

Frequently Asked Questions:

ABPTRFE Policy and Procedures Changes

The following frequently asked questions were developed through the collaboration of the Academy of Orthopaedic Physical Therapy's Residency and Fellowship Special Interest Group (ORF-SIG) with the assistance of Linda Csiza, Lead Accreditation Specialist, and Mark Weber, Chair of the American Board of Physical Therapy Residency and Fellowship Education (ABPTRFE).

1. What is the intent of policy 13.5 Addition of Practice Sites and the Site visit?

During a substantive change process when a program is adding additional practice sites, ABPTRFE must ensure quality of education within these sites, and the program's continued compliance with the Quality Standards.

The former policy required every site submitted to undergo a site visit as part of a substantive change. As a result of the April Stakeholder forum with subsequent recommendations from the ABPTRFE Standards Committee, ABPTRFE clarified within policy 13.5 that only those sites used for mentoring would undergo a site visit.

In addition, ABPTRFE adopted the recommendations of the Stakeholder Forum and Standards Committee by creating a threshold for the number of site visits conducted as part of the substantive change when additional practice sites are added. Instead of conducting 100% site visits for all practice sites for all substantive changes submitted by a program, a program that demonstrates continued compliance with the ABPTRFE standards with 5 consecutive site visits for mentoring sites reported during substantive changes, will move to reporting-only, or "Notification Status".

Programs on notification status will only need to submit Part 1 of the substantive change form for additional practice sites. They will no longer be required to undergo site visits or submit the Part 2 application after those sites have been on-boarded. Note: a program that falls out of compliance with ABPTRFE standards will lose notification status. To regain that status, the program would have to demonstrate compliance with the standards and successfully complete 5 consecutive sites visits (see 13.5.4).

The other recommendation adopted from the Stakeholder Forum and Standards Committee is to allow a program the option of having these sites visits conducted virtually. This option is addressed in policies 5.2, 13.5.2, and 13.5.4.

Relevant sections from [ABPTRFE Processes and Procedures](#) include:

- 13.5 Change in Practice Sites (effective July 1, 2021)
 - 13.5.1 Change in Practice Sites Application Part 1
 - 13.5.2 Substantive Change Implementation
 - 13.5.3 Change in Practice Sites Substantive Change Decision
 - 13.5.4 Notification Status

a. Q&A Follow up questions:

i. **QUESTION 1:** How will policy 13.5 affect temporary reduction in sites or change in site location due to the pandemic?

ANSWER 1: If the site was previously approved by ABPTRFE, there is no need to complete a substantive change.

1. If you are adding new sites, that's when you will complete the substantive change process.
2. Any site that was placed on hold due to the pandemic; you would simply mark the last column of the Practice Site Chart on the ACIR as "Inactive". Once you resume using that site, you change the last column of the Practice Site Chart on the ACIR to "Existing".

ii. **QUESTION 2:** Does a Change in Practice Sites Application have to be completed if a new clinic site is added within the same organization, even if a mentor from a previously approved clinic will be providing the mentoring at the new site?

ANSWER: Yes, this has been the policy with substantive changes since Rule 14 in the June 2014 version of ABPTRFE Policy and Procedures and is covered in policy 13.5.

iii. **QUESTION 3:** What happens when the mentor travels from clinic to clinic? The mentor has already been vetted and approved as being someone who provides high quality mentorship, just the location is different.

ANSWER 3: ABPTRFE accredits educational programs, not faculty. Therefore, if a new site is being added to the program, regardless of the faculty at that site, the program must seek ABPTRFE approval in accordance with the substantive change policy.

