



February 9, 2017

Michael Farrell, Chair

Group Insurance Board

Dear Mr. Farrell and Board members,

The Wisconsin Academy of Physician Assistants represents a significant number of physician assistants who provide health care, both primary care and specialty care, to state employees. As you consider changes to how state employees are insured, we respectfully encourage you require care provided by a physician assistant be a covered benefit under self-insurance contracts.

Physician assistants (PAs) are nationally certified, state-licensed medical professionals who practice medicine on healthcare teams with physicians and other providers. PAs are trained and qualified to take medical histories, conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, develop treatment plans, counsel on preventative care, and write prescriptions. In short, PAs practice medicine on healthcare teams with physicians and other providers and do so in all specialties and settings. Unfortunately, some self-insured plans in Wisconsin will only reimburse for services provided personally by physicians, meaning services provided by a PA are denied, even if the PA works side by side with a covered physician.

Health care providers have no way of knowing whether PA services are a covered benefit by simply looking at the patient's insurance card. So, either the patient receives an unexpected bill for the full cost of the services, or the organization has to write off the cost. Alternatively, some clinics require patients to contact the plan to determine whether PA services are a covered benefit, delaying their access to health care. Some urgent care clinics similarly require such screening, which again can result in a delay of care.

We hope you find this information helpful as you continue your deliberations. In the event that the Board elects to adopt the self-insurance model, we would encourage you



to consider adding language to the contract clarifying that physician assistant services are a covered benefit. This will help ensure that state employees continue to enjoy equal access to care.

Sincerely,

Paula Havisto, PA-C

Paula Havisto, MS, PA-C
WAPA President