

PTA CAUCUS

PTA Caucus Delegates

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Are Times Changing?

Ann Lowrey

Every spring, just prior to APTA's NEXT Conference and Exposition, APTA's House of Delegates (House) gathers to discuss and vote on issues pertaining to our profession. The House is comprised of voting delegates from each chapter, non-voting delegates (APTA Board of Directors and delegates from the sections, Student Assembly, and PTA Caucus), and consultants. For three days, over 400 Physical Therapists (PT) and Physical Therapist Assistants (PTA) discuss issues pertaining to the association and the profession of physical therapy. Only the elected physical therapist delegates from each chapter vote on the motions. This year's House will be held in National Harbor, Maryland from June 1 – 3, 2015.

During the 2015 House, there will be three motions sponsored by APTA's Board of Directors (Board) that are directly relevant to the PTA. If adopted, these motions will require amendments to APTA's bylaws and will be monumental in moving PTA participation in APTA governance forward.

Here is some background on the three anticipated motions from the Board. At the 2012 PTA Caucus Business Meeting, the following six goals were established by the Caucus:

- Expansion of PTA entry level education
- Expansion of post entry-level education and specialization to include designation
- Active participation in governance at all levels of APTA
- Promotion of the PTA and protection of payment for PTA services
- Expansion of PTA scope of work
- Promotion of the PT/PTA team.

To address these goals, APTA President Paul Rockar appointed a PTA Board Work Group in 2013 comprised of 10 members: four PTAs, four board members and two APTA staff. With significant effort and compromise on both sides, the PTA-Board Work Group came to understand the needs of the PTA member. As a result, the PTA Board Work Group presented their report to APTA's Board of Directors in April 2014. During this meeting, (<http://www.apta.org/BOD/Meetings/>) the Board adopted eight motions related to the PTA, including the following three that have been developed further as House motions for 2015.

- PTA member eligibility to serve in a non-officer position on the Board. This means that a PTA may be nominated for and run beside a Physical Therapist for a board of director position. This is not a designated position on the Board. A non-officer position means that a PTA may not run for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer or House Speaker/Vice Speaker positions. As a board member, the PTA will represent all members of APTA and participate on an equal level with other PT Board members. Currently, PTAs serve in positions of leadership in other related areas such as state boards of physical therapy, CAPTE (Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education), and FSBPT (Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy).
- Allowing components the option to amend their bylaws to provide PTA members a full vote at the component level. A component refers to chapters (states) and sections within APTA. Currently, PTAs have ½ vote at the component level where PTs have a full vote (see section 2 of APTA bylaws). This motion supports the rights of components to determine voting strength. Currently, no other medical association provides voting members ½ vote and there is no reference in Roberts Rules of Order to provide for ½ vote.
- Allowing chapters the option to amend their bylaws to permit PTA members to serve as chapter delegates. This motion also places the decision-making within the component. If adopted by the House and component, PTAs will be eligible to run for the position of delegate in their respective chapter and section to serve and vote in the House. A PTA in this position will represent all members of their chapter and our profession.

Motions that will be forwarded to the 2015 House are currently being discussed on The HUB, which is a communication page for open discussion for delegates attending the House. The HUB contains a number of other topics relevant to our association which is open to membership. I encourage all APTA members to become familiar with what occurs during the House of Delegates. Decisions are made that impact our entire profession, not just members of APTA. Please visit <http://www.apta.org/HOD/> to visit The HUB.

Education Committee Update

The Education committee has divided into two subcommittees: 1) Entry-level education; and 2) Post-graduation education.

- The subcommittee on entry-level education has a number of goals, including:
 1. Sharing the message about proposed PTA-related bylaw changes in the 2015 House of Delegates;
 2. Improving communication between the PTA Caucus and PTA Educators; and
 3. Identify opportunities to improve entry-level PTA education.
 A voice-over PowerPoint presentation of the proposed PTA-related bylaw changes is being prepared for distribution to PTA Educators.
- The post graduate sub-committee will conduct a needs analysis to identify opportunities to improve lifelong learning for the PTA and will be further publicizing the Grassroots Plan to educate everyone.

