

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

Entry Level: Master's Degree

***Please Note:** BYU has PA advisement is for students that are interested in becoming a certified physician assistant: <https://ppa.byu.edu/physician-assistant>.

Physician assistants (PA) are medical providers who are licensed to diagnose and treat illness and disease and to prescribe medication for patients. They work in physician offices, hospitals and clinics in collaboration with a licensed physician.¹ A PA is a nationally certified and state-licensed medical professional. PAs practice medicine on healthcare teams with physicians and other providers.²

JOB REQUIREMENTS

What is the exact job title?

- Physician Assistant (PA)

How do I become one?

- Graduate from an accredited PA program.¹
- Pass the national certification exam.¹
- Obtain a license in the state in which you wish to practice.¹

What qualities do I need?

- Communication skills: PAs must explain complex medical issues in a way that patients can understand. They must also effectively communicate with doctors and other healthcare workers to ensure that they provide the best possible patient care.³
- Compassion: PAs deal with patients who are sick or injured and may be in extreme pain or distress. They must treat patients and their families with compassion and understanding.³
- Detail oriented: PAs should be observant and have a strong ability to focus when evaluating and treating patients.³
- Emotional stability: PAs, particularly those working in surgery or emergency medicine, should work well under pressure. They must remain calm in stressful situations in order to provide quality care.³
- Problem-solving skills: PAs need to evaluate patients' symptoms and administer the appropriate treatments. They must be diligent when investigating complicated medical issues so they can determine the best course of treatment for each patient.³

TYPICAL WORK DAY

What do they do?

- Physician assistants practice medicine on teams with physicians, surgeons, and other healthcare workers.³
- Take or review patients' medical histories.³
- Examine patients.³
- Order and interpret diagnostic tests, such as x rays or blood tests.³
- Diagnose a patient's injury or illness.³
- Give treatment, such as setting broken bones and immunizing patients.³

1<https://explorehealthcareers.org/career/medicine/physician-assistant/>

2<https://www.aapa.org/career-central/become-a-pa/>

3<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm>

4[https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Physician_Assistant_\(PA\)/Salary](https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Physician_Assistant_(PA)/Salary)

- Educate and counsel patients and their families—for example, answering questions about how to care for a child with asthma.³
- Prescribe medicine.³
- Assess and record a patient’s progress.³
- Research the latest treatments to ensure the quality of patient care.³
- Conduct or participate in outreach programs, talking to groups about managing diseases and promoting wellness.³

Where do they normally work?

- Physician assistants work in physicians’ offices, hospitals, outpatient clinics, and other healthcare settings.³

What hours do they work?

- Most physician assistants work full time. Some work more than 40 hours per week. PAs may work nights, weekends, or holidays. They may also be on call, meaning that they must be ready to respond to a work request with little notice.³

BENEFITS

What is a typical salary in this field?

- BLS: In May 2018, median pay was \$52.22/hour or \$108,610/year.³
- Payscale: \$94,723/year.⁴

Does this job come with any benefits? (vision, dental, 401k, PTO, etc.)

- Medical: 80%⁴
- Vision: 51%⁴
- Dental: 62%⁴
- None: 19%⁴

GROWTH

What is the projected job growth?

- Between 2018 - 2028, job growth is projected to be 31%, much faster than the average for all occupations.³

Last Updated: October 2019

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