



APTA Colorado  
March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020

## **“Stay in Place” Order from Governor Polis – Considerations for Physical Therapists**

### **Members & Colleagues,**

Today marks the implementation, at 6am, of the “Stay in Place” order from Governor Jared Polis of Colorado, which will be in place unless rescinded by executive order through Saturday April 11th. This is subsequent to a progressive implementation of primarily county wide orders for “Shelter in Place” mandates, designed to reduce as much as possible the community spread of COVID-19, first identified March 5<sup>th</sup> in Colorado, and with over 1000 cases in Colorado now reported and 19 fatalities.

This order is also subsequent to Executive Orders (EO) as published by the Governor relating to COVID-19, commencing with EO D 2020 003 Declaring a State of Emergency in Colorado due to the presence of COVID-19, and subsequent orders addressing in-person gatherings (005), school attendance (007), suspension of elective medical procedures (009) and a fifty percent reduction in present work-forces in places of business (013), with these EO’s published from March 11<sup>th</sup> – March 22<sup>nd</sup> with ongoing enactment.

APTA Colorado has been actively engaged with regulatory authorities over the last three weeks in multiple areas; including seeking expansion for telehealth services of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants and identifying the essential roles that physical therapist practice provides in optimizing the health of society, *and the inherent need to maintain access in as many ways as possible to the services we provide, while protecting society and minimizing any non-essential in person contact.*

This is a very challenging time, and this is a time for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants to meet the needs of our society by ensuring the value of the care that we provide is readily available to those in need, and that it is provided in such a way as to **optimize the health of both the individual and the communities we reside and practice in.**

Physical therapist services are an essential health benefit, and Health Care Operations (overall business, not surgical) are exempted from the mandates of the “Stay in Place” order from the Governor as “Critical Businesses” that are to remain open during this “Stay in Place” order.

This exemption, which APTA CO believes to represent a clear recognition of the essential role and value that our profession provides to society to optimize health and function, should not be seen as a waiver to continue business operations as normal. We are called to provide our services in such a way as to balance the risks of a lack of individual care to the risks of care provision in a time of crisis.

At this time APTA CO is not recommending to any Physical Therapist practice that they should either close or stay open, but our recommendations follow those which we have been providing at our public facing COVID-19 resource page:

[https://aptac.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=439:coronavirus--information-for-members&catid=20:site-content](https://aptac.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=439:coronavirus--information-for-members&catid=20:site-content)

**The recommendations of APTA CO follow the following key themes:**

- Each clinician and business should seek to understand the risks and benefits present by continuing or ceasing the provision of in person care on an ongoing basis
- Each clinician and business should continue with patient risk assessment to identify the optimal method of care delivery and prioritize a transition to telehealth services where able
- In the ongoing provision of essential health services involving in person care, CDC and CDPHE guidance should be reviewed to ensure the best selection of patient and practitioner protection procedures are utilized in service delivery - <https://covid19.colorado.gov/>
- Patient scheduling should prioritize social distancing within clinic settings
- For patient management that is amenable to a delay in provision or reduction in visit scheduling, without anticipated functional decline, such reductions are recommended
- Essential aspects of care delivery, such as wound care, post-operative management, post-stroke management and at risk geriatric and pediatric services (non COVID-19 risk) should be prioritized

For our members and our colleagues; it is the ongoing priority of APTA CO in this time of crisis, with the COVID-19 pandemic, to prioritize the efficient, effective and safe delivery of physical therapist services in the optimal way for the health of the individual and society. At the time of recovery for those afflicted with COVID-19, by maintaining the function of our profession, we will be able to step up and serve those seeking to return to movement and quality of life.

Each of you individually has the ability to adjust your models of practice to best serve in this time of need. This may involve shifting roles to serve in inpatient settings, engaging in triage services for neuromusculoskeletal impairments to reduce the burden on hospitals, medical offices and emergency departments, and by managing in innovative ways the ongoing neuromusculoskeletal disorders which will not stop being present. This will allow for those in need of emergent care due to COVID-19, to be serviced by a higher volume of resources.

As we move into a new chapter in our profession, balancing new service delivery for many in telehealth, with a substantially different clinical environment, I have great confidence that each of you will find your best way forward in these challenging times. As recently outlined by the **US Department of Homeland Security**, **physical therapists are part of the essential infrastructure needed to combat COVID-19, and we have a special responsibility to maintain our provision of care.**

At this time physical therapists are essential in flattening the curve of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cameron W. MacDonald



APTA Colorado President