



Minnesota Academy of Physician Assistants

600 S Hwy 169 Ste 1680 • St Louis Park, MN 55426

voice (952) 562-8700 • office@mnacadpa.org • www.mnacadpa.org

Minnesota Regulation of Physician Assistant Practice in 2008: Registration vs. Licensure

Since physician assistant (PA) practice in Minnesota first became regulated in 1987, PAs have been registered with the Board of Medical Practice. That wasn't an unusual approach at the time: only 4 of 51 jurisdictions in the U.S. (including the District of Columbia) licensed PAs.

The national landscape has changed significantly in 20 years. Currently 45 of 51 U.S. jurisdictions license PAs to practice. The exceptions:

- Maryland, Ohio, and Vermont “certify” PAs
- Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New York still “register” PAs

Regulatory trends

- More than 30 states have converted to the licensure model for PAs since 1992.
- No states have changed from licensure of PAs to another form of regulation.
- A Kentucky legislative review in 2005 (during their transition to licensure) found no major impact on PA practice across the US resulting from this transition.¹

What's the difference?

Traditional ways of regulating occupations:

- licensure...
 - is the most restrictive model
 - sets standards for the title
 - prohibits others from the practice
- certification...
 - is a medium level of regulation
 - recognizes those with special qualifications
- registration...
 - is the least restrictive form
 - usually doesn't require additional education or training

In fact, Minnesota's current regulation of PAs is equivalent to a licensure model, but referred to by the misnomer “registration.”

- Entry and continuing education requirements are set.
- A plan for disciplinary action is included.
- Title protection is established.

What are the standards?

- The American Academy of Physician Assistants states: “*Licensure is the most appropriate regulatory term for PAs.*”
- Pew Health Professions Commission on Health Care Workforce Regulation (1995): advocates that states “*use licensure for regulation of health professions.*”

MAPA advocates for revising Minnesota statute 147A to convert to “licensure” of physician assistants, with minimal substantive changes in the regulation of PA practice.

Why does it matter?

Without licensure...

- PAs may be unintentionally excluded from provisions for “licensed health care professionals” in state law or with payers
- Minnesota PAs may be restricted from providing care in a disaster response in other states
 - During the 2005 hurricanes, Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco issued an executive order (KBB 2005-26) declaring a public health emergency and suspending certain statutory provisions related to licensing of medical personnel. The order allowed health professionals licensed in other states to provide services in Louisiana to people in need. Registered PAs from other states were not included in the order.

Related questions

Does this change PA scope of practice or lead to independent practice?

- *No*. Moving away from supervised practice would deviate from traditional philosophy & definition of PA practice.
- Independent practice by PAs is unprecedented in the U.S., and is opposed by the American Academy of Physician Assistants and MAPA. No jurisdiction provides for PA practice independent of physician supervision.
- ***MAPA will oppose any effort to diminish the physician supervision currently required in law.***

Would licensure of PAs in Minnesota need a separate licensing board?

- *No*. Fully 45 jurisdictions regulate PA practice through a physician regulatory board, despite a licensure model in almost all. Arizona, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Rhode Island, and Utah have separate physician assistant boards.
- ***MAPA advocates for continued regulation by the Minnesota Board of Medical Practice.***

Are there stakeholders who oppose a change to licensure?

- MAPA is not aware of any provider organization opposing this change.

Resources

- Reference 1: *A Study of Physician Assistant Licensure*, Legislative Research Commission, Frankfort, Kentucky, December 2005: <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/lrcpubs/RR331.pdf>
- American Academy of Physician Assistants resources
 - *Physician Assistant State and Territorial Regulatory Authorities*
<http://www.aapa.org/gandp/statereg.html>
 - *Summary of State Laws for Physician Assistants Abridged Version*
<http://www.aapa.org/gandp/statelaw.html>
 - *Professional Practice Issues*
<http://www.aapa.org/gandp/pro-issues.html>
- American Academy of Physician Assistants *Issue Briefs*
 - *Standardization of Regulatory Terms: Licensure for Physician Assistants:*
<http://www.aapa.org/gandp/issuebrief/licensure.pdf>
 - *The Physician-PA Team:* <http://www.aapa.org/gandp/issuebrief/pateamb.pdf>
 - *Physician Assistant Scope of Practice:* <http://www.aapa.org/gandp/issuebrief/pascope.pdf>

Contacts

For further information, please contact:

Walter Rothwell, PA-C
Co-Chair, Legislative and Reimbursement Committee
Minnesota Academy of Physician Assistants
2917 NW 12 Ave
Rochester, MN 55901-7771
wsrothwell@charter.net
voice (507) 261-4924

Prepared July 27, 2008