

SAFE PLAY ACT (H.R. 829/S. 436)

Supporting Athletes, Families, and Educators to Protect the Lives of Athletic Youth Act

POSITION

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) strongly supports the Supporting Athletes, Families, and Educators to Protect the Lives of Athletic Youth Act (SAFE PLAY Act), (S. 436/H.R. 829). The legislation would promote safety in youth sports, including provisions related to concussions, heat stroke, and sudden cardiac arrest. In particular, this legislation would allow for the development of concussion management guidelines that address the prevention, identification, treatment, and management of concussions in school-aged children. H.R. 829 was introduced by Reps. Lois Capps (D-CA) and Bill Pascrell (D-NJ). S. 436 was introduced by Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ).

BACKGROUND

Concussions in student athletes are a growing public health problem that demands immediate attention. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), each year US emergency departments treat an estimated 248,418 children and adolescents for sports- and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries (TBIs), including concussions. Immediate recognition and response to concussions can help prevent further injury or even death. The rising statistics have been accompanied by a dramatic increase in public awareness of concussion management; however, legislative and policy efforts at the state and local levels have been highly inconsistent. Most states have passed laws on youth concussions in sports with varying provisions and standards. This inconsistency can be detrimental to the quality of care and other considerations necessary if we are going to effectively respond to the complexity of concussion injuries in student athletes.

CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT

Concussions are complex injuries that can have diverse effects on the individual. As such, concussion management does not fall within the expertise of any single health care discipline, but instead it benefits from the expertise of several different disciplines, including but not limited to physical therapy, neurology, neuropsychology, and athletic training.

The management of a concussion involves a continuum of care that includes prevention, detection, rehabilitation, and return to participation. Multidisciplinary collaboration is essential in evaluating the appropriateness for a safe return to play, and APTA believes that concussions should be evaluated and managed by a multidisciplinary team of licensed health care providers that includes a physical therapist.

In addition, a structured protocol that puts the health needs of the student athlete first is necessary to ensure that return-to-play decisions after a concussion are made consistently for every student.

Physical therapists are licensed health care professionals who are trained in the diagnosis and management of traumatic brain injury, and they play an important role in the school and sports settings. Physical therapists provide a unique contribution to the concussion care management team, particularly in the areas of balance and vestibular evaluation and rehabilitation. The SAFE PLAY Act would ensure that school districts have concussion management plans that educate students, parents, and school personnel about how to recognize and respond to concussions. This legislation would also provide student athletes with information about how to prevent and manage concussions while helping them return safely to academic and athletic pursuits. The initiatives proposed in this legislation are crucial to establishing concussion management guidelines, supporting the treatment of concussions by licensed qualified health professionals such as physical therapists, and providing resources for state and local entities who are engaged in this issue within the youth sports and academic communities.

For more information on APTA priorities, visit APTA's policy center at <http://policy.apta.org>.



Co-sponsor H.R. 829/S.436 Today!

For additional information, contact the American Physical Therapy Association's Government Affairs Department at 703/706-8533 or advocacy@apta.org.

FACTS ABOUT PHYSICAL THERAPISTS AND PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS



WHO WE ARE

Physical therapists (PTs) are health care professionals who diagnose and treat individuals of all ages, from newborns to the very old, who have medical problems or other health related conditions that limit their ability to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives. PTs also work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness- and wellness-oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles.

Physical therapist assistants (PTAs) provide selective physical therapy interventions under the direction and supervision of physical therapists.

WHAT WE DO

PTs examine each individual and develop a plan of care using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability. Under the direction and supervision of the PT, PTAs provide selective physical therapy interventions based on the developed plan of care.

WHERE WE PRACTICE

PTs and PTAs provide care for people in a variety of settings, including outpatient clinics or offices; inpatient rehabilitation facilities; skilled nursing, extended care, or subacute facilities; education or research centers; schools; hospices; industrial, workplace, or other occupational environments; and fitness centers and sports training facilities.

EDUCATION & LICENSURE

All PTs must receive a graduate degree from an accredited physical therapist program before taking a national licensure examination that permits them to practice. The majority of programs offer the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree. State licensure is required in each state in which a PT practices. PTAs must complete a 2-year associate's degree and are licensed, certified, or registered in most states.

AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

The American Physical Therapy Association (www.apta.org) is a national organization representing more than 90,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students nationwide. Its goal is to foster advancements in physical therapist education, practice, and research.

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