



The Washington State Academy of Physician Assistants

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The Physician Assistant profession was created in the mid 1960's with Washington State's first PA program opening in 1969. Today over 4,000 PAs practice medicine in Washington State. PAs work collaboratively with their physician colleagues, however state law fails to reflect how PAs work, which limits job opportunities.

Each PA has a colleague who is struggling to find employment during the pandemic – or maybe even before the start of the pandemic. WAPA believes this is due to practice laws that prevent PAs from working at the top of their licenses. By passing collaborative practice laws in Washington State, we will improve employment opportunities for Washington PAs in all specialties.

17 states have passed versions of collaborative practice legislation responding to several employment barriers for PAs.

Collaborative practice legislation (inspired by Oregon's new law) will do the following:

1. Allow PAs with over 2,000 hours of post-graduate clinical experience to enter into collaborative practice agreements with physicians or PA employers.
2. Allow the degree of collaboration to be determined at the practice site so PAs can refer to the appropriate member of a healthcare team, if indicated by the patient's condition (i.e., physician, PA, ARNP, etc.).
3. Give PAs sole legal responsibility for the care they provide.
4. Allow direct reimbursed for PA services and care.

During the pandemic, Governor Inslee waived the requirement for PAs to enter into practice agreements. While this change is time-limited, it is an important indication that PAs know how to operate effectively within a team-based health care model, collaborating with their physician colleagues when necessary.

What every Washington State PA can do to improve their operating environment:

It is important that every PA in the state work toward the goal of passing collaborative practice language by speaking with their physician colleagues to gain their support of collaborative practice laws. By working at the practice site level to demonstrate that PAs aren't seeking to become independent, but instead to be recognized for the expertise and autonomy they currently utilize, we hope to reduce opposition to collaborative practice laws for PAs. WAPA hopes to introduce legislation in 2023 to make these changes.

If you have questions about WAPA's past legislative successes or what collaborative practice means, please contact the WAPA legislative committee. Linda Dale Ldale0224@aol.com.