

# **North Carolina Professional School-Based Physical Therapy Standards**

The North Carolina Professional School-Based Physical Therapy Standards are the basis for preparation, evaluation, and professional development for school-based physical therapists. Colleges and universities are encouraged to align with these standards, a new evaluation instrument has been created, and professional development will occur to ensure growth based on these standards. These will describe the skills and knowledge needed for 21<sup>st</sup> Century intervention and learning.

## **Vision for School-Based Physical Therapy**

The demands of 21<sup>st</sup> Century education dictate new roles for school-based physical therapists who provide a wide variety of services that help students succeed academically, functionally, socially, and emotionally. In collaboration with educators, parents/guardians, and other school professionals, school-based physical therapists strive not only to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments for all students, but also to strengthen connections between home and school. Utilizing leadership, advocacy, specialized technical skills and knowledge, data, and collaboration, school-based physical therapists promote overall academic and functional success by providing services that enhance student, school, home, and community partnerships and alleviate barriers to learning.

## **Intended Purpose of the Standards**

The North Carolina School-Based Physical Therapy Standards serve as a guide for school-based physical therapists as they continuously improve their effectiveness. It is imperative for the school-based physical therapist to provide services as part of a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary team whose members have complementary knowledge, skills, and experiences.

The North Carolina School-Based Physical Therapy Standards will:

- guide the development of the skills and knowledge germane to the physical therapy profession in the twenty-first century;
- provide the focus for schools and districts as they employ, support, monitor, and evaluate their physical therapists; and
- assist higher education programs in aligning the content and requirements of physical therapy education curricula with expectations for practice.

## **Standard 1: School-based physical therapists demonstrate leadership.**

### **Element a. School-based physical therapists demonstrate leadership in public schools.**

Physical therapists work collaboratively with school staff to determine and implement educationally relevant services. They contribute to developing, implementing, coordinating, and staffing the physical therapy program within the school and district. Physical therapists promote the philosophy, vision, procedures, and goals of the state and district.

**Element b. School-based physical therapists provide knowledge and skills critical to support educational outcomes of students.** They recommend strategies and provide guidance to support school staff members.

**Element c. School-based physical therapists promote and support their profession.** Physical therapists afford students and colleagues opportunities to learn about the profession.

**Element d. School-based physical therapists demonstrate and promote high ethical standards.** Physical Therapists uphold the *Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators* and the *Standards for Professional Practice*. They adhere to professional, ethical, and legal standards of practice as defined in the *Physical Therapy Practice Act: North Carolina*, and APTA Code of Ethics. Physical Therapists uphold federal, state and local policies, laws and regulations (e.g. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Americans with Disability Act, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, etc.), that apply to the delivery of services to students with disabilities.

**Standard 2: School-based physical therapists establish an inclusive and respectful environment for a diverse population of students.**

**Element a. School-based physical therapists promote awareness of individual student needs.** Physical therapists treat all people with dignity and respect. They ensure that school communities are mindful of and address individual differences.

**Element b. School-based physical therapists communicate effectively.**

**Element c. School-based physical therapists advocate for equal access for all students to programs, facilities, and inclusion in adherence to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504.**

**Element d: School-based physical therapists collaborate with school and district staff members and community partners to provide a wide range of student services.** They form effective partnerships to promote student success.

**Standard 3: School-based physical therapists implement educationally relevant pediatric (ages 3 to 21) physical therapy.**

**Element a. School-based physical therapists understand the importance of appropriate and timely documentation.** Physical Therapists assist in developing student-centered and clear IEPs. They provide accurate documentation and maintain records compliant with the *Physical Therapy Practice Act: NC*.

**Element b. School-based physical therapists connect their work to the NC Standard Course of Study to facilitate student learning and participation.**

**Element c. School-based physical therapists incorporate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into the physical therapy program.** Physical Therapists develop individual interventions to address current student needs and promote successful transitions.

**Standard 4: School-based physical therapists support learning by practicing educationally-relevant physical therapy to facilitate student participation and access in the least restrictive learning environment.**

**Element a. School-based physical therapists provide services in a professional, effective, and efficient manner.**

**Element b. School-based physical therapists use a variety of methods to assess students in the educational environment.** Physical Therapists evaluate students using appropriate assessments and therapeutic observations. They utilize information from IEP team members, school staff, outside agencies, and student records. Physical Therapists assess student ability to participate in meaningful school activities and to function independently.

**Element c. School-based physical therapists plan service delivery, interventions, and strategies that are based on the student's strengths and needs.** Physical therapists promote skill acquisition and generalization to enhance student participation and learning. They create a plan of care that fosters achievement of student's goals.

**Element d. School-based physical therapists promote safety, access, and participation of all students.** Physical therapists promote wellness using knowledge of health and environmental safety measures. Physical therapists recommend modifications and adaptations to the school environment.

**Standard 5: School-based physical therapists reflect on their current practice and demonstrate an increasing knowledge base, life-long learning, and professional development.**

**Element a. School-based physical therapists collect and analyze data to evaluate the impact of physical therapy services on student success.** Physical therapists adapt their practice based on evaluation findings and student outcomes.

**Element b. School-based physical therapists link professional growth to their professional goals.** Physical therapists thoughtfully plan and complete continuing competency requirements for licensure. Physical therapists actively investigate and consider current evidence in order to function effectively in a complex, dynamic environment.