



MICHIGAN ACADEMY
of PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS



PAs: Michigan's Mental Health Providers

The Facts:

- Michigan PAs provide much of the psychiatric medical care across every region of Michigan. Every inpatient psychiatric facility employs psychiatric PAs including UofM, the state psychiatric hospitals, and the VA. Michigan Psych PAs have been filing the same roles as psychiatrists for decades.
- Psychiatric Medicine and Behavioral Health are a part of the education curriculum and clinical training for every Physician Assistants (PA).
- PAs currently serve patients in every type of psychiatric medicine/behavioral health/mental health setting in every region of Michigan.

Two solutions to improve mental health access for Michigan residents by amending Michigan's Mental Health Code (MHC):

1. **Define PAs as Mental Health Professionals in the MHC.** The MHC currently defines "Mental Health Professional" as a physician, psychologist, RN, MSW, licensed professional counselor, or a licensed marriage and family therapist.
2. **Include PAs in the MHC as providers able to issue the initial certification to refer a patient for an evaluation by a psychiatrist.** The law ensures only a psychiatrist can provide the second certification needed to admit a patient involuntarily, and this bill does not change that.

PAs: Michigan's Mental Health Providers FAQs

PAs are able to sign for hospital certification and offer restraint/seclusion orders? Are they qualified to do this?

PA medicine programs prepare students to assess and implement a wide array of interventions for patients presenting in acute mental and physical health. These programs include training in psychiatric mental assessment and interventions. Psychiatric medicine is a core component of PA education.

In addition, PAs are qualified to perform initial hospital certifications. Currently, this can be done by any physician and refers a patient to a psychiatrist for further evaluation. Only a psychiatrist is able to offer second certifications for involuntary admittance under the current law and this bill does not change that.

Should the MHC require PAs to have additional hours of post-graduate, post-certification psychiatric practice experience before being allowed to issue restraints and seclusion?

These clinicians receive adequate training to apply restraints and do so under Michigan's Public Health Code (PHC) in every setting today.

The current Mental Health Code (MHC) does not require physicians to have additional training in psychiatry or mental health in order to write clinical certificates for seclusion/restraint orders. ANY physician, even those who have recently graduated from medical school, may authorize hospitalizations and seclusion/restraint episodes without any special training. The PHC already outlines requirements for PAs. It is outside the scope of the MHC to introduce additional requirements for acts, tasks or functions that PAs are already authorized to provide in the PHC.

Shouldn't the Mental Health Code include provisions to reduce the use of seclusion/restraints? Does the use of seclusion and/or restraints do damage to vulnerable service recipients?

Seclusion and restraint episodes are highly regulated and monitored with exceptional care by national and state regulatory bodies. The bar for initiating and maintaining an episode is extremely high and often these interventions are used to ensure the safety of the patient and others.

The mission of the MHC as a whole is intended to significantly restrict involuntary procedures (short and long term) from being conducted on recipients and this bill would not change that intent. Those who support this bill are certainly willing to work with patient advocates on language in the law that would further reduce seclusion/restraint episodes. But that is not the intent and does not fit within the constitutional scope of this bill.



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Support for including PAs in Michigan's Mental Health Code:

The Michigan Academy of Physician Assistants
The Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners
The Michigan Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists
The Michigan Health & Hospital Association
The Michigan Osteopathic Association
The Michigan Academy of Family Physicians
The Michigan Society of Addiction Medicine
The Michigan Psychological Association
The Michigan Mental Health Counselors Association
The American Nurses Association-MI Chapter
The American Psychiatric Nurses Association-Michigan Chapter
The Michigan Nurses Association
The Michigan Association of Treatment Court Professionals
The Economic Alliance of Michigan
The Michigan Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers
The Michigan Association of Colleges of Nursing
The Mackinac Center for Public Policy
The Michigan Association of Health Plans