



Perseverance Wins: A Victory for PAs in Indiana

A Case Study in Never Giving Up

Laws and regulations govern PA practice, but sometimes another organization's policy has the power to severely impact PA practice and patient care. Reversing such a policy is not easy, but the Indiana Academy of PA's (IAPA) past advocacy experience – with back up from AAPA – gave them confidence knowing there is a solution to every policy problem.



The Background

Sports physicals have traditionally been performed in a pediatrician's or family physician's office. It is routine for PAs to complete these exams either at an office visit, at "pop up" low-cost or no-cost sports physical clinics, or in urgent care or convenient care clinics. However, the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) instituted a policy that mandated that only a physician could conduct and sign a sports physical.

This policy was loosely interpreted for years; with physicians countersigning forms after a PA had conducted the exam. However, a change in IHSAA leadership prompted closer scrutiny and a more stringent interpretation of the policy. In 2010 Indiana PAs started to notice that IHSAA was rejecting sports physicals they had conducted.

"Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish."

–John Quincy Adams

IAPA was eager to work with IHSAA to remedy the discrepancy between policy and practice. Other state high school athletic associations had accepted physicals performed by PAs for many years. However, IHSAA was not open to changing its policy.

IAPA sprang into action, forming a coalition comprised of the Indiana State Nurses Association, the Indiana Association of Family Physicians, the Indiana Hospital Association, and several corporate partners. This coalition spread awareness of the problem among physicians and families who were most affected by this policy and advocated for IHSAA to make a change. On June 27, 2016, IHSAA announced it had changed its policy and PAs and NPs could resume performing sports physicals.

Courtney Doran, PA-C, IAPA's past president and legislative co-chair, reflected on this experience, and offered tips for chapters seeking policy change.

Key Takeaways

Know Who – and When – to Ask for Help

IAPA and AAPA's advocacy partnership spans decades, so it was no surprise that Courtney's first call about this issue was to AAPA's Constituent Organization Outreach & Advocacy (COOA) staff. COOA worked closely with IAPA leaders throughout the process to provide strategic advice and information such as a summary of other state athletic associations' policies governing sports physicals, briefs on PA performance of sports physicals, and up-to-date information on current Federal Trade Commission action on anti-competition policy.

Use Your Network

IAPA treated this issue like a major legislative campaign, sending email action alerts through AAPA's Legislative Action Center and using social media platforms to spread the word and ask PAs to take action. PAs, physicians, hospitals, schools, and parents stepped up and wrote letters to IHSAA explaining how the association's policy was limiting patient access to care.

Don't Give Up

This effort did not happen overnight; it took IAPA more than two years to persuade IHSAA

to change its policy. While it would have been ideal for IHSAA to come to the conclusion to amend this policy on its own, IAPA knew that it was worth its time and resources to persist in its advocacy until the policy was changed.

This is one of many unique barriers outside of PA practice laws our team has helped take on. Are there similar challenges your organization has overcome? Contact me at apeer@aapa.org to share your thoughts.



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Learn more about how COOA works collaboratively with State PA Chapters:
[AAPA Partners with Illinois Academy of PAs to Remove Barriers for PAs: Shares Key Takeaways for Legislative Success](#)