

**AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION
CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Directions for Use

The purpose of this comprehensive resource document is to provide physical therapist and physical therapist assistant students, new graduates/new hires, and licensed physical therapists and licensed/certified physical therapist assistants with a common set of questions to assess practice or work opportunities and professional development. These questions have been organized into four areas that include financial considerations, professional development considerations, ethical and legal considerations, and quality of care considerations. It is helpful to read through the entire document to gain a broad overview and perspective of all of the potential questions that could be considered when seeking a position to facilitate the user's thinking and strategy for how to approach the interview process.

While all of these questions may be relevant, interviewees are encouraged to review and tailor their list of questions prior to an interview to ensure they gather information specific to their particular level of professional experience, career development goals, and personal and professional needs and goals. Another consideration includes the level of clinical practice experience of the interviewee. For example, a new graduate may want to focus on gathering information related to the availability of mentoring opportunities with expert practitioners and assistance with student loans, whereas a more experienced practitioner may be more concerned with opportunities for expanding an area of clinical practice within a facility/practice, mentoring and teaching others, or being a part of a management team. The intent is that the user would select key questions from each of the four categories that are most relevