



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
Arnold School of Public Health

PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM
THE NORMAN J. ARNOLD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Essential Functions

Essential Functions:

The practice of physical therapy includes the examination, diagnosis, and treatment of people with physical disabilities, movement dysfunction, and pain. Physical therapists must be prepared to continually evaluate and manage patients in a time efficient manner with a continual focus on outcomes that are functional and/or relevant to the patient. Physical therapists must also possess the skills necessary to determine when referral of the patient/client to another health care professional is appropriate.

The Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) accredits professional physical therapy programs and **requires** that graduates of these programs be able to deliver entry-level clinical services. Graduates of the program are required to possess a broad base of knowledge and skills requisite for the practice of physical therapy. Physical therapists require the: 1) *intellectual - communication*, 2) *behavioral – social*, 3) *observational*, and 4) *motor* abilities to meet the standard of practice.

The University is not permitted to ask if a student has a disability and answering such a question is not required for a student to participate in a clinical education experience. However, if you desire to voluntarily disclose your status as an individual with a disability, you may do so. If you choose to disclose your status as an individual with a disability, and you desire to receive an accommodation to enable your participation in any physical therapy clinical education experience, you have the right to request a reasonable accommodation.

The Physical Therapy Program at the University of South Carolina has defined the essential functions of physical therapy as follows.

1. Intellectual – Communication Abilities

Intellectual skills include the abilities to recall and comprehend large amounts of didactic information and to apply this information to the examination, evaluation and management of routine and complex physical therapy problems. Effective communication skills enable the physical therapist to elicit appropriate information from patients and to effectively explain examination and treatment procedures.

Some of the skills an individual must be able to demonstrate include but are not limited to the ability to:

- Communicate clearly and in a timely manner with patients, physicians, other health professionals, community or professional groups, and colleagues.
- Report clearly, legibly, and in a timely manner through notes in patient charts, reports to physicians, insurance forms, and order forms.
- Respond to such things as a patient calling from behind a curtain, warning calls from anyone, and machine alarms.
- Participate in group meetings to deliver and receive information and to respond to questions from a variety of sources.

2. Behavioral and Social Attributes

Students must demonstrate the ability to practice in a professional and ethical manner and possess the emotional stability to practice in a stressful work environment. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, cultural competence and motivation are all personal attributes associated with the practice of physical therapy. Some of the skills an individual must be able to demonstrate include but are not limited to the ability to:

- Recognize and respond appropriately to individuals regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.
- Cope with the stress of heavy work loads, demanding patients, and life-threatening clinical situations.
- Recognize and respond appropriately to potentially hazardous situations.
- Consistently adhere to schedules of attendance and timeliness.

3. Observational Skills

Observation is one of the key tools that a physical therapist possesses. Gathering data on patient/client condition is critical to being an effective physical therapist. Some of the skills an individual must be able to demonstrate include but are not limited to the ability to:

- Observe and interpret patient movement, skin condition, safety hazards, and changes in appearance.
- Read and interpret equipment dials, assessment graphs, patient charts, professional literature, and notes from patients, physicians, and other health professionals.

4. Motor Skills

The practice of physical therapy requires that the practitioner possess the ability to perform basic evaluative and therapeutic procedures that require specific physical skills and stamina (e.g. palpation, transfers, gait training). A therapist must be able to use vision and somatic sensation in the evaluation and treatment of patients. Some of the skills an individual must be able to demonstrate include but are not limited to the ability to:

- Exert manual forces sufficient to move body parts, assist transfer of patients, and operate physical therapy equipment in a manner safe to self and patients.
- Walk and balance well enough to help patients walk and transfer with or without equipment, and prevent injury to patient and self.
- Palpate anatomical structures and handle injured body parts without causing injury to the subject.
- Exhibit sufficient manual dexterity to manipulate small and large equipment; provide support, resistance and facilitation as needed through complex exercise movements; perform CPR; perform mobilization and manipulations of bony and soft tissues; and treat acutely ill patients without disturbing sensitive monitoring instruments and lines.
- Provide for the patient's safety and well being in all therapeutic or transporting activities.

By my signature below, I certify that I have read and understand the essential functions for the Physical Therapy Program at the University of South Carolina as set forth above, and that I am able to perform the essential functions of the Physical Therapy Program. I understand the university is not permitted to inquire if I have a disability and that my disclosure or non-disclosure of such information shall not be used to determine my participation in any clinical education program. I also understand that if I desire to voluntarily disclose any disability, it is also my responsibility to request a reasonable accommodation if I require a reasonable accommodation to enable me to perform the essential functions of the clinical education program. I further understand that if I desire to disclose a disability and if I desire to request a reasonable accommodation, I should contact the Student Disability Resource Center at 803-777-6142, sadrc@mailbox.sc.edu.

Signature of Student: _____

Date: _____

Printed Last Name: _____