a patient for the purposes of: Examining, evaluating and testing for mechanical, physiological and developmental impairments, functional limitations and disabilities or other neuromusculoskeletal conditions in order to determine a physical therapy diagnosis or prognosis or a plan of physical therapy intervention and to assess the ongoing effects of physical therapy intervention.

- a. Alleviating impairments and functional limitations by designing, implementing, administering and modifying physical therapy interventions.
- b. Reducing the risk of injury, impairment, functional limitation and disability by physical therapy interventions that may include as a component the promotion and maintenance of health, fitness and quality of life in all age populations.

The Licensee should obtain consent if any of the services that are being provided meet the Board definitions of consult and/or direct intervention. For further inquiries in regard to what activities may or may not be considered consult, please contact the Board (contact info is provided at the end of the document).

## **Additional Special Education Considerations**

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### **How are PTs expected to document each goal and student progress? Are there forms available to use for documentation?**

In regards to education documentation requirements related to an IEP/IFSP, [OAR 581-015-2200\(1\)\(c\)](#) requires “a description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured and when periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards) will be provided”. PTs need to document progress towards meeting the annual goals in a manner consistent with requirements specified in the IEP in alignment with district policy and procedure and Board documentation requirements. PT

documentation requirements can be found at [OAR 848-040-0110](#). Each employer has different software and filing systems, the board does not provide forms for recordkeeping.

**How do PTs address the fact that sessions for telepractice are scheduled and students are not showing up?**

This situation should be handled in the same way as you would if a student missed an in-person service. It is important to follow district policy, document your efforts, communicate with the student and family, and consult with the IEP/IFSP team if needed.

## **Privacy Concerns and Virtual Platforms**

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**Are records created by medically licensed staff providing health related services to students pursuant to an IEP/IFSP or Section 504 plan considered education records and thus, subject to FERPA privacy protections? Is this any different with Telehealth?**

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements apply to the information contained in student education records. FERPA does not specifically address online settings. It is important to note that records created during the provision of school health services, whether provided in-person or via Telehealth, are considered education records as defined by FERPA at 34 CFR § 99.2.

See [Student Privacy Considerations and Remote/Online Education Platforms](#), [Joint Guidance on the Application of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\) and the Health Insurance Portability Act of 1996 \(HIPAA\) To Student Records \(December 2019 Update\)](#) and [Guidance for School Officials on Student Health Records, and FERPA Protections for Student Health Records](#) for more information about FERPA, HIPAA, and digital privacy.

**Can I use Skype, Zoom, or Google to provide PT telehealth services?**

It depends. There are multiple factors to consider when using telehealth technology. The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for enforcing certain regulations issued under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Telehealth services provided by “covered entities” are subject to HIPAA requirements for security, transmission, and confidentiality. Compliance with HIPAA requires that covered entities have appropriate administrative, physical, and technical safeguards in place and that they have reasonably implemented those safeguards. See the [HIPAA Security Series 101](#) for more information.

## School Based Health Services (SBHS) Medicaid Billing

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**Can school districts bill Medicaid for school health services (SLP, OT, RN, PT) provided through telehealth?**

Yes. An education agency may bill SBHS Medicaid for covered health services provided and documented by a medically qualified practitioner to a Medicaid-enrolled child or young adult pursuant to an Individual Plan of Care. The SBHS Medicaid rules for Telehealth can be found at [OAR 410-133-0070](#).

## Future Updates

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This document will continue to be updated based on:

- Input from educators, students, families, and community partners.
- Updates to state and federal rules and regulations.
- An ongoing review of equity impacts.

## Resources for Implementation of Telehealth

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- [Northwest Regional Telehealth Resource Center](#)
- [Roadmap for Action Advancing the Adoption of Telehealth in Child Care Centers and Schools to Promote Children’s Health and Well-Being](#)
- [The National Consortium of Telehealth Resource Centers](#)

## Additional Resources:

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- [Joint Guidance on the Application of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\) and the Health Insurance Portability Act of 1996 \(HIPAA\) To Student Records \(December 2019 Update\)](#)
- [Guidance for School Officials on Student Health Records, and FERPA Protections for Student Health Records](#)
- [American Physical Therapy Association - Telehealth](#)
- [The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy](#)
- [Oregon Board of Physical Therapy](#)
- [PT Compact](#)

## Contacts

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### **Oregon Board of Physical Therapy**

- [Oregon Board of Physical Therapy](#), 971-673-0200, [physical.therapy@oregon.gov](mailto:physical.therapy@oregon.gov)

### **Oregon Department of Education – School Health**

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