



Ensure Uninterrupted Access in Care

APTAPrivate Practice, a Section of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) Supports the *Prevent Interruptions in Physical Therapy Act* (H.R. 1517/S. 2225)

Background

Locum tenens arrangements by health care providers refers to the ability for a provider to bring in a temporary substitute provider during an absence, due to instances such as, illness, pregnancy, jury duty, vacation, or continuing medical education. Under this arrangement, a provider can bill and receive payment for the replacement provider's services. Locum tenens arrangements under Medicare must meet regulatory standards, including the use of a modifier on the claim form and a 60-day limitation on the use of a temporary provider.

In 2016, when *21st Century Cures* became law, physical therapists practicing in Medically Underserved Areas (MUAs), Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), and rural areas were added to the list of those Medicare providers eligible to use locum tenens. This geographical limitation prohibits physical therapists (PTs) in private practice, not located in those areas, from taking needed absences without interrupting patient care. While rural areas may have more challenges during a provider absence, the need for locum tenens arrangements has more to do with the size of the practice than geographic location.

Health Care Providers Who May Utilize Locum Tenens

Section 1842(b)(6) of the Social Security statute currently only allows locum tenens arrangements to be used by the following providers: MDs/DOs, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, chiropractors, and physical therapists practicing in rural, MUAs and HPSAs. Physical therapists are the only provider type whose use of locum tenens is restricted geographically.

The Prevent Interruptions in Physical Therapy Act (H.R. 1517/S. 2225)

This legislation, led by Representatives Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12) and Paul Tonko (D-NY-20) and by Senators Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) and John Boozman (R-AR) will add physical therapists to the list without restriction.

Why It's Important

The Prevent Interruptions in Physical Therapy Act would allow for continued access to care for Medicare beneficiaries during a PT's absence to avoid patient regression and higher costs of care down the line. This legislation would also enable private practice physical therapists to take off work when necessary, reducing burnout and financial strain on private practices.