

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

JOB SUMMARY:

Under the general supervision of the Director of Special Education or designee, the Physical Therapist assesses, plans, and provides physical therapy services to students with disabling conditions to support their access to the educational environment. The Physical Therapist evaluates gross motor development, neuromuscular function, posture, balance, and mobility; develops and implements individualized intervention plans; and collaborates with Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams to support students' educational and functional performance in the least restrictive environment. Incumbents in this classification will directly supervise the work and performance of classified staff involved in providing these services and will participate as a member of the educational team assessing student performance.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:

This highly specialized classification is distinguished from other Student Support Services classifications by its focus on the provision of educationally based physical therapy services to students with neuromotor, orthopedic, and developmental challenges. The incumbent possesses advanced training, certification, and clinical knowledge in pediatric physical therapy, including neuromuscular assessment, gross motor development, mobility, and access to curriculum and school environments. A primary responsibility is to collaborate with multidisciplinary IEP teams to support the development and implementation of goals, services, and accommodations that promote student independence and functional participation in the school setting. The Physical Therapist provides consultation and training to district staff and families, supervises and monitors the effectiveness of physical therapy interventions, and may guide or oversee staff assisting with mobility-related student support. This position is differentiated from a Physical Therapy Assistant in that it holds independent clinical responsibility, performs formal assessments, and develops therapy plans within the IEP framework.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED

The Physical Therapist reports directly to the Director, Student Support Services, receiving guidance and direction on program goals, service delivery priorities, and compliance expectations. This role is responsible for providing clinical expertise and oversight in the implementation of physical therapy services, including offering training and direction to classified staff and other support personnel involved in student care and therapy-related activities.

EXAMPLES OF DUTIES: Duties may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Serves as supervisor and case manager for students who require physical therapy services, taking a lead role in IEP team meetings and regular progress update discussions.
- Trains, supervises, and consults with instructional staff, related service providers, health professionals, and parents to support the development and implementation of Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and related physical therapy services.
- Conducts comprehensive evaluations using standardized tests and clinical observations to assess gross motor skills, balance, postural control, coordination, muscle strength, mobility, endurance, and neuromuscular function.
- Provides parents with strategies to support the generalization of motor skills at home and in community environments; develops and monitors individualized home programs that promote functional mobility, safety, and participation in daily school activities.
- Designs and implements therapy interventions that enhance student access to and engagement in the educational setting.

- Travels between school and home sites using a personal or district vehicle to deliver physical therapy services to individual students or small groups.
- Explains and clarifies physical therapy goals, intervention strategies, and accommodations to school personnel and parents; maintains consistent communication regarding student progress and concerns.
- Recommends and demonstrates the use of adaptive equipment, assistive devices, and positioning techniques; provides training to staff on safe usage and proper maintenance.
- Analyzes performance data and makes routine modifications to therapy interventions and access supports to ensure continuous student progress and goal attainment.
- Maintains detailed records, progress logs, and documentation required to support compliance with federal, state, and district mandates.
- Delivers in-service training to staff and parents on topics including motor development, physical access, and student safety.
- Collaborates with instructional staff, outside agencies, and medical professionals to ensure integrated and coordinated physical therapy service delivery across school and community settings.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Education:

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in Physical Therapy or a closely related field.
- A Master's degree in one of these fields is desirable. Graduation from a physical therapy program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). Must have a valid California PT license.
- Maintenance of this license is a condition of continued employment.

Experience: Experience providing physical therapy services to children with disabilities in a school or educational setting is preferred. Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively as part of a multidisciplinary team, including working effectively with students, parents, educators, and related service providers. Experience conducting assessments, developing individualized therapy plans, and implementing physical therapy interventions aligned with educational goals. Prior experience in delivering services across multiple school sites and communicating progress to IEP teams is highly desirable.

Knowledge of:

- Applicable laws, codes, regulations, policies, and procedural safeguards related to physical therapy services within the educational setting.
- Principles and techniques of physical therapy, including neuromuscular and musculoskeletal development in children.
- IEP planning process and the role of physical therapy in educational programs; methods and techniques of physical therapy interventions commonly used for students with orthopedic, neurological, and developmental disabilities; typical gross motor development, posture, balance, coordination, and physical growth patterns in children.
- Principles of kinesiology, anatomy, neuro-anatomy, and physiology as applied to physical therapy; adaptive equipment and assistive technology used to support student mobility and function; safe and proper positioning techniques for students using orthopedic devices;
- Modification of tasks and environmental factors to enhance student participation and access to the curriculum; professional documentation, report writing, and data collection methods; current research and best practices in pediatric physical therapy.

