

## **Physical Therapists; HB 2066**

**HB 2066** amends the Physical Therapy Practice Act to allow physical therapists to initiate a physical therapy treatment without referral from a licensed health care practitioner. In prior law, physical therapists were allowed only to evaluate patients without physician referrals and to initiate treatment after approval by certain health care providers.

This bill requires physical therapists, in instances where treatment of a patient occurs without a referral, to obtain a referral from an appropriate licensed health care practitioner to continue treatment if, after ten patient visits or a period of 15 business days from the initial treatment visit (follows the initial evaluation), the patient is not progressing toward documented treatment goals as demonstrated by objective, measurable, or functional improvement, or any combination of these criteria.

The bill provides that when a patient self-refers to a physical therapist, the physical therapist is required, prior to commencing treatment, to provide written notice to the patient that a physical therapy diagnosis is not a medical diagnosis by a physician. The bill also provides that new provisions of law created by the bill are not to be construed to prevent a hospital or ambulatory surgical center from requiring a physician order or referral for physical therapy services for a patient currently being treated in such facility.

Under the bill, physical therapists are authorized to perform wound debridement services only after approval by a person licensed to practice medicine and surgery or other licensed health care practitioner in appropriately related cases.

The bill deletes requirements that limited physical therapists to evaluation of patients without a physician referral and the conditions and time frame specified for permitted evaluation and treatment without referral. Prior to this bill, physical therapists were permitted to initiate treatment only after approval by a licensed physician, a licensed podiatrist, a licensed physician assistant or a licensed advanced practice registered nurse working pursuant to the order or direction of a licensed physician, a licensed chiropractor, a licensed dentist or licensed optometrist in appropriately related cases. The bill also deletes provisions authorizing physical therapists to initiate treatment under the approval of a healing arts practitioner licensed by another state.

The bill defines the term “licensed health care practitioner” to mean “a person licensed to practice medicine and surgery, a licensed podiatrist, a licensed physician assistant or a licensed advanced practice registered nurse working pursuant to the order or direction of a person licensed to practice medicine and surgery, a licensed chiropractor, a licensed dentist, or licensed optometrist in appropriately related cases.”