



**ARIZONA STATE BOARD OF PHYSICAL THERAPY**  
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# Consumer News

**Take Control of Your Health Choices**

**Finding an Arizona Licensed  
Physical Therapist**

## Physical Therapy

Physical therapy is a specialized area of healthcare includes therapeutic exercise, manual therapy techniques, patient related instruction, and many other modalities. For the complete list of care and services provided, please view A.R.S. §32-2001 (12) and <http://www.fsbpt.org/ThePublic/LearnPhysicalTherapyBasics.aspx> for more information. Physical therapy is beneficial to all age groups from infants to aged; from good health to terminally ill.

## Physical Therapist (PT)

A Physical Therapist (PT) is a medical professional who has received years of specialized education from accredited college or university in the field of physical therapy. A national PT examination and a state jurisprudence exam must be passed before an Arizona license will be issued.

## Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA)

A Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) is a graduate of an accredited school of Physical Therapist Assisting. A national PTA exam and a state jurisprudence exam must be passed before Arizona certification will be issued. A PTA performs physical therapy procedures and related tasks that have been selected and delegated by the supervising physical therapist.

## Arizona State Board of Physical Therapy

The Arizona State Board of Physical Therapy is adamant about your safety. The mission of the Arizona State Board of Physical Therapy is to protect the public from the incompetent, unprofessional, and unlawful practice of physical therapy. The Arizona Physical Therapy Practice Act establishes the standards for the practice of physical therapy, continuing competence and testing, and defines the scope and limitations of practice. The Board licenses and certifies qualified applicants as physical therapists and physical therapist assistants; and receives, investigates and adjudicates complaints against licensees and certificate holders.

*Because public safety is the primary reason for our existence, we recommend that a savvy consumer be proactive in choosing a PT health care professional. Verification of Arizona license to practice PT and certification to work as a PTA may be ascertained at our website: [www.ptboard.az.gov](http://www.ptboard.az.gov) > top of the home page > PT/PTA Verification. Information can also be obtained by calling our office at 602-274-0236. Whether you live in the state of Arizona or you move to another state, a physical therapist must be licensed by that state before legally practicing as a physical therapist. Every state in the United States requires licensure before the physical therapist is allowed to practice in that state.*

*Always verify licensure through the state board of physical therapy.*

**Arizona State Board of Physical Therapy**

**Consumer Rights: As a consumer, you have the right to the following ~**

**INFORMATION:** You have the right to receive correct and easy to understand information.

**CHOICE:** You have the right to choose a physical therapist or other healthcare professionals for high quality care.

**ACCESS:** You have the right to access to emergency services if you feel that your health is in serious jeopardy

**PARTICIPATION:** You have the right to participate in all your treatment options and decisions about your care.

**RESPECT:** You have the right to respectful and nondiscriminatory care.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** You have the right to confidentiality regarding your healthcare so that you can speak in confidence with your healthcare provider.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

More information regarding your Consumer Rights, can be accessed at the following website:

[www.fsbpt.org/thePublic/UnderstandYourRights.aspx](http://www.fsbpt.org/thePublic/UnderstandYourRights.aspx)



Other Websites that may be of assistance to consumers.

Federation of State Board of Physical Therapy  
[www.fsbpt.org](http://www.fsbpt.org)

American Physical Therapy Association  
[www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org)

Arizona Physical Therapy Association.  
[www.aptaaz.org](http://www.aptaaz.org)

**The Complaint Process ~ How to file a complaint against a PT or a PTA**

Anyone who believes that he or she has a complaint against a licensed PT or certified PTA who is believed to have done something that may constitute a violation of law may file a complaint.

A complaint form can be downloaded from our website: [www.ptboard.az.gov](http://www.ptboard.az.gov) or requested by calling our office at 602-274-0236 or by emailing a request to any member of the Board staff.

Once the complaint form is received, Board staff will review the information to determine if

jurisdiction exists for the matter. There is no assumption at this stage that a law was violated. That decision will be made by the Board during a Board meeting.

The Licensee/certificate holder will be contacted as will the person who has initiated the complaint.

To obtain the complaint form via our website, please go to: [www.ptboard.az.gov/docmgmt/docs/ComplaintForm.pdf](http://www.ptboard.az.gov/docmgmt/docs/ComplaintForm.pdf).

