

Student Advocacy Toolkit

What is Advocacy?

Efforts and actions that help support, influence, or champion a cause or idea to benefit an individual, organization, or industry can be considered 'advocacy'!

Why Should I Get Involved in Advocacy as a Student?

You play an important role in shaping public policy, including state and federal legislation and regulations, that help improve patient access to care and affect how physical therapists are recognized and compensated in the medical system today and in the future.

What Does Advocacy Look for Physical Therapy Professionals?

Policymakers depend on the voices and advocacy efforts of their constituents (the people they represent) to help them understand the value of the physical therapy profession to the health system. Your voice could encourage policymakers to enact changes that benefit the industry and society.

Putting Advocacy into Action

There are lots of ways to get involved in advocacy based on your time, resources, and comfort level.

- ▶ **Share your story:** Discuss your personal experience entering the physical therapy profession. What inspired you to pursue a career in physical therapy? What do you look forward to most in this field? How are you helping patients and your community?
- ▶ **Join the conversation:** Post on social media platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, X, Facebook, and TikTok about your experiences as a physical therapy student and the issues you see as important to the field. Follow relevant physical therapy associations and coalitions to stay on top of the issues.
- ▶ **Engage with your lawmakers:** Call and email your elected officials to share your concerns and ideas. Ask them for an in-district or virtual meeting to share more.

Scan this QR code for social media resources to use/post!



Snapshot of Why Payment Policies Matter

- When patients visit a clinic, the services provided by the physical therapist are reimbursed by payers – either a private health insurer or a government-funded program like Medicaid and Medicare.
- As a physical therapy professional or clinic owner, the ability to serve patients and employ therapists depends on the company's reimbursement for the care it provides.
- Historically, reimbursement rates haven't always kept up with the rising costs of care. Policymakers need to understand the impact of their decisions. Advocacy on behalf of physical therapists and patients can ensure policymakers implement reimbursement rates that reflect the true costs of our services.

Advocacy



Better Reimbursement



Professional Stability



Better Patient Outcomes

What are Some Relevant Advocacy Issues?

- ▶ **Professional designation:** Proposals from the US Department of Education may restrict professional degree designations to manage federal student loan limits. It's important that physical therapy is classified as a professional degree, so students do not face the graduate degree loan limit of \$20,500 a year with a \$100,000 total cap.
- ▶ **Medicare reimbursement:** Annual cuts to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) financially strain PT practices and could impact the stability of practices offering outpatient physical therapy care. Physical Therapists need to be properly reimbursed through the Medicare program to eliminate gaps in patient care.
- ▶ **Telehealth extension:** Remote telehealth physical and occupational care services help mitigate access barriers and allow patients to receive care at home, which is particularly beneficial for those living in rural areas or without transportation. It's important that telehealth for physical therapy continues to be reimbursed under the Medicare program.
- ▶ **State issues:** Advocating for state-specific bills, such as those that improve direct access to physical therapy services or address other issues concerning the state's medical billing, insurance, co-pay, licensing, or practice ownership policies, are just as important as advocating at the federal level!

Physical Therapy Advocacy Social Media Toolkit – Please Use!

Instagram Story Graphics



Captions/Social Copy

I'm advocating for [insert legislation/issue] to advance the physical therapy profession. As a future physical therapist, I'm advocating for better access to care for patients and stable reimbursement for providers.

As a physical therapy student at [insert school], I'm taking my advocacy outside of the classroom. Join me in sending a letter to Congress to represent our industry and push for improved access to care.

Send a letter here: <https://www.aptqi.com/take-action/>