



Obtaining a Physician's Prescription

Question 1: What are First Steps guidelines for obtaining a physician's prescription for occupational therapists (OT), physical therapists (PT) & speech-language pathologists (SLP) services?

Initial Evaluation for Eligibility Determination: Missouri utilizes the *Developmental Assessment of Young Children (DAYC)* for initial evaluation to determine eligibility. The DAYC is NOT a discipline specific instrument and can be administered by a variety of professionals (teacher, OT, PT, SLP, etc.) who meet the qualifications outlined by the publisher. The System Points of Entry (SPOE), along with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), determine which First Steps providers are trained to administer the DAYC. For these reasons, the Missouri Board of Healing Arts has determined that a physician's prescription is NOT needed for any discipline to conduct the DAYC for First Steps eligibility determination. Further information on the scope of work permitted by professionals licensed by the Division of Professional Registration can be found at Chapter 334.506.RSMo. (Physical Therapists), Chapter 324 RSMo. (Occupational Therapists), and Chapter 345 RSMo. (Speech-Language Pathologists).

Assessment: An assessment is the administration of a discipline specific instrument such as the Peabody, E-LAP, REEL, etc. or an informal assessment such as an observation, by a PT, OT, or SLP. A PT must obtain a physician's prescription for every assessment, according to the Missouri Practice Act. Additionally, SLP and OT must also obtain a prescription for an assessment if the child has MO HealthNet coverage (Medicaid or MC+).

Ongoing services: A PT must obtain a physician's prescription for all ongoing services, regardless of the funding source. Additionally, SLP and OT must also obtain a prescription for ongoing services if the child has MO HealthNet coverage (Medicaid or MC+). It is the primary responsibility of the service provider to obtain the prescription. First Steps and MO HealthNet have agreed to this arrangement with the expectation that the provider will have an active prescription for each eligible child they treat. Providers may be assisted with obtaining prescriptions by the child's Service Coordinator or family; however, the primary responsibility to obtain the prescription rests with the provider as they are the individual conducting the service. The original prescription should remain with the provider, and a copy must be placed in the child's official record at the SPOE.

Question 2: If the child is in First Steps for longer than a year, do we need to update a physician's prescription on an annual basis?

Yes, a physician's prescription for therapy services needs to be updated by the provider on an annual basis. Again, the original prescription should remain with the provider and a copy must be placed in the child's official record at the SPOE.

3. Must frequency, intensity and duration of therapy services be included on the physician's prescription for it to be valid?

No. The frequency, intensity and duration of services are determined by the child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team. It is preferred that a prescription not include frequency, intensity and duration as the physician's recommendations are often developed from a medical interpretation of therapy services, as opposed to the developmental, family-capacity building model of First Steps. If the prescription does include these recommendations, the team may take them into consideration when deciding frequency, intensity and duration of services; however, they are not obligated to abide by the physician's prescription.

4. Can a nurse practitioner sign a prescription for therapy services?

It is acceptable for a physician or their designated representative to sign a prescription for occupational therapy and speech-language pathology; however, a physician must co-sign the prescription for physical therapy services. Keep in mind a nurse practitioner cannot sign documentation for First Steps eligibility. A physician's signature is required on the confirmation of a medical condition for eligibility determination.