

Strengthening Our Advocacy for Aging Adults and Home Health Patients: The Joint Government Affairs Committee's Groundbreaking Work

The **American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)** is built on a foundation of advocacy, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to improving patient care. With the combined strengths of **APTA Home Health** and **APTA Geriatrics**, we now have a unified force that is working diligently to make a lasting impact on the future of physical therapy services. Through the formation of the **Joint Government Affairs Committee (JGAC)**, we are taking bold steps to amplify our collective voice and secure better policies for aging adults and home health patients across the nation.

A Unified Approach to Advocacy

The primary goal of the Joint Government Affairs Committee is simple yet profound: **to merge the expertise and resources of both APTA Home Health and APTA Geriatrics** to tackle the critical federal policy issues impacting physical therapy for aging adults and home health patients. Together, these two vibrant groups are creating a force that advocates for improved access to services, better reimbursement policies, and enhanced federal engagement on issues that matter most to our members.

Through the **collaborative efforts of these two entities**, we aim to be the driving force behind better policies that ensure older adults and home health patients receive the care they deserve. The committee is structured to be efficient and forward-thinking, consisting of **two committee chairs, seven members**, and a robust **budget of \$3000 annually** to maintain visibility at federal advocacy events like the APTA Federal Advocacy Forum.

Strategic Functions: Advocacy, Education, and Leadership Development

The committee has laid out clear priorities, ensuring a **strategic focus** on areas that are critical to both Home Health and Geriatrics. These efforts are built on four primary functions:

- 1. Discovery & Advocacy**

The committee constantly identifies and monitors federal issues impacting physical therapy in home health and geriatrics, advocating for improved policies that enhance access to services and address reimbursement concerns. These efforts will lead to real change in the legislative landscape that directly impacts patient care and therapist practice.

- 2. Education & Communication**

Keeping members informed is vital. The committee regularly shares educational content through articles, webinars, and presentations to ensure that all members are well-versed in critical legislative developments and are equipped to take action through grassroots advocacy.

- 3. Collaboration & Recruitment**

The committee fosters cross-collaboration between members from both the APTA Home Health and APTA Geriatrics communities, ensuring that diverse voices are heard, and

advocacy strategies are unified. In addition, the committee actively recruits new members to strengthen the efforts and expand the breadth of knowledge and experience.

4. **Mentorship & Succession Planning**

Long-term sustainability is a priority, and mentorship is key. One of the committee chairs actively mentors their successor, ensuring that future leadership remains robust and informed. This succession model guarantees **continuity and effective leadership** that supports the committee's goals and initiatives for years to come.

Targeted Advocacy for Home Health and Geriatrics

The **strategic goals** of the committee are laser-focused on two distinct but interconnected areas:

- **APTA Home Health Focus:**

Advocating for improved reimbursement and regulatory policies that will empower home health providers to better meet the needs of patients. Building grassroots networks will be key in influencing federal decision-makers and ensuring that home health services are adequately represented on Capitol Hill.

- **APTA Geriatrics Focus:**

Pushing for better payment policies and more access to physical therapy for aging adults. The committee is committed to amplifying the voices of geriatrics physical therapists, ensuring that the legislative needs of older adults are prioritized, and ultimately improving health outcomes for this vulnerable population.

A Vision for the Future: More Than Just Advocacy

The formation of the Joint Government Affairs Committee is more than just a merging of two committees; it represents a **vision for the future** of physical therapy. A vision where we can collectively advocate for improved policies, educate our members, and recruit new leaders to take on the challenges of tomorrow.

The committee has set ambitious but achievable goals, and with **strong backing from both the APTA Home Health and APTA Geriatrics Boards**, the committee is positioned to make a significant impact. The work being done right now will echo across the profession for years to come, ensuring that we continue to advocate for those who need us most: our aging population and those receiving home health services.

Join the Effort – Be Part of the Change

As members of the APTA community, your involvement and support are essential to the success of this committee. Together, we are shaping the future of physical therapy for home health and geriatrics. If you're passionate about policy advocacy and want to make a tangible difference in the lives of aging adults and home health patients, **now is the time to engage**. Whether through **active participation** or by simply staying informed, your contribution is invaluable.

The **Joint Government Affairs Committee** is here to stay, and with the ongoing support of our members, we will continue to push for meaningful change in federal policy. Together, we are making history—let's ensure the future is brighter for those we serve.

Email me if you would like to learn more or join our efforts.

Learn, Educate, Advocate – PT & Our Patients are Counting on You!

Eva Norman, PT, DPT

Chair, JGAC of APTA Home Health & APTA Geriatrics