

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

Physician assistants (PAs) are highly skilled members of the healthcare team who are licensed to practice medicine with the supervision of a licensed M.D. The physician assistant functions in many capacities in the state of Alaska. In urban areas, they work in close association with a supervising M.D. However, in rural areas, they often work independently in a clinic, with their supervising physician stationed many miles away. Historically, physician assistants have been a major influence in the delivery of healthcare in rural areas and villages in Alaska where access to care has previously been limited.

The physician assistant can be found in all medical and surgical specialties. They are trained to perform physical examinations, compile patient medical histories, and order and interpret diagnostic testing, including electrocardiograms, laboratory tests, and x-rays. PAs often perform therapeutic procedures (including suturing and cast application), develop and monitor patient treatment plans based on medical diagnosis, and counsel patients about preventive care and risk management. In the state of Alaska, PAs can prescribe medications and controlled substances (schedule three through five). PA training is that of a medical school model.

Where do physician assistants work in Alaska?



Physician assistants work in both rural and urban settings. A majority of PAs work in clinics and physician offices. Other settings include tribal health organizations, hospitals and nursing homes.



Hourly Wage Range*
\$30.14-\$57.31 (Mean \$41.57)

*based on Alaska DOL data



Years in School: 5-7*

*after high school graduation

Educational Requirements



- Graduation from high school with coursework in science and math.
- Completion of at least two years of coursework in the sciences. Some programs require a Bachelor's degree prior to admission. Most PA programs require anatomy and physiology.
- Acceptance into and completion of a 24-month PA program which includes coursework and clinical experiences.

Academic Programs in Alaska

The Medex Northwest PA Program is expected to transition to a master's-level program in 2009 although they are also currently exploring options for maintaining a bachelor's degree option.

UAA Department of Health Sciences is planning to expand the Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences to include a pre-professional track for potential UW Medex applicants and other graduate level health career students.

For more information, visit the following websites:
Medex: <http://www.washington.edu/medicine/som/depts/medex/>

University of Alaska Anchorage, Department of Health Sciences <http://health.uaa.alaska.edu/bshs/>

State and National Contacts

State Contact:

Alaska Academy of Physician Assistants (AKAPA)
Toll free: (800) 478-8684
In Anchorage: (907) 646-0588
Email: info@akapa.org
Web site: <http://www.akapa.org/>

National Contact:

American Academy of Physician Assistants
Phone: (703) 836-2272
Email: aapa@aapa.org
Web site: <http://www.aapa.org/>

Information from: www.healthcareersinalaska.info

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developed by Alaska Center for Rural Health-Alaska's AHEC: <http://nursing.uaa.alaska.edu/acrh/>