**The Arizona State Board of Physical Therapy has jurisdiction over investigation of complaints filed by members of the public against PTs and PTAs. The Board is charged by law with the responsibility to receive and investigate complaints and to conduct investigations, enforce the law and impose disciplinary action when a violation of the law has occurred. For more information please access our website: [www.ptboard.az.gov/public/pages/faq.asp](http://www.ptboard.az.gov/public/pages/faq.asp)**

# Rights of Consumers

From Arizona Revised Statutes. May be viewed in its entirety at [www.ptboard.az.gov](http://www.ptboard.az.gov)

## 32-2051. Rights of consumers

A. The public has access to the following information:

1. A list of licensees and interim permit holders that includes the licensee's and interim permit holder's place of practice, license or interim permit number, date of license or interim permit expiration and status of license or interim permit.
2. A list of physical therapist assistants certified in this state, including place of employment, certificate number, date of certificate expiration and status of certificate.
3. Public records.

B. The home addresses and telephone numbers of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are not public records and shall be kept confidential by the board unless they are the only addresses and telephone numbers of record.

C. If a referring practitioner is deriving direct or indirect compensation from the referral to physical therapy the physical therapist shall disclose this information in writing to the patient.

D. A physical therapist shall disclose in writing to a patient any financial interest in products the physical therapist endorses and recommends to the patient and shall document this disclosure in the patient's record.

E. A physical therapist shall ensure that each patient understands that the patient has freedom of choice in services and products.

F. Information relating to the physical therapist-patient relationship is confidential and shall not be communicated to a third party who is not involved in that patient's care without the prior written consent of the patient. The physical therapist shall divulge to the board information it requires in connection with any investigation, public hearing or other proceeding. The physical therapist-patient privilege does not extend to cases in which the physical therapist has a duty to report information as required by law. The confidentiality requirements and privileges of this subsection also apply to physical therapist assistants.

G. Each licensee and certificate holder shall display a copy of the license or certificate and current renewal verification in a location accessible to public view at the licensee's place of practice. If the licensee or certificate holder is unable to display the license, certificate or current renewal verification, the licensee or certificate holder must produce that documentation on request.

H. The board shall keep all information relating to the receipt and investigation of complaints filed against a licensee or certificate holder confidential unless the information is disclosed in the course of the investigation or any subsequent proceeding or if that information is required to be disclosed by law.

I. The following are confidential and are not available to the public:

1. Patient records, including clinical records, files, any report or oral statement relating to a diagnostic finding or treatment of a patient.
2. Any information from which a patient or a patient's family might be identified.
3. Information received and records or reports kept by the board as a result of an investigation made pursuant to this chapter.



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## Complaints and Investigations

Following is a list of Frequently Asked Questions and their answers concerning complaints, investigations and disciplinary actions before the Arizona Board of Physical Therapy. Please note that this information is provided primarily for the public as this is the constituency served by the Board. Ideally, this information is useful to Arizona licensed physical therapists and certified physical therapist assistants as well. Licensees and certificate holders may want to click on the link at the bottom of this page to read a note concerning your rights and responsibilities should a complaint be filed against you.

### What is the Board's role regarding complaints?

The Arizona Board of Physical Therapy has jurisdiction over investigation of complaints filed by members of the public against physical therapists (P.T.s) and physical therapist assistants (P.T.A.s). The Board is charged by law with the responsibility to receive and investigate complaints and to conduct investigations, enforce the law, and impose disciplinary action when a violation of the law has occurred.

### How long does the process take?

The complainant receives written notification of receipt of a complaint, however, he or she is advised that the investigative process and the Board's final disposition may take a number of months to complete.

### How is a complaint filed?

Anyone, including the Board, may file a complaint against a licensed physical therapist or a certified physical therapist assistant for anything he or she believes may constitute a violation of law. A complaint form can be downloaded by clicking the appropriate link at the bottom of this page, by calling the Board office at 602-274-0236, or by e-mailing any of the Board's staff. When completing the form, provide as many details as possible such as a full description of the alleged action, the exact nature of the complaint and any other information that will assist the investigation. The Board may contact you for additional information. Complainants should sign and return an Authorization for Release of Records (see link below) so the investigator may obtain copies of documents necessary to the investigation. The Board may also subpoena records necessary to the investigation. **When a complaint is filed it must have the following information:**

- **The complainant's name, address and phone number:** Although this Board does accept anonymous complaints, the Board cannot guarantee the anonymity of the complainant if the nature of the complaint will require a witness or testimony from the complainant, or if the complainant was or is a patient of the physical therapist.
- **The name of the P.T. or P.T.A. against whom the complaint is being filed:** THE BOARD CANNOT ACCEPT COMPLAINTS FILED AGAINST A CLINIC OR FACILITY (unless the facility is registered with the Board) WHEN A P.T. OR P.T.A. IS NOT IDENTIFIED IN THE COMPLAINT.
- **The nature of the complaint:** The complaint should provide as much detail as possible. Additional pages and copies of documents/records may be attached to the complaint form. PLEASE DO NOT SEND ORIGINALS.

