

- Physician assistants 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 as many as 2,000 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 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)
	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 11500-11600 or CHM 12500-12600 or CHM 12300-12400 or CHM 13600 or CHM 12901 & CHM 11500 credit exam (not accepted at all schools)
	Organic with lab	CHM 25500-25600 or CHM 26100-26200 or CHM 26505-26605 or MCMP 20400-20500
	Biochemistry	BCHM 30700 or BCHM 56100 or CHM 33900 or CHM 43300 or MCMP 20800 (CHM 33300, CHM 53300)
Psychology	General	PSY 12000 (may need abnormal psych [350] and/or developmental psych [230])
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, 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

Program Information Resource: PA Education Association [Program Directory](https://directory.paeonline.org/) https://directory.paeonline.org/

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.
- 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/revised_general/about/fees/reductions/) https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/fees/reductions/
- [PA-CAT Fee Assistance](https://www.pa-cat.com/register-and-schedule/) is under development <https://www.pa-cat.com/register-and-schedule/>

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 31% through 2029. Median pay for a PA was \$112,260 in 2019. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm>

Diversity Matters

The PA profession needs physician assistants who look just like you, and who share your life experiences. Race or ethnicity, LGBTQ+ identity, disability, age, geographic region, socioeconomic status, social and cultural identity, and nationality add to a richer experience for all students in the PA classroom, contribute to the PA profession, and ultimately lead to better outcomes for patients.

Programs in Indiana

- [IUPUI](https://shhs.iupui.edu/graduate-professional/physician-assistant-studies/index.html) Indianapolis, IN <https://shhs.iupui.edu/graduate-professional/physician-assistant-studies/index.html>
- [University of Saint Francis](https://majors.sf.edu/physician-assistant-studies/) Ft. Wayne, IN (on probation) <https://majors.sf.edu/physician-assistant-studies/>
- [Butler University \(Standard Admission Pathway for those entering with an undergrad degree\)](https://www.butler.edu/physician-assistant/pa-admission-information) Indianapolis, IN <https://www.butler.edu/physician-assistant/pa-admission-information>
- [University of Evansville](https://www.evansville.edu/majors/physicianassistant/) (new program-provisional accreditation) Evansville, IN <https://www.evansville.edu/majors/physicianassistant/>
- [Indiana State University](https://www.indstate.edu/health/program/pa) Terre Haute, IN <https://www.indstate.edu/health/program/pa>
- [Trine University](http://www.trine.edu/academics/majors-and-minors/graduate/master-physician-assistant-studies/index.aspx) (new program-provisional accreditation) Angola, IN <http://www.trine.edu/academics/majors-and-minors/graduate/master-physician-assistant-studies/index.aspx>
- [Franklin College](https://franklincollege.edu/academics/graduate-programs/master-science-physician-assistant/) (new program-provisional accreditation) Franklin, IN <https://franklincollege.edu/academics/graduate-programs/master-science-physician-assistant/>
- [Valparaiso University](http://www.valpo.edu/college-of-nursing-and-health-professions/physician-assistant/) (new program-provisional accreditation-combined undergrad/grad program) Valparaiso, IN <http://www.valpo.edu/college-of-nursing-and-health-professions/physician-assistant/>

More Information

- [American Academy of Physician Assistants](https://www.aapa.org) (AAPA) <https://www.aapa.org>
- [Physician Assistant Education Association](https://paeaonline.org/) (PAEA) <https://paeaonline.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