

## **Physical Therapy Services in Iowa for Children 3 years to 21 years of age**

Parents, physicians, administrators, therapists, caregivers, and payers are often confused by the different criteria for physical therapy services that are set by various agencies.

In Iowa, physical therapy services are provided by licensed physical therapists. Regardless of the setting or agency, physical therapy services are provided to evaluate, treat, and promote movement and function, prevent disability, train families, and coordinate with other agencies. Physical therapists provide services to enhance the child's functional performance, within various environments. This also includes selection and management of adaptive equipment and orthotics related to the above areas.

### **Areas addressed may include:**

#### Mobility

- Functional movement skills
- Architectural accessibility
- Utilizing appropriate assistive devices
- Transfers

#### Positioning

- Independent sitting, standing, etc.
- Assistive alternative positions
- Transportation

Collaboration between physical therapists in both the educational and clinical settings ensures high quality, comprehensive care and program planning. The Physical Therapist's function in slightly differing roles depending upon whether services are performed in a clinical vs. educational setting. These differing roles are designed to meet the therapy needs of the student in both his/her home and educational environments.

### **Similarities between Hospital/Community P.T. Services and Educationally-based P.T. Services:**

#### **Similarities in Services**

- May use Medicaid dollars
- Evaluate a child's development in the areas of large motor skills.
- Use a variety of interventions to enhance the child's performance.

### **Differences in Services:**

#### **Educationally Related Services:**

##### **Area Education Agency (AEA) Physical Therapy**

- Physical Therapy is provided if a preschooler or student is unable to participate in the educational program without the support from a physical therapist.
- Services, at no cost to the family, are available in the local education districts by the AEA P.T.s.
- Physical therapist reviews the classroom and school expectations (standards/benchmarks) for preschoolers/students in their districts.
- Physical therapist evaluates the students/preschooler's performance through observation, record review, interviews, and assessment in the natural environment to identify the supports and barriers to performance at the school or preschool.
- The education team (including the parents) determines a student/preschooler's instructional needs and priorities for the education program (IEP).
- If a student/preschooler requires special education, the educational team establishes the student's goals and necessary services to meet those needs.
- If the IEP team determines that P.T. services are needed, P.T. interventions are provided in the least restrictive environment, usually the environment where the concern occurs (such as the preschool or school classroom).
- A primary role of the AEA P.T. is to work collaboratively with the educational staff and family to develop daily programs to enhance performance and to work with the student/preschooler to enhance skills and performance needed to meet the educational goal.

##### **Hospital/Community P.T. Services:**

- Physician referral may be needed. A medical-based or treatment-based diagnosis or impairment must be documented.

- Services are paid through insurance, private pay, waivers, or grants.
- Physical therapist evaluates the child using various assessment tools that focus on areas of impairment. (e.g. strength, balance, joint mobility)
- Physical therapist works on with the family and child to determine the areas to address and the priorities.
- Physical therapist collaborates with the family and child to write functional treatment goals.
- Some agencies may have established criteria regarding the amount, frequency and duration of physical therapy services.
- A primary focus is to work with the child to attain treatment goals to enhance performance at home and in the community. This includes training the family in a home program.
- Services are provided in the clinic or home settings.

**AEA and clinically-based therapy roles are complimentary.** It is not uncommon for AEA and clinically-based therapists to work together to develop a comprehensive therapy program for the students, families, and schools they serve.

**Reference:** Brochure developed in 2004 through a collaborative effort between the Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Area Education Agencies, and hospital/community agencies.