

New Compromise Language for Legislation

March 21, 2007

As you know, it is imperative that MAPA's bill to revise the state's supervision law pass this legislative session. Because of outside pressure and the language of the current law, the Board of Healing Arts plans to require 100 percent on-site supervision of PAs statewide come August if lawmakers fail to act. That would rob many patients of access to care and would devastate our profession, so it is unacceptable to MAPA. Jobs would be lost, but more importantly, patient access to quality health care would be compromised as rural and inner-city health clinics are forced to reduce operating hours or permanently close their doors.

With your help, MAPA is aggressively working to prevent the worst-case scenario from becoming reality. One of the best ways to improve our chance for passing pro-PA legislation is to have widespread support among the various medical organizations for HB 497, sponsored by Rep. David Sater, and SB 537, sponsored by Sen. Brad Lager. With other medical organizations on our side, we can present a united front as our bills advance through the House and Senate.

Because we are determined to pass a bill this year, MAPA has negotiated a compromise with the Missouri State Medical Association in an effort to secure its endorsement of our bills. MSMA is the voice of more than 6,500 Missouri physicians. Several lawmakers are physician members of MSMA and many more will respect its support for our bills, helping win passage.

The compromise language would:

- Require physicians to be on site 66 percent of the time that PAs practice, unless the physician-PA team receives a waiver from the Advisory Commission on Physician Assistants (part of the Board of Healing Arts).
- Require the doctor to be readily available through telecommunications and within 30 miles by road the rest of the time.
- Allow PAs to make follow-up visits in hospitals, nursing homes, patient homes and correctional facilities without the physician's presence.

To protect PAs who already work with off-site supervision in Health Professional Shortage Areas, MAPA was able to insert into the bill a process for obtaining a waiver from the 66 percent on-site supervision requirement. Physician-PA teams will be able to apply to the Advisory Commission on PAs for a waiver. The Commission, with the Board's approval, would have the authority to grant waivers when:

- PAs practice in HPSAs
- Adequate supervision will be provided, given the PA's training and experience and the acuity of patients
- The physician would be within 50 miles; and

- The 66% requirement would reduce access to health care for the community.

This process will allow doctors and PAs to better customize how their practices deliver medical care.

While making the transition to these new rules, physician-PA teams would be allowed to operate under the current rules until 90 days after the rules for the waiver process are in place.

MSMA testified before a House panel in support of Rep. Robert Schaaf's PA supervision bill, HB 209, which would require a supervising physician to be present 80 percent of the clinic hours where the PA works with no exceptions. It was noted during the Senate hearing that MSMA opposed Sen. Lager's bill, but its membership was prepared to change its stance if a compromise was reached.

This compromise puts MSMA squarely in our corner. It means that our bills go forth with the support of MAPA and three other highly respected organizations, including MSMA, the Missouri Farm Bureau, and the Missouri Hospital Association. Remember, though, that while the terms of this compromise were approved by a House committee, they will not become law until passed by both chambers of the legislature and signed by the Governor.

MAPA needs your help as we continue to work aggressively to pass a new law to protect Missouri PAs. MAPA's Lobby Day on April 3 will be an important opportunity to persuade lawmakers of the value of this compromise, and calls and e-mails to your legislators are always helpful. Please stay alert for other ways in which you can help ensure passage of our legislation.