



FROM THE AAPA

Department of Labor clarifies PA status under FMLA

By Sandy Harding, director, federal affairs

Citing comments submitted a year ago by AAPA on confusing language and forms regarding the role of PAs in certifying health conditions through the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the US Department of Labor has issued regulations that clarify the status of PAs under FMLA. The proposed regulations

- Add PAs to the FMLA regulations' list of recognized health care providers
- Delete the requirement that health care providers must be authorized to diagnose and treat physical and mental health conditions without supervision by a doctor or other health care provider.

Additionally, the proposed regulations contain a new form (WH-380) for use by the certifying health care provider that deletes the previous form's references to "physician's [sic] assistant under direct supervision of a health care provider."

In its January 2007 comments to the Department of Labor, AAPA stated that a PA is usually covered as a FMLA provider under regulations that define "health care provider" as "any health care provider from whom an employer or the employer's group health plan's benefit manager will accept certification of the existence of a serious health condition to substantiate a claim for benefits." However, AAPA went on to say that regulatory language regarding the authority to diagnose and treat without supervision created confusion regarding the role of PAs, as did the certification form.

The proposed regulations also implement a recently passed law that extends FMLA to military families and contain new regulatory provisions on fitness-for-duty medical certification and permission for employers to contact the employee's health care provider for clarification of the medical certification.

PAs bring their collective voice to Capitol Hill

By Christopher Doscher, news editor, AAPA News

Nearly 200 PAs and PA students descended on Washington, DC, to make sure the collective voice of the profession continues to be heard by their representatives in Congress. Over the course of 2 days, PAs both received an education in the art of communicating

a message to legislators and were able to put their skills to work during visits with those who represent their own states and Congressional districts.

Keynote speaker Mara Liasson, a political correspondent for National Public Radio, told PAs in attendance that she expects that health care will be the "number one domestic issue" in this year's presidential campaign. She said plans offered by various candidates ranged from a focus on consumer choice to mandatory coverage for adults or children.

PAs' lobbying efforts focused on the following issues:

- Achieving changes in the Medicare statute that will allow PAs to order home health, hospice, and skilled nursing facility care for Medicare patients, as well as to ensure that PAs may provide hospice care for Medicare patients
- Updates to the Federal Workers' Compensation Program that will allow PAs to diagnose and treat federal employees who are injured on the job
- Restoring federal funding for the Title VII, Public Service Act, Health Professions Programs, which supports PA educational programs and is critical for providing PAs to work in medically underserved areas
- Elevating the position of PA advisor in the Department of Veterans Affairs to a full-time position.

AAPA part of White House campaign against prescription drug abuse

AAPA is part of a major public health campaign against prescription drug abuse launched in late January by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Partnership for a Drug-free America. The National Youth Anti-drug Media Campaign, designed to reduce prescription and OTC drug abuse among the nation's teens, includes television, print, and online advertising. The ads, which list the supporting professional organizations, are directed to parents and ask them to take five specific steps to reduce the risk of prescription drug abuse in the home. Ads have also appeared in professional journals, including *JAAPA*, encouraging health professionals to become involved in the campaign.

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