

Information Resources

American Physical Therapy
Association

[Www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org)

Michigan Physical Therapy
Association

www.mpta.com

Michigan Alliance of School
Physical & Occupational
Therapists

[Www.maspot.org](http://www.maspot.org)



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Physical Therapy Services

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Special Education
Programs and
Services

Physical Therapy Services

What is a Physical Therapist?

A Physical Therapist (PT) is a person who has been trained in the examination and treatment of musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, and developmental disorders. All PTs are college graduates with advanced training who must pass state licensure examinations. PTs work with people in hospitals, nursing homes, outpatient clinics, industry, the home and in schools.

Physical therapy services within the educational setting assist students in accessing, participating, and progressing in the general curriculum by:

- Addressing the student's ability to access the environment. This may include wheelchair mobility, ambulation, transfers, balance, coordination, and ramp/stair negotiation.
- Making accommodations/adaptations within the educational setting. This may include assessing the facility and recommending changes or additions to the environment/equipment.
- Improving posture, physical development, and mobility as it relates to school participation. This may include the recommendation of an activity program to improve strength, influence tone, endurance, neurodevelopmental skills, or range of motion.

- Facilitating the progression of gross motor skills for school tasks including transitional movements, functional skills, balance, and coordination.
- Consulting with resources involved in the student's education including parents, teachers, and other professionals.

Who is Eligible?

Students who qualify for special education are eligible for related services. Students who display motor deficits that interfere with the ability to benefit from education or have a need for environmental adaptations may be eligible.

How is Eligibility Determined?

PT services are established through the assessment and placement process.

- PT may utilize standardized testing, functional assessment, or observation to assess the student's ability to access the educational environment and participate in curricular activities.
- PT services are based on the program objectives established by the Individual Education Plan Team (IEPT) process (i.e. the specific individual needs of each student).
- A prescription signed by a physician is necessary for all students receiving PT services. This signed prescription is required on a yearly basis and PT services cannot be provided without it.

Frequently Asked Questions

“What is the difference between the school-based PT and services received in an outpatient/medical setting?”

School-based physical therapy is limited to addressing the obstacles interfering with attaining academic goals. This service enhances the student's ability to learn and function at school. Outpatient physical therapy is broader in scope and addresses all aspects of gross motor skill development.

“My child has a prescription for physical therapy; can he/she get services at school?”

While all students receiving physical therapy require a prescription, a diagnosis or referral made by a physician does not guarantee physical therapy services with the school setting. A student must meet the eligibility requirements for physical therapy at school. If a student meets the criteria then the amount of frequency of service will be determined by the IEPT. If there is no impact on accessing and progressing in the educational curriculum, physical therapy services will need to be provided in a medical setting.

“My son/daughter has been receiving physical therapy services for years and now they say he/she is not eligible: why?”

Physical therapists design and modify student programs. If a program can be established that meets a student's ongoing needs and allows them to function in the educational environment, physical therapy services are discontinued. This program may be carried out by school staff or it may consist of environmental modifications.