Physical Therapist Assistant

Physical therapist assistants (PTAs) provide physical therapy services under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist. PTAs help people of all ages who have medical problems, or other health-related conditions that limit their ability to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives.

Some of the care provided by a PTA may include teaching patients or clients exercises for mobility, strength and coordination, training for activities such as walking with crutches, canes, or walkers, and the use of physical agents and manual therapies. PTAs also observe the patient’s abilities and report their observations to the physical therapist. Unlike a physical therapist, the PTA cannot evaluate a patient, but can provide vital and ongoing assessment and treatment interventions toward specific short- and long-term goals.

Where do they work?

Generally, physical therapist assistants are employed wherever physical therapists (PTs) work. PTs work in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, home and public health agencies, athletic departments, and private physical therapy practices. In rural Alaska, PTs generally work in hospitals located in regional centers. They are also employed by school districts to assess and treat children.

Educational Requirements

- Graduation from high school with coursework in English, math, and science.
- Graduation from an accredited PTA Associate's degree program.
- PTA licensure is required by the State of Alaska and most other states. After graduation, candidates must pass a state administered national exam and be approved by their state's licensing board.

Hourly Wage Range

$19.31-$36.99 (Mean $27.24)*
*Based on 2016 Alaska DOL data

Years in School

2 years (after high school graduation)

Academic Programs in Alaska

The University of Alaska Anchorage began offering an Associate Degree in physical therapist assistance in early 2015. For more information:

University of Alaska Anchorage, School of Allied Health Physical Therapist Assistant Program Phone: (907) 786-6782 Email: uaa_pta@uaa.alaska.edu http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/alliedhealth/academics/physicaltherapistassistant/index.cfm

National Contact

American Physical Therapy Association 1111 North Fairfax Street Alexandria, VA 22314 Phone: (703) 684-2782 Toll free: (800) 999-2782 https://www.apta.org/

State Contact

Alaska Physical Therapy Association Phone: (800) 999-2782 ext 8562 Email: alaska@apta.org http://www.akapta.org/