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Some License Requirements for Qualified Physicians Assistants Are Suspended During Coronavirus Emergency

In order to allow physician assistants practicing under the state Board of Osteopathic Medicine to more easily and effectively assist with emergency response efforts to COVID-19, Governor Wolf granted the Department of State's request to suspend requirements pertaining to written agreements and several other items.

The following requirements are suspended:

- The Osteopathic Medical Practice Act restricts physicians to the supervision of four physician assistants, but they can apply for a waiver from the state board of Osteopathic Medicine to supervise more. Governor Wolf has suspended both the ratio and waiver requirements.
- The requirement is suspended that all physicians with whom a physician assistant is assisting be named on the written agreement. Only one primary and one substitute physician will need to be named.
- The board regulations that require contact information for at least two substitute supervising physicians are suspended because if a primary physician and substitute physician are named, their contact information will be in the Department of State's PALS system.
- The requirement that written agreements receive board approval is suspended. Written agreements will be effective upon submission to the board.
- The requirement is suspended that temporary authorization to practice be issued for up to 120 days upon board receipt of a complete written agreement.
- Countersignature requirements outlined in the Osteopathic Medical Practice Act will be suspended, provided that the number of patient records reviewed is sufficient to assure adequate review of the physician assistant's scope of practice.
- Board regulations that require countersignature from a physician within 10 days and at least weekly review by a physician of medical records prepared by a physician assistant are suspended.
- The requirement that the board must approve use of a physician assistant at "satellite operations" is suspended. This will allow more physician assistants to practice wherever they are needed during the disaster declaration.

In addition, after review, the department determined that no suspensions pertaining to written agreements are required for physician assistants practicing under the Pennsylvania Board of Medicine.

This allowance is due to an emergency medical services clause in their regulations that permits licensed physician assistants to respond to a need for medical care created by a declared state



of emergency by rendering care consistent with relevant standards of care. It applies to physician assistants licensed in Pennsylvania and physician assistants licensed or authorized to practice in any other state.