Advocacy Committee Update

PTAs in all jurisdictions are becoming more involved in advocacy at many levels, including the following:

1. State Licensing Boards: State licensing board meetings are typically open to the public and have opportunities for service on committees and task forces. It is important for PTAs to understand how state licensure board members attain their positions and to take action to fill positions designated for PTAs. When the position is appointed, it is appropriate for PTAs to contact the Governor's Office of Boards & Commissions to inquire about the appointment process and volunteer to be appointed.
2. Chapter Government Affairs Committees: All chapters of APTA have advocacy-related committees, task forces, etc. that provide ample opportunities for member involvement. PTAs can and should be involved with the legislative process and serve in the legislative governmental affairs committee of their state association.

3. Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT): The FSBPT (Federation) is a group representing all state boards of physical therapy. They are responsible for the National Physical Therapy Exam and have many volunteer opportunities available that can strengthen PTAs' knowledge and skill in advocacy. See: <http://www.fsbpt.org/volunteers/volunteersopportunities/committeetaskforce.aspx>

Payment and Practice Committee Update

The Payment and Practice Committee has been working on the following:

- Participating in grass roots efforts to assure the passage of proposed PTA-related bylaw changes in the 2015 House of Delegates;
- Monitoring and communicating updated payment information to PTAs, especially policies regarding payment for PTA provided services;
- Updating practice data and use data to substantiate change in the profession.

Regarding Blue Cross/Blue Shield (BCBS) of Arkansas: The AR chapter president, lobbyist and members of the payment committee met with the medical directors at AR BCBS regarding members' concern over their policy that excludes PTAs from providing services. The meeting was very successful and AR BCBS is now in revising their policy so PTAs will no longer be excluded from performing physical therapy interventions.

The PT/PTA Team Payment Toolkit will be released by APTA this month. Questions should be directed to Carmen Elliott at carmenelliott@apta.org. Please continue to inform us of any payment issues around the PT/PTA team.

Public Relations Committee Update

During the 2014 House of Delegates, RC 11-14 Membership Value for the PTA was adopted with a directive that APTA create a plan for increasing the value of APTA membership for the PTA with presentation of the plan to the House by December 2014. In compliance with this mandate, the report has been posted to the House Community within the Motions, House Handbook, Background Papers file library, and a discussion thread has been provided on the House Report Discussions forum. This report will be incorporated in the official House Handbook that will be published on April 10, 2015. The PTA Caucus is hopeful that the Membership Value for the PTA report and its initiatives will contribute to a successful approach, as this is vital to increasing PTA membership and for the retention and longevity of PTA's in the association.

The PTA Caucus has also developed a focused and dynamic strategic plan. In that, the Membership/Public Relations Committee has been collectively working on mass media tools to help educate, promote and increase recognition of the Physical Therapist Assistant.

The work of the Membership/Public Relations Committees includes;

- Identified and developed videos for PT educators and membership to use, this includes videos on the PT/PTA Teamwork, Recognition of Advanced Proficiency and Advance Proficiency Pathways, PTA Leadership: Growing through Involvement and Volunteerism, and Student Physical Therapist Assistant - Why I chose a Career as a PTA. These videos can be found within www.youtube.com/APTAVideo
- Surveyed Doctorate of Physical Therapy Programs, identified materials that physical therapy educators use to educate the DPT student. Through this will help in developing and maintain a resource library that includes current association guiding documents, videos, and printed materials that will recognize and separate the PTA among other health care providers.

While these are small initiatives, we hope to better reach and educate our PT colleagues, physical therapy educators and the general public of the knowledge, experience and work of the PTA in physical therapy practice.

If you would like more information on any of these topics, please feel free to contact the committee chairs or delegates.