



Facts About Physical Therapists

Who We Are

Physical therapists (PTs) are licensed health care professionals who diagnose and manage movement dysfunction and enhance physical and functional status in all age populations. Following an examination of individuals with impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities or other health-related conditions, physical therapists design individualized plans of physical therapy care and services for each patient. Choosing from a broad array of physical therapy interventions, PTs alleviate impairments and functional limitations as well as promote and maintain optimal fitness, physical function, and quality of life as it relates to movement and health. PTs also implement services to reduce risk and prevent the onset and progression of impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities that may result from injury, diseases, disorders, and other health conditions.

What We Do

Physical therapists provide care to people of all ages who have functional problems resulting from, for example, back and neck injuries, sprains/strains and fractures, arthritis, burns, amputations, stroke, multiple sclerosis, birth defects such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida, and injuries related to work and sports. Physical therapy care and services are provided by physical therapists and by physical therapist assistants who work under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist. Physical therapists evaluate and diagnose movement dysfunction and use interventions to treat patients and clients. Interventions may include therapeutic exercise, functional training, manual therapy techniques, assistive and adaptive devices and equipment, and physical agents and electrotherapeutic modalities.

Where We Practice

Physical therapists practice in hospitals; outpatient clinics or offices; inpatient rehabilitation facilities; skilled nursing, extended care, or sub-acute facilities; patients' homes; education or research centers; schools; hospices; industrial workplaces or other occupational environments; fitness centers; and sports training facilities.

Education & Licensure

The minimum educational requirement to become a physical therapist is a post-baccalaureate degree from an accredited education program. The majority of programs offer a doctor of physical therapy (DPT) degree; others offer a master's degree. After graduation, candidates must pass a state-administered national examination for licensure. State licensure is required in each state in which a physical therapist practices.

American Physical Therapy Association

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) is a national professional organization representing more than 100,000 members throughout the United States. The Association's efforts are directed toward serving its members and the public by increasing the understanding of the physical therapist's role in the nation's health care system and by fostering advancements in physical therapy education, practice, and research.



Facts About Physical Therapist Assistants

Who We Are

Physical therapist assistants (PTAs), under the direction and supervision of the physical therapist, play a vital role in providing the public with access to physical therapy services.

What We Do

The physical therapist assistant's work includes implementing selected components of patient interventions; obtaining outcomes data related to the interventions provided; modifying interventions either to progress the patient as directed by the physical therapist or to ensure patient safety and comfort; educating and interacting with other health care providers, students, aides/technicians, volunteers, and patients and their families and caregivers; and responding to patient and environmental emergency situations.

The scope of work for physical therapist assistants is contained in the intervention component of the patient/client management model and includes plan of care review, provision of selected procedural interventions, patient/client instruction, data collection, patient/client progression through the intervention within the plan of care, documentation, and emergency response, all as directed and supervised by the physical therapist.

Supervision

Supervision requirements vary and are normally determined based on state practice acts and payer supervision requirements. Medicare requires either general or direct supervision of physical therapist assistants depending on practice setting.

Education and Licensure

Physical therapist assistant education culminates in a 2-year associate degree obtained in no more than 5 semesters. The physical therapist assistant curriculum includes general education or foundational content, physical therapy content, and clinical education experiences. The average number of credits is 76, and there are an average of 16 weeks of clinical education experiences.

The Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) reported that there are currently 252 PTA programs across the country. **The accredited PTA programs in Maryland are:**

Allegany College of Maryland
Baltimore City Community College
Carroll Community College
Cecil College
Chesapeake Area Consortium for Higher Education:
Anne Arundel Community College, College of Southern Maryland, and Chesapeake College
Howard Community College
Montgomery College – Takoma Park
Wor-Wic Community College

Physical therapist assistants are licensed or certified in all jurisdictions except Colorado and Hawaii. Graduation from a CAPTE-accredited physical therapist assistant education program or its equivalency and passage of the national examination is required for licensure.

PTs and PTAs are licensed in Maryland.