

Position Statement New Graduate Physician Assistants

A question frequently posed to the Board concerns the level of on-site supervision required of a PA in their first year of practice following graduation. Language in the PA Act and Administrative Code refers to a required one year of post-graduate work prior to being granted an Application to Practice in a statutorily defined “Remote patient care setting”. Such a setting assumes the supervising physician and PA are at geographically distinct sites and the physician is available on-site a minimum of one-half day each week. This is clearly not the most appropriate setting for a new graduate. However, the Board recognizes a new graduate working in a “Remote patient care setting” alongside a supervising physician is indistinguishable from any other practice setting, thus warranting approval.

While a “Remote patient care setting” is specifically addressed in statute and rule, other work environments for new graduates are not explicitly defined. To address this issue, the Board must consider several factors. First and foremost is public safety. Second, the Board understands the plight of practices, particularly in rural areas, in attracting health care workers. And finally, the Board must guard against the formation of entrepreneurial enterprises over the delivery of quality health care.

One determinant of an effective physician/PA team practice is that *supervision is provided frequently and on an on-going basis* (435:15-9-2(a)). The Board interprets this for new graduate Physician Assistants, and in light of language related to “Remote patient care settings”, to mean that the supervising physician needs to be physically present for the preponderance of time the Physician Assistant is working, and when not physically present, within at a minimum of a few minutes from the practice location.

An example of an acceptable arrangement for a new graduate PA would be if the PA were providing health care services in the clinic while the supervising physician was rounding in the adjacent hospital. In this scenario, the location and time separation would be brief. Examples of work environments not acceptable would include having a new graduate PA cover an emergency room without immediate and on-site access to the supervising physician or in a clinic facility where the supervising physician could not respond within a matter of minutes.