



April 27, 2020

The Honorable Jim Justice
Governor
State of West Virginia
Capitol Complex, Building 1
1900 Kanawha Blvd, East
Charleston, WV 25305

Dear Governor Justice:

On behalf of the West Virginia Physical Therapy Association (WVPTA) and its members and the West Virginia Board of Physical Therapy (WVBOPT), we are writing to provide some information that may be helpful to you as you consider modifying existing executive orders. As we phase back to performing “essential” surgeries, it will be important that the ancillary healthcare infrastructure is prepared to address the need and to respond in a safe manner.

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) provided a statement on March 17, 2020, that “physical therapists have a responsibility to review CDC guidance, to understand who is at highest risk and how to best reduce exposure, and to use professional judgment in the best interest of their patients and clients and local communities.” The WVPTA supports that physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are essential workers and each facility and each licensee has the professional responsibility to make sound decisions based on the best available information from trusted sources such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR).

As we prepare to phase back to performing essential surgeries, we offer some examples of practices and procedures that some physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are implementing but that all should consider to help ensure the safety of the patients and clients they serve.

1. Adequate space utilization in waiting rooms and common seating areas to ensure recommended social distancing. If available, use non-traditional or alternative/secondary entrances and exits to ensure safe traffic patterns for patients, clients, and staff.

2. Restrict building access to visitors, except when necessary for caregiver instruction, end-of-life care, vulnerable populations (e.g., elderly, minors, and those that need special assistance).
3. Screen all healthcare workers, patients, and visitors using appropriate questions based on the latest CDC signs and symptoms, and exposure to those diagnosed with COVID-19. This may also include body temperature checks and other reasonable measures to ensure the safety of staff, patients, and clients.
4. Consider refusing entry to anyone who screens positive, and make an appropriate referral for testing.
5. Require staff to quarantine for 14 days if sick or present with CDC listed signs or symptoms.
6. Plan for and ensure enhanced workplace sanitizing (e.g., common contact surfaces such as doorknobs, pulls, tables, chairs, etc.).
7. Plan for and ensure enhanced hand hygiene (washing and sanitizing) for patients, clients, visitors, and staff.
8. Provide easily accessible hand sanitizer throughout the office/building.
9. Procure necessary PPE appropriate for the setting and patient interaction. Request that patients bring their own masks, but if not available, provide them.
10. All healthcare providers and staff who interact face-to-face with others should wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including mask/face covering, protective eyewear, gloves. There should be no hanging jewelry or rings.
11. When possible for the procedure provided, staff who interact with patients should wear medical grade gloves and wear clothing without sleeves below the elbow. If medical grade gloves interfere with the clinical procedure, hands should be washed or sanitized immediately before and after the procedure.
12. Utilize telehealth as appropriate

The above list is not intended to be prescriptive but rather to depict examples of measures that physical therapists and physical therapist assistants should consider to help mitigate the risk of disease transmission and to protect staff, patients, and others.

Respectfully,
WVPTA Board of Directors
WV Board of Physical Therapy