



TO: House Committee on Families, Children, and Seniors

FROM: Michigan Physical Therapy Association

DATE: April 10, 2019

SUBJECT: Please support House Bill 4108: Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants added as Mandatory Reporters of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Dear Members of the House Committee on Families, Children, and Seniors,

My name is Jena Colon. I am the Legislative Director for the Michigan Physical Therapy Association (MPTA). I am also a physical therapist that has worked in several settings including outpatient, home care, as well as inpatient acute care hospital with all patient populations.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with you regarding House Bill 4108. This bill will add Physical Therapists (PTs) and Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs) to the list of mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect.

Current Law for Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect in Michigan

The Michigan Child Protection Law, 1975 PA 238, MCL 722.621 et. Seq.(CPL) includes regulation of professionals who are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect. "Mandated reporters are an essential part of the child protection system because they have an enhanced capacity, through their expertise and direct contact with children, to identify suspected child abuse and neglect.

Reports made by mandatory reporters are confirmed at nearly double the rate of those made by non-mandated reporters."⁴

Professionals Identified as Mandatory Reporters by Michigan Statute

Physician	Audiologist	School Administrator
Dentist	Psychologist	School Counselor
Physician's Assistant	Marriage/Family Therapist	School Teacher
Registered Dental Hygienist	Licensed Professional Counselor	Law Enforcement Officer
Medical Examiner	Social Worker	Clergy
Nurse	Social Service Technician	Reg. Child Care Provider
Emergency Medical Provider	Friend of the Court	

The CPL identifies many health professionals as mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect. PTs and PTAs are currently NOT mandatory reporters of child abuse or neglect in Michigan unless the PT or PTA is classified as a teacher in a school system.

Please know that physical therapists have reported cases of suspected child abuse and neglect over the years, as permitted under the Child Protection Law, but they are NOT REQUIRED to do so. This bill remedies that loophole and increases accountability of physical therapists on behalf of the children of this state, and MPTA is strongly in support of this change.

Passage of HB 4108 would serve as an opportunity to remind and further educate health care professionals about the problem of child abuse and neglect in our state. If HB 4108 becomes law, MPTA pledges to educate our members on what it means to be official mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect.

To help contextualize the importance of this legislation, I would like to provide some important background information about child maltreatment and child abuse and neglect in Michigan.

Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment includes all types of abuse or neglect of a child. Four types of maltreatment commonly identified are 1) Physical Abuse, 2) Sexual Abuse, 3) Emotional Abuse and 4) Neglect.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention states that 683,000 victims of child abuse and neglect were reported to child protective services nationally in 2015. Young children are the most vulnerable, particularly during their first year.¹

Child Abuse and Neglect in Michigan

The MI Department of Health and Human Services reported that 37,370 abused and neglected children were identified in Michigan in 2015... the highest number in over 20 years. MI DHHS further reported that 247,745 reports of suspected child abuse or neglect were investigated in 2015.² Child abuse and neglect occurs across all segments of Michigan's citizens, occurring in all counties in the state.²

National Overview for Reporting

Forty-four states identify PTs as mandatory reporters by law, explicitly or as part of a larger group (e.g. all "health practitioners", "allied health professionals", persons involved in "admission, examination, care or treatment", etc.). In 3 states PTs are mandatory reporters when they work in a hospital setting.

PTs are trained to identify victims of child abuse and neglect and respond appropriately during their professional education and it is included on the national licensing exam. PTAs provide care under the supervision of the PT in Michigan and are qualified to identify victims of child abuse and neglect with their supervising PT's input.

PTs and PTAs are ideally situated to screen for and respond to situations of suspected child abuse and neglect. PTs and PTAs provide care to children in a variety of settings including schools, hospitals, home-care and outpatient clinics. Physical therapy treatment often includes extended time with children and their families over multiple visits. During these multiple visits, PTs and PTAs are able to assess for atypical bruise patterns that can't be explained by a fall, multiple bruises in various stages of healing, and whether injuries are consistent with the family reported mechanism of injury. PTs and PTAs can also observe interactions between the child and family members.

Adding PTs and PTAs as mandatory reporters makes good sense for the safety of children in Michigan. Although some may have concern about adding a mandate, the MI Child Protection Law provides civil and criminal immunity for someone making a report in good faith. The identity of the reporting person is confidential under the law under most circumstances.

MPTA sincerely asks you to SUPPORT HB 4108.

Thank you for providing time to present to you on this important topic.

Jena Colon, DPT, MBA
Legislative Director
Michigan Physical Therapy Association

