

2026 -- H 7274

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

Introduced By: Representatives Hopkins, J. Brien, Casimiro, Shanley, Perez, Nardone,  
Fascia, Ackerman, Tanzi, and Chippendale

Date Introduced: January 23, 2026

Referred To: House Health & Human Services

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Sections 5-54-5 and 5-54-8 of the General Laws in Chapter 5-54 entitled  
"Physician Assistants" are hereby amended to read as follows:

**5-54-5. Board of licensure.**

(a) The director of the department of health, with the approval of the governor, shall appoint  
a board consisting of ~~seven (7)~~ nine (9) persons, residents of the state, to constitute a board of  
licensure for physician assistants with the duties, powers, and authority as stated in this chapter,  
and that board shall be composed of the following:

(1) Two (2) members shall be licensed physicians under the provisions of chapter 37 of  
this title who have been actively engaged in the practice of medicine;

(2) [Deleted by P.L. 2019, ch. 197, § 1 and P.L. 2019, ch. 230, § 1.]

(3) Two (2) members who are representatives of the general public not employed in any  
health-related field; and

(4) ~~Three (3)~~ Five (5) members shall be physician assistants.

(b) Members shall be appointed for terms of three (3) years each. No member shall be  
appointed to more than two (2) consecutive terms. Upon expiration of the term of office, a member  
shall continue to serve until a successor is appointed and qualified.

(c) ~~In the director's initial appointment, the~~ The director shall designate the members of  
the board of licensure for physician assistants as follows: ~~two (2)~~ three (3) members to serve for  
terms of three (3) years; ~~two (2)~~ three (3) members to serve for a term of two (2) years; and three

(3) members to serve for a term of one year. Any additional appointments shall serve for one year.

(d) The director of the department of health may remove any member of the board for cause.

(e) Vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired portion of any term in the same manner as the original appointment.

**5-54-8. Permitted healthcare practices by physician assistants.**

(a) Physician assistants shall ~~practice in collaboration~~ collaborate with, consult with, or refer to the appropriate member of the healthcare team as indicated by the condition of the patient, the education, experience, and competence of the physician assistant, and the standard of care physicians. The degree of collaboration shall be determined at the practice which may include decisions made by the employer, group, hospital service, and the credentialing and privileging systems of a licensed facility. A physician assistant is responsible for the care provided by that physician assistant and a written agreement related to the items in this chapter is not required. A physician assistant may provide any medical or surgical services that are within the physician assistant's skills, education, and training. Whenever any provision of general or public law or regulation requires a signature, certification, stamp, verification, affidavit, or endorsement by a physician, it shall be deemed to include a signature, certification, stamp, verification, affidavit, or endorsement by a physician assistant. Physician assistants may perform those duties and responsibilities consistent with the limitations of this section, including prescribing, administering, procuring, and dispensing of drugs and medical devices. Physician assistants may request, receive, sign for, and distribute professional samples of drugs and medical devices to patients only within the limitations of this section. Notwithstanding any other provisions of law, a physician assistant may provide medical and surgical services when those services are rendered in collaboration with a licensed physician.

(b) [Deleted by P.L. 2019, ch. 197, § 1 and P.L. 2019, ch. 230, § 1].

(c) Physician assistants may write prescriptions and medical orders to the extent provided in this paragraph. When extended medical staff privileges by a licensed hospital or other licensed healthcare facility in accordance with subsection (e) of this section, a physician assistant may write medical orders for inpatients as delineated by the medical staff bylaws of the facility as well as its credentialing process and applicable governing authority. Physician assistants may prescribe legend medications including Schedule II, III, IV, and V medications under chapter 28 of title 21 of the Rhode Island uniform controlled substances act, medical therapies, medical devices, and medical diagnostics.

(d) When collaborating with a physician licensed under chapter 29 of this title, the service

1 rendered by the physician assistant shall be limited to the foot. The “foot” is defined as the pedal  
2 extremity of the human body and its articulations, and includes the tendons and muscles of the  
3 lower leg only as they are involved in conditions of the foot.

4 (e) Hospitals and other licensed healthcare facilities have discretion to grant privileges to  
5 a physician assistant and to define the scope of privileges or services that a physician assistant may  
6 deliver in a facility.

7 (f) A physician assistant shall not undertake or represent that he or she is qualified to  
8 provide a medical or surgical care service that he or she knows or reasonably should know to be  
9 outside his or her competence or is prohibited by law.

10 (g) Notwithstanding any other provision of law or regulation, a physician assistant shall be  
11 considered to be a primary care provider when the physician assistant is practicing in the medical  
12 specialties required for a physician to be a primary care provider.

13 SECTION 2. Chapter 40-8 of the General Laws entitled "Medical Assistance" is hereby  
14 amended by adding thereto the following section:

15 **40-8-33. Direct payments to physician assistants.**

16 Licensed physician assistants shall be permitted to receive payments directly from the  
17 department for medical services provided under this chapter. The director shall make and  
18 promulgate rules, regulations, and fee schedules consistent with the provisions of the federal Social  
19 Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1396 et seq., and any rules or regulations promulgated pursuant thereto  
20 to ensure direct payments to licensed physician assistants.

21 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

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1           This act would increase the number of physician assistants serving on the board of licensure  
2   for physician assistants. This act would also remove the requirement that physician assistants  
3   practice under the direct supervision of a physician. Further, this act would require the department  
4   of human services to amend its regulations to permit direct payment to physician assistants.

5           This act would take effect upon passage.

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