- CPR and basic first aid procedures; effective oral and written communication skills; interpersonal skills demonstrating patience, tact, and courtesy in interactions with students, families, and educational teams.

Ability to:

- Deliver physical therapy services in alignment with students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) requirements.
- Conduct physical therapy screenings and assessments using appropriate tools and professional judgment.
- Maintain detailed, accurate, and legally compliant records of therapy sessions, student progress, and treatment plans.
- Prepare clear, concise, and professional reports related to student services and physical therapy activities.
- Monitor and evaluate student progress; adjust interventions as needed and communicate outcomes regularly with the educational team.
- Instruct, train, and effectively supervise support staff assisting in the delivery of physical therapy services.
- Motivate and support students with physical disabilities to promote motor development and functional mobility.
- Safely lift, position, and assist students using orthopedic or adaptive equipment; make appropriate adjustments for safety and support.
- Interpret, apply, and explain laws, regulations, and district policies related to physical therapy in educational settings.
- Operate within the professional scope of physical therapy licensure and ethical standards.
- Observe and implement health and safety practices in all service environments.
- Communicate clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing, with students, families, and school personnel.
- Demonstrate professionalism, sound judgment, confidence, and tact in all interactions.
- Plan, organize, and prioritize work to meet deadlines, manage caseloads, and adapt to changing schedules.
- Make independent, timely decisions to respond to student needs and clinical situations.
- Build and maintain cooperative, respectful, and effective working relationships with students, colleagues, families, and administrators.
- Maintain the confidentiality of sensitive student information and records in compliance with applicable laws and policies.
- Travel to school sites, student homes, and other assigned locations; adapt to schedule and location changes as needed.
- Obtain and maintain valid First Aid and CPR certification.
- Maintain a valid California driver's license, appropriate insurance, and use a personal vehicle as required for job-related travel.

LICENSES AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS:

- Valid license to practice as a Physical Therapist issued by the Physical Therapy Board of California (PTBC), as well as meeting requirements to keep licensure current.
- Valid California driver's license and proof of current automobile insurance to travel between school sites and other locations as assigned.
- Current certification in First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), or the ability to obtain certification within the first three months of employment, and maintain it as a condition of continued employment.

Physical Standards:

The work environment and physical demands of the positions as described below are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of a position working with special education students. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals to perform the essential functions of a specific position. These physical standards are generic in nature, and tasks may vary depending on student assignments.

Work Environment: While performing the duties of this job, the employee works in several environments, including the home environment, classroom, indoor and outdoor, and clinic environments. The employee's primary responsibility is to provide physical therapy and supervision of certified physical therapy assistants, according to Individual Education Program (IEP) goals and treatment plans. The incumbent will be expected to drive to and from assigned sites. Employees in this position may have a higher level of exposure to infection and physical injury from students. There is also frequent contact with staff and the public. The noise level is moderate. Actual daily work schedules will vary, dependent on program needs.

Physical Demands: The physical demands of this position require that the employee engage in strenuous physical activity. Sitting and standing for extended periods of time is also required. Depending on class/student assignment, the employee may frequently move or lift children weighing up to 50 lbs unassisted from wheelchairs to tables or desks. Works with students who have severe physical and emotional disabilities. Employees may lift and move students who may wear heavy braces, use wheelchairs, and other assistive devices. Frequent bending at the waist is required, as is kneeling, crouching, pushing, and pulling to assist students with braces, floor exercises, and pushing of wheelchairs with or without students up and down inclines, steps, and on long walks. Employees may reach overhead as well as above the shoulders and horizontally. Dexterity of hands and fingers to demonstrate activities and equipment is required, as is hearing and speaking to model clear English speech, exchange information, make presentations, hear in a noisy environment, and locate the source of a sound. Seeing to read a variety of materials and monitoring student activities is required.

The information contained in this physical standards description is for compliance with ADA and is not an exhaustive list of duties performed. The individuals currently holding this position perform additional duties, and additional duties may be assigned.

Physical Therapist Personnel Action	Personnel Action Date
Adopted by the Personnel Commission:	6/23/2025