

- Physician assistants (eventually to be renamed physician associates) provide diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic care as designated by a licensed physician.
- PAs are trained as generalists but can also work in specialty areas. They perform physical exams, diagnose and treat illness, order and interpret lab tests, prescribe medication, perform in-office procedures, suture wounds, assist in surgery, provide patient education and counseling, and make rounds in hospitals.
- Nearly 40% of PAs practice in hospital settings. An equal number work in group and solo-physician offices. The rest are found in rural and community health centers, nursing homes, surgical facilities, school and college-based health centers, industry, and correctional facilities.
- Originally PA programs were created to train former military corpsmen to practice medicine and provide care for people with limited access to health care. In recent years, the field has included students directly from undergraduate studies as well as practitioners from a variety of healthcare fields.

Education & Licensure

- To attend one of the accredited PA master's programs, you need to complete a bachelor's degree in any major along with appropriate prerequisite courses (below).
- **Considerable health care experience** (generally hands-on patient care) is needed to be admitted to most programs. Some programs require 2,000+ hours. Many admitted students will have even more hours. Schools have different opinions on the experiences they value. Training is typically needed to work in a healthcare setting.
- After completing science courses (didactic training), PA students complete clinical rotations in a number of specialties including family medicine, pediatrics, emergency medicine, internal medicine, general surgery, psychiatry, and obstetrics/gynecology.
- Training is competency based. Once clinical training is finished, students must pass the national PA certification exam to become a PA-C and then be licensed in their state.

Preparation

- Observe a PA to make sure this is the right field and that you truly understand what a PA does.
- Course requirements can vary substantially between programs. Research programs of interest to you to make sure you meet their requirements.
- A grade of at least C (even higher at some schools) is often needed at many programs in required courses.

Common Prerequisite Courses (required courses determined by each PA school but similar to this list)

Requirement	Course	Purdue Equivalents (specific courses may vary by major)
Biology	Intro Biology with lab	BIOL 11000-11100 or BIOL 13100 & BIOL 23100 & 23200 (lab) or BIOL 23100 & ABE 22600* & upper-level biology (including lab) or BME 29500* & for a lab BME 24300* or BME 32001* or BME 25400* plus additional upper-level biology (including lab)
	Anatomy & Physiology with lab	BIOL 20300-20400 (BIOL 30100-30200)
	Microbiology with lab	BIOL 22100 or BIOL 43800 & 43900 (lab)
Chemistry	General with lab	CHM 11510-11610 with labs or CHM 12500-12600 or CHM 13600 or CHM 12901 & CHM 11500 credit exam (Students may earn CHM 11500 credit through course sequence of CHM 12901, CHM 25500-25600, CHM 33900)
	Organic with lab	CHM 25500-25600 or CHM 26100-26200 or CHM 26505-26605 or PHSC 20400-20500
	Biochemistry	BCHM 30700 or BCHM 56100 or CHM 33900 or CHM 43300 or PHSC 20800 (CHM 33300, CHM 53300)
Psychology	General	PSY 12000, may need abnormal psych (PSY 350) at some schools
English	Composition	ENGL 10600 or 10800 or SCLA 10100* (some schools require a second English course)
Additional courses	Statistics	STAT 30100 or STAT 50300 or PSY 20100 or SOC 38200
	Communications	SCLA 10200* or COM 11400 or COM 21200 or COM 21700
	Medical Terminology	HSCI 13100
	Nutrition	NUTR 30300 or NUTR 31500
May need		Physics; HDFS 21000; Ethics or other courses; <i>additional Bio (with lab) may be required</i>
Pre-Medical Planning Seminar (Optional)		BIOL 39600 is a 0 credit 10 week class covering how to apply to PA school and other health professions programs
*Ask individual PA school if they will accept this course toward their requirements; Courses no longer offered.		

