

# The ABC's of Pediatric Physical Therapy



The Section on Pediatrics  
American Physical Therapy Association

# Pediatric Physical Therapists and Assistants

- ◆ Highly educated, clinically trained professionals
- ◆ Work with individuals birth through adulthood with movement dysfunction
- ◆ Strong desire & unique talent for working with children & families



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# The Goal of Pediatric Physical Therapy

Help children reach their  
maximal functional level of  
independence



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# Pediatric Physical Therapy:

- ◆ Promotes independence
- ◆ Increases participation
- ◆ Facilitates motor development & function
- ◆ Improves strength
- ◆ Enhances learning opportunities
- ◆ Eases caregiving
- ◆ Promotes health & wellness



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# Increased Participation

- ◆ Pediatric Physical Therapists and Assistants promote increased participation in daily activities & routines in the:
  - ◆ Home
  - ◆ School
  - ◆ Community



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# The Critical Role of the Family

- ◆ Parents and families have the primary role in children's development.
- ◆ Pediatric Physical Therapists and Assistants collaborate with the family to implement individualized programs for each child.



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# Family Support

- ◆ The child's family is supported by the Pediatric Physical Therapist and Assistant through:
  - ◆ Coordination of services
  - ◆ Advocacy
  - ◆ Assistance with enhancing development



# Enhancing Development

- ◆ Pediatric Physical Therapists and Assistants assist the family with enhancing the child's development through:
  - ◆ Positioning during daily routines and activities
  - ◆ Adapting toys for play
  - ◆ Expanding mobility options
  - ◆ Using equipment effectively



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# Family Support

- ◆ Pediatric Physical Therapists and Assistants also:
  - ◆ Teach families about safety in the home and community
  - ◆ Provide information on the child's physical and health care needs
  - ◆ Assist the child & family with transitioning from early childhood to school, and into adult life



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# Starting a child in Pediatric Physical Therapy

- ◆ First, an interview is completed to identify the child's needs
- ◆ Next, an examination & evaluation is completed of the child in the context of his/her daily routines & activities.



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# The Physical Therapy

## Evaluation assesses the child's:

- ◆ Mobility
- ◆ Muscle and joint function
- ◆ Strength and endurance
- ◆ Cardiopulmonary status
- ◆ Posture and balance
- ◆ Oral motor skills & feeding
- ◆ Sensory & neuromotor development
- ◆ Use of assistive technology



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# Pediatric Physical Therapy

- ◆ Includes collaboration & coaching
- ◆ Occurs in natural learning environments, such as
  - ◆ Home
  - ◆ Child care centers
  - ◆ Preschools & schools
  - ◆ Job sites



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# Hospitals & Clinics

Children also may receive Pediatric Physical Therapy in hospitals & clinics when the child is receiving care for related medical conditions or during acute care episodes.



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# Is Your Child Entitled to Services?

All children ages birth to 21 eligible for:

- ◆ Early intervention or
- ◆ Special education & related services

are entitled to Pediatric PT through *IDEA*

- ◆ Federal Legislation: Public Law 105-17
- ◆ *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*



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# Additional Federal Legislation

- ◆ **The Rehabilitation Act, Section 504**
  - ◆ Requires provision of reasonable accommodations, including PT, for persons with disabilities
- ◆ **The Americans with Disabilities Act**
  - ◆ Protects rights of all individuals with disabilities



# Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) & Pediatric Physical Therapy

- ◆ “EBP” is the integration of research findings, clinical expertise, & values.
- ◆ Pediatric Physical Therapists and Assistants use EBP in order to collaborate with families, health care providers & educators to provide best practice.



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# Evidence-Based Practice supports the use of therapy interventions, such as:

- ◆ Developmental activities
- ◆ Strengthening
- ◆ Movement and mobility
- ◆ Tone management
- ◆ Motor learning
- ◆ Balance & coordination
- ◆ Recreation, play and leisure



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# EBP & Interventions (continued):

- ◆ Adaptation of daily care & routines
- ◆ Equipment design, fabrication & fitting
- ◆ Orthotics and prosthetics
- ◆ Burn and wound care
- ◆ Cardiopulmonary endurance
- ◆ Safety and prevention programs
- ◆ Use of assistive technology



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# Licensing of Physical Therapists and Assistants?

- ◆ Each State has laws governing licensure and practice of physical therapy.
- ◆ All physical therapists and assistants are graduates of an accredited university. Today, that degree is a graduate degree for physical therapists and an associate degree for assistants.
- ◆ Pediatric Physical Therapists have specialty training in & a desire to work with children and families.



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