

Navigation

Purpose and Scope.....	1
Definition of a Pelvic Health PT.....	2
Education and Training.....	2
Collaboration.....	3
Referral Guidelines.....	3
Physical Therapy Plan of Care.....	3
References.....	3

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this statement is to define the personal scope of practice for physical therapists (PTs) in pelvic health. Throughout this statement, the terms “physical therapy” and “physical therapist” are used. The document also applies to physical therapist assistants (PTAs) practicing under the plan of care by a licensed pelvic health PT within their scope of practice. According to the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) document “Physical Therapist’s Scope of Practice,” the scope of practice for each practitioner involves professional, jurisdictional, and personal realms.¹

A. Professional Scope

The *professional scope* of practice “consists of patient and client management, which includes diagnosis and prognosis, and treatment interventions to optimize physical function, movement, performance, health, quality of life, and well-being across the lifespan. Additionally, the professional scope of practice includes contributions to public health services aimed at improving population health and the human experience.”¹

1. PTs are licensed practitioners who have graduated from an accredited physical therapist program and have passed the National Physical Therapy Examination.
2. Pelvic health PTs are qualified to provide patient/client management related to pelvic health conditions.
3. PTs who specialize in treating conditions related to the abdominopelvic region, including the pelvic floor, lower extremities, and abdominal muscles and organs.

B. Jurisdictional Scope

The *jurisdictional scope* of practice will depend upon each PT’s state practice acts and rules and regulations that govern their license.

1. Maintain confidentiality, respect patients, obtain consent, and adhere to all applicable codes of conduct, including but not limited to the APTA Code of Ethics for the Physical Therapist and the APTA Standards of Ethical Conduct for the Physical Therapist Assistant.²
2. Comply with all requirements of the jurisdictions that regulate the practice of physical therapy for PTs/PTAs.

C. Personal Scope

The *personal scope* of practice is determined by an individual's PT education, training, experience, and skill set. Pelvic health PTs require adequate continuing education and specialized training, including additional coursework and in-person instruction in abdominopelvic health assessment and treatment techniques.

Definition of a Pelvic Health PT

PTs are experts in movement and function, specializing in improving and restoring mobility, movement, strength, flexibility, balance, and coordination in people of all ages. PTs practicing in pelvic health have the distinction of being movement and function experts addressing pelvic health conditions. They use their extensive knowledge in biomechanics, anatomy, and kinesiology of the extremities and trunk to assess pelvic health conditions. Treatment by pelvic health PTs focuses on addressing neuromuscular and musculoskeletal impairments, functional limitations related to pelvic health conditions, and behavioral interventions.

They work with patients of all ages and genders to address conditions related to:

- bladder, bowel, and sexual health
- abdominal-pelvic pain conditions
- pregnancy and postpartum-related conditions such as
 - Incontinence
 - pelvic pain
 - sexual dysfunction
 - diastasis recti
 - musculoskeletal dysfunction
 - general orthopedic or neurologic conditions

Education and Training

Becoming a pelvic health PT requires additional education and training beyond entry-level PT education that may come in a variety of methods:

- **Continuing education courses:** Didactic and hands-on lab skills for examining, evaluating, and treating pelvic health conditions, including internal vaginal and anorectal techniques. Courses may cover introductory, intermediate, and advanced knowledge and skills.
- **Clinical education experience:** PT students may choose a clinical education experience focused on pelvic health. Formal continuing education courses should also be taken alongside clinical education experiences in pelvic health.
- **Residencies:** A PT Residency in pelvic and women's health is a planned program of post-professional education for licensed PTs that combines advanced didactic instruction with mentored clinical practice.
- **Mentorship:** As a PT enters the field of pelvic health, it is recommended that they work with a practicing pelvic health PT as a mentor.
- **Certificate Training:** Completion of a continuing education course series that includes didactic instruction, lab practice, and knowledge/skills check activities. APTA Pelvic Health offers Certificate of Advanced Practice in Physical Therapy (CAPP) programs in pelvic health and obstetric health.
- **ABPTS Board Certification:** Current board certification available to pelvic health therapists is the Pelvic & Women's Health Certification (PWCS). The PWCS is offered through the American Board of Physical

Therapy Specialties (ABPTS). Earning this certification demonstrates robust expert-level knowledge in pelvic and women's health physical therapy.⁴

Collaboration

- Interprofessional collaboration should occur when the clinical situation requires knowledge or skills outside the therapist's scope of practice. Patient-centered care often requires a team-based approach to address all patient goals and needs.^{5,6}
- PT/Patient Collaboration involves establishing and maintaining an ongoing collaborative process for the plan of care

Referral Guidelines

- Patients may self-refer for pelvic health PT in states with direct access to physical therapy services.
- Patients may be referred to physical therapy for pelvic health conditions by qualified health care practitioners, per the licensed PTs' state practice act and payers' regulations.