2. What is considered the "Addition of a Practice Site"?

A practice site is any site used for [Patient-Care Clinic Hours](#). This is defined in the ABPTRFE Processes and Procedures (p. 45) as: *Participant time spent in patient care, documentation of patient care, direction and supervision of a physical therapist assistant or student during patient care, and conference/rounds on patient care. Mentoring hours are inclusive of the patient-care clinic hours (whether a program meets the minimum mentoring hours or exceeds the minimum mentoring hours).*

a. Follow up Q & A

- i. **QUESTION 1:** With the new process, will programs be accredited based on the number of “Practice sites” like it is with the “Number of Participants”

ANSWER 1: Programs have always been accredited based on the sites listed within their accreditation application materials; this is not a new process. When a program achieves accreditation, those sites listed within their accreditation materials have been identified as the approved sites for the program.

As in the past, when an accredited program plans to expand training at additional practice sites, these are submitted through the substantive change process.

- ii. **QUESTION 2:** Does an accredited program need to submit Substantive Change documentation and undergo a site visit if one of their clinic sites relocates to a new location? No other elements of the educational program including faculty has changed nor the number of sites just the physical address of the clinic.

ANSWER 2: The program should contact ABPTRFE staff and discuss the changes to determine if a substantive change form would be required.

- iii. **QUESTION 3:** In instances (ex- COVID-19 19) where an accredited multi-site educational program who does not have to change any program structure or delivery has to reallocate clinic resources such as staff and/or residents across their different institutional clinics. Does a program have to submit Substantive Change Documentation and undergo a Site Visit in order to relocate the resident to a different clinic within their institution so that 1:1 mentorship can occur?

ANSWER 3: If the clinic site that the resident is moved to is already an approved site, then no. If it is a new clinic site that has not been approved by ABPTRFE, then yes.

3. What is the difference between policy 13.5 and 13.6?

Policy 13.5 is specific to the addition of practice sites. Policy 13.6 is specific to the addition of participant positions. While the policy and process for a program adding participant practice sites has not changed, ABPTRFE removed this change from its original location under Change in Curriculum and placed it into a separate policy number.

4. Since policy 13.5 does not take effect until July 1, 2021, what process should programs follow between now and July 1, 2021 if they plan to add practice sites?

Programs are to continue following [policy 13.4 from the September 23, 2019](#) publication of the ABPTRFE Processes and Procedures.

a. General Follow up Q & A / Scenarios

- i. **QUESTION:** At the initial accreditation there are 5 mentoring sessions that occur. Does that then meet the standard for moving to notification only?

ANSWER: Notification status is specific to substantive changes (Change in Practice Site). Policy 5.0 (Onsite Visit) has not changed with respect to accreditation and renewal of accreditation. A maximum of five sites may be visited during accreditation site visits.

- ii. **QUESTION:** If an accredited program submits substantive changes with the addition of 5 sites and undergoes 5 successful site visits will this move them to notification only?

ANSWER: Yes, see policy 13.5.4

- iii. **QUESTION:** What are the program costs for substantive change site visits listed in the scenario above?

ANSWER: The fees are per-person, per-day of the site visit. If the program can arrange for all 5 practice sites to undergo the mentoring observation in a single day, then the cost would be based on a 1-day visit. Please refer to the [ABPTRFE Fees](#) on the website.

- iv. **QUESTION:** What are the Program Fees for Substantive Change Virtual Site Visits?

ANSWER: There is no difference between virtual site visit fees and in-person site visit fees.

- v. **QUESTION:** For programs going through reaccreditation, will the standards be the same for all site visitors for all reaccreditations?

ANSWER: The Quality Standards, Processes, and Procedures are the same whether a program is undergoing initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation.

- vi. **QUESTION:** If mentors are added to a program but not a change in a clinical site or residents, does that trigger the need for a site visit?

ANSWER: No, a change in faculty is not considered a substantive change.

- vii. **QUESTION:** In an initial site visit in a program with 2 sites and 2 residents, does there need to be mentoring observation of both residents, both sites?

ANSWER: Yes, policy 5.0 (Onsite Visits) states that a maximum of five sites may be visited.

- viii. **QUESTION:** Who can I contact for more information related to substantive changes?

ANSWER: Programs should contact APTA staff, Linda Csiza, at lindacsiza@apta.org with any questions on ABPTRFE standards, processes, and procedures.