### What will happen once a complaint is filed?

All complaints that are filed with the Board against a licensed physical therapist or a certified physical therapist assistant must be investigated and brought before the Board for action.

1. Board staff analyzes the information received, assigns an intake number, and reviews the information to determine whether jurisdiction for the complaint exists (*i.e. is the complaint against a licensed physical therapist or a certified physical therapist assistant, AND, if the allegations are true, would the matter constitute a violation of law*).
2. If jurisdiction is established a complaint number will be assigned and a file will be opened.

3. A copy of the complaint will be sent to the individual against whom the complaint has been opened with a request for a written response to the allegations within 30 days of receipt. A subpoena requiring the licensee to provide a copy of pertinent records may also be sent with the notification of the complaint.
4. Board staff investigates the allegations using tools including—but not limited to—interviews, expert witness reviews, analysis of patient records, and facility site reviews.
5. Once Board staff determines the case is ready for initial review by the Board, the complaint is scheduled for the next available Board meeting.
6. The Board will then review the complaint for the first time during a regular session public meeting. ***This is not a hearing.*** The Board is reviewing the facts presented in the complaint, the response and the relevant records. There is no assumption that a law was violated. It is simply a review of facts as presented. When the complaint is placed on a Board agenda both the licensee/certificate holder and the complainant receive written notice of the meeting, including the date, time and location. Both parties to the complaint are welcome and encouraged to attend but their presence is not required. At this meeting, both the licensee/certificate holder and the complainant will have an opportunity to briefly address the Board regarding the complaint.

The Board will review the complaint to determine one of the following:

- Is there a basis on which to believe a law may have been violated? If there is not a substantive basis on which to proceed the complaint will be dismissed. If the Board does not have enough information to make a determination the complaint will be held open for further investigation.
- If the Board is concerned that there is a substantive basis to believe a law has been violated they may vote the matter to go to an informal hearing or to a formal hearing.

If the complaint is dismissed or directed to further investigation both the complainant and the licensee/certificate holder will be notified by letter. If further investigation takes place, the Board's staff will keep both parties informed when the matter will be scheduled for Board review again.

### **What is the difference between an informal hearing and a formal hearing?**

The Board's statutes use the term "informal hearing" for an interview before the full Board that may result in resolution of the case other than through a formal hearing. The purpose of the informal interview is to further the Board's investigation toward resolution of the complaint. The complainant should be prepared to act as a witness at the hearing.

Generally, formal hearings are reserved for those cases where unique circumstances exist, and for cases where the allegations are serious to the degree to warrant possible suspension or revocation of the license/certificate if those allegations are proven to be true. If the matter is voted to a formal hearing, the licensee/certificate holder will be noticed through a formal process called a Complaint and Notice of Hearing. The Complaint will identify the date, time and place for the hearing. It will outline the factual allegations and charges made against the licensee/certificate holder by the State of Arizona. The hearing may either be conducted before the Board or before an Administrative Law Judge with the Arizona Office of Administrative Hearings. The complainant should be prepared to act as a witness at the hearing.

With all matters before the Board, the licensee/certificate holder has the right to be represented by an attorney.

### **What action can the Board take?**

If a violation of the law has occurred the Board will impose disciplinary action to include the following:

- Issue a decree of censure
- Prescribe a licensee's scope of practice, place of practice, supervision of practice, the duration of a license or a certificate or the type or condition of patient served by a licensee/certificate holder.
- Suspend a license/certificate for a period prescribed by the Board
- Revoke a license or certificate

The Board may also dismiss a complaint. When a complaint is dismissed it does not necessarily mean that the Board agrees with or condones the actions of the licensee or certificate holder; it means that the Board had no jurisdiction or could not find evidence of a violation of law. If the Board does not find a violation of law, but has concerns with a P.T.'s or P.T.A.'s conduct, the Board may issue an Advisory Letter. An Advisory Letter is a non-disciplinary action but it is part of the public record, as are disciplinary actions. If there is no violation of law, or if the complaint is without merit, the Board will dismiss the case.