

State Laws

Definition of Terms and State Practice Laws:

Accreditation

Recognition granted to an educational institution or agency that indicates it has met standards promulgated by a state or federal regulatory authority or professional organization. Medical school and Physician Assistant training programs have a national accreditation process.

Certification

A voluntary process that indicates an individual has met criteria promulgated by a professional organization.

Physicians may choose to be board certified or not. Board certification is obtained by passing a written national examination designed to test the particular area of medical expertise. Some practice groups require that physicians be "board-certified" in order to participate in the group.

Physician Assistants may be board certified in Primary Care and/or Surgery. Not all states require board certification for licensure. Recertification is by proof of 100 continuing education hours every two years and by written examination every six years.

Licensure

Statutory, state-granted, authority to practice. Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, Physicians, Physical Therapists, and Physician Assistants must be licensed in the state in which they practice.

District of Columbia

Washington, DC: NP authority and prescriptive authority is independent and does not require physician oversight. The Board of Nursing grants licensure. PA authority is derived from the physician and requires agreement with a physician-collaborator. Both providers have prescriptive authority; both may be directly reimbursed under Medicaid. A recent change in Medicare law allows for direct reimbursement of NPs in all settings; regulations are pending. PAs have limited ability to apply for reimbursement under Medicare.

Maryland

NPs and PAs must practice under a collaborative agreement with a physician. NPs have independent prescriptive authority. PAs do not have prescriptive authority, except in limited settings, predominantly hospitals. Both types of providers may be reimbursed

directly by Medicaid.

Virginia

NPs carry dual licensure-as an RN first and additionally as an NP; jointly regulated by the Board of Nursing and the Board of Medicine. NPs must practice under a collaborative agreement with a physician and, based on that agreement, may apply for prescriptive privileges authorized by the Board of Nursing and the Board of Medicine. PAs authority derives from a physician agreement. PAs have prescriptive authority in Virginia. Both providers may be reimbursed under Medicaid.