Physical Therapy Plan of Care

- Based on CMS, physical therapy state licensing boards, and APTA's Guide to Physical Therapist Practice, "physical therapy plans of care require that the diagnosis, prognosis, management plan, and plan of care be carried out by a licensed PT. Delegation and supervision of interventions as appropriate are included in the management plan."^{7,8}
- CMS guidelines state that if multiple disciplines are treating a patient for the same diagnosis, each must have established a diagnosis, goals, and plans of care specific to their discipline.⁷
- Once a PT completes an evaluation and plan of care for a pelvic health patient,^{11,12} that plan of care must be carried out by a licensed PT or PTA trained in pelvic health physical therapy and in compliance with the state-specific practice act guidelines on supervision.^{9,10,13}

References

1. American Physical Therapy Association. Physical therapist's scope of practice. American Physical Therapy Association. Accessed August 3, 2026.
<https://www.apta.org/apta-and-you/leadership-and-governance/policies/position-scope-of-practice>
2. American Physical Therapy Association. Code of ethics for the physical therapist. American Physical Therapy Association. Published 2025. Accessed August 3, 2026.
<https://www.apta.org/apta-and-you/leadership-and-governance/policies/code-of-ethics-for-the-physical-therapist>
3. American Board of Physical Therapy Residency and Fellowship Education. Women's health. American Board of Physical Therapy Residency and Fellowship Education. Published June 1, 2017. Accessed August 3, 2026.
<https://abptrfe.apta.org/for-programs/clinical-programs/womens-health>
4. American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties. Pelvic and women's health. APTA Specialist Certification. Accessed August 3, 2026. <https://specialization.apta.org/become-a-specialist/pelvic-womens-health>

5. American Physical Therapy Association. Interprofessional education and practice: resources for clinicians. American Physical Therapy Association. Accessed August 3, 2026.
<https://www.apta.org/for-educators/interprofessional-education-practice/resources-clinicians>
6. Academy of Pelvic Health Physical Therapy. Pessary fitting and management position statement. Published 2022. Accessed August 3, 2026.
<https://www.aptapelvichealth.org/info/pessary-fitting-and-management-position-statement>
7. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. *Medicare Benefit Policy Manual. Chapter 15: Covered Medical and Other Health Services*. CMS Publication 100-02. Updated June 13, 2024. Accessed August 3, 2026.
<https://www.cms.gov/regulations-and-guidance/guidance/manuals/downloads/bp102c15.pdf>
8. American Physical Therapy Association. APTA Guide to Physical Therapist Practice 4.0. Published 2023. Accessed August 3, 2026. <https://guide.apta.org>
9. Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy. Licensure reference guide. Accessed August 3, 2026.
<https://www.fsbpt.org/Secondary-Pages/Exam-Candidates/National-Exam-NPTE/Eligibility-Requirements>
10. Academy of Pelvic Health Physical Therapy. Physical therapist assistant education position statement. Published 2021. Accessed August 3, 2026.
<https://www.aptapelvichealth.org/info/-physical-therapist-assistant-education-position-statement>
11. Academy of Pelvic Health Physical Therapy. Chaperone position statement. Published 2023. Accessed August 3, 2026.
https://assets-002.noviams.com/novi-file-uploads/apta/Position_Statement_on_Use_of_Chaperones__1_-54b56b08.pdf
12. Academy of Pelvic Health Physical Therapy. Internal Physical Therapy, Pelvic Examinations, and Interventions Position Statement. Published 2021. Accessed August 3, 2026.
<https://www.aptapelvichealth.org/info/-internal-physical-therapy-pelvic-examinations-and-interventions-position-statement>
13. American Physical Therapy Association. Guide for conduct of the physical therapist assistant. American Physical Therapy Association. Published 2019. Accessed August 3, 2026.
<https://www.apta.org/your-practice/ethics-and-professionalism/apta-guide-for-conduct-of-the-physical-therapist-assistant>