

Pre-Physician Assistant

Physician assistants (PAs) practice medicine under the supervision of physicians and surgeons. PAs are formally trained to provide diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventive health care services, as delegated by a physician. Working as members of the health care team, they take medical histories, examine and treat patients, order and interpret laboratory tests and x rays, and make diagnoses. They also treat minor injuries, by suturing, splinting, and casting. PAs record progress notes, instruct and counsel patients, and order or carry out therapy. In 48 States and the District of Columbia, physician assistants may prescribe medications. PAs also may have managerial duties. Some order medical supplies or equipment and supervise technicians and assistants.

Physician assistants work under the supervision of a physician. However, PAs may be the principal care providers in rural or inner city clinics, where a physician is present for only 1 or 2 days each week. In such cases, the PA confers with the supervising physician and other medical professionals as needed and as required by law. PAs also may make house calls or go to hospitals and nursing care facilities to check on patients, after which they report back to the physician.

Many PAs work in primary care specialties, such as general internal medicine, pediatrics, and family medicine. Other specialty areas include general and thoracic surgery, emergency medicine, orthopedics, and geriatrics. PAs specializing in surgery provide preoperative and postoperative care and may work as first or second assistants during major surgery.

Above information taken from The Bureau of Labor Statistics Internet: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm#tab-4>. See also: American Academy of Physician Assistants Information Center, 950 North Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314-1552. Internet: <http://www.aapa.org>

Job Outlook

Employment of physician assistants is projected to grow 30 percent from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations. As demand for healthcare services grows, physician assistants will be needed to provide care to patients.

Earnings

The median annual wage for physician assistants was \$98,180 in May 2015. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$62,760, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$139,540.

Educational Requirements

- Most applicants to PA educational programs already have a bachelor's degree.
- Physician assistant programs usually last at least 2 years; admission requirements vary by program, but many require at least 2 years of college and some health care experience.
- All States require physician assistants to complete an accredited education program and to pass a national exam in order to obtain a license. *See also National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, Inc., 12000 Findley Rd., Suite 200, Duluth, GA 30097. Internet: <http://www.nccpa.net>*

Educational Programs

Nationally, in 2011, more than 156 education programs for physician assistants were accredited or provisionally accredited by the American Academy of Physician Assistants. Six of these programs offered the option of a master's degree. http://www.arc-pa.com/postgrad_programs/acc_clinical_programs.html

In the state of Georgia, PA programs are offered by

- Emory University
- Augusta University
- Mercer University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
- South University

In general these programs require that you have a Bachelor's Degree, one year of biology, chemistry or physics, one semester of biochemistry, microbiology, and anatomy and physiology with labs. Additional requirements can be found at www.valdosta.edu/biology

For further information visit our website at

<http://www.valdosta.edu/~rgoddard/advising/advising.htm>