Student Organizations: Pre-PA Club, Caduceus Club (pre-medicine/pre-health club)

Program Information Resource: PA Education Association [Program Directory](https://paeonline.org/our-programs/) <https://paeonline.org/our-programs/>

Applying

- Some programs require the [Graduate Record Exam](https://www.ets.org/gre) (GRE) <https://www.ets.org/gre>. A few schools require the new [PA-CAT](https://www.pa-cat.com/) exam. <https://www.pa-cat.com/>
- The initial application to most PA programs is through an online application service called the [Central Application Service for Physician Assistants](https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login) (CASPA). <https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>
- The competitive applicant will have:
 - Strong academic performance including a grade point average of 3.5 or better
 - Scores above the national average on the GRE/PA-CAT
 - Leadership, teamwork, and communication skills
 - Volunteer and shadowing/observation experience
 - Significant hands-on patient care hours even at schools that don't require it
 - Strong positive letters of recommendation (mostly from science faculty and physicians or PAs)
- Early application is important as most programs are relatively small. The application opens in April. Applications should be submitted in May for schools with January starts and in June or early July for August/September start dates (of the next year).
- Many students find they need to work for a year before applying to gain enough clinical hours to be competitive at many PA programs.

Fee Assistance

- [CASPA Fee Assistance Program](https://help.liaisonedu.com/CASPA_Applicant_Help_Center/Starting_Your_CASPA_Application/Getting_Started_with_Your_CASPA_Application/3_CASPA_Application_Fees) https://help.liaisonedu.com/CASPA_Applicant_Help_Center/Starting_Your_CASPA_Application/Getting_Started_with_Your_CASPA_Application/3_CASPA_Application_Fees
- [GRE Fee Reduction Program](https://www.ets.org/gre/test-takers/general-test/register/fees.html) <https://www.ets.org/gre/test-takers/general-test/register/fees.html>
- [PA-CAT Fee Assistance](https://exammaster.aweb.page/feeassistance) <https://exammaster.aweb.page/feeassistance>

Employment Outlook

- According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm), the PA field can expect continued job growth of 28% through 2033. Median pay for a PA was \$133,260 in 2024. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm>

Programs in Indiana

- [Indiana University](https://shhs.indianapolis.iu.edu/academics/physician-assistant-studies/index.html) Indianapolis | <https://shhs.indianapolis.iu.edu/academics/physician-assistant-studies/index.html>
- [University of Saint Francis](https://majors.sf.edu/physician-assistant-studies/) Fort Wayne | <https://majors.sf.edu/physician-assistant-studies/>
- [Butler University](https://www.butler.edu/pharmacy-health/physician-assistant/admission-information/) (Standard Admission Pathway for those entering with an undergrad degree) Indianapolis | <https://www.butler.edu/pharmacy-health/physician-assistant/admission-information/>
- [University of Evansville](https://www.evansville.edu/majors/physicianassistant/) Evansville | <https://www.evansville.edu/majors/physicianassistant/>
- [Indiana State University](https://indianastate.edu/academics/academic-program-finder/physician-assistant-studies-ms) (on probation) Terre Haute | <https://indianastate.edu/academics/academic-program-finder/physician-assistant-studies-ms>
- [Trine University](https://www.trine.edu/academics/majors-degrees/graduate/master-physician-assistant-studies/index.aspx) Angola | <https://www.trine.edu/academics/majors-degrees/graduate/master-physician-assistant-studies/index.aspx>
- [Franklin College](https://franklincollege.edu/major/master-of-science-in-physician-assistant-studies/) Franklin | <https://franklincollege.edu/major/master-of-science-in-physician-assistant-studies/>
- [Valparaiso University](http://www.valpo.edu/college-of-nursing-and-health-professions/physician-assistant/) (combined undergrad/grad program) Valparaiso | <http://www.valpo.edu/college-of-nursing-and-health-professions/physician-assistant/>
- [Taylor University](https://www.taylor.edu/academics/degrees/physician-assistant/) Upland | <https://www.taylor.edu/academics/degrees/physician-assistant/>

More Information

- [American Academy of Physician Assistants](https://www.aapa.org) (AAPA) <https://www.aapa.org>
- [Physician Assistant Education Association](https://paeonline.org/) (PAEA) <https://paeonline.org/>
- [Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant](http://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation/accredited-programs/) (ARC-PA) <http://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation/accredited-programs/>

Other Careers to Consider—Nurse Practitioner · Physician · Anesthesiologist Assistant

Preparing for your Giant Leap

purdue.edu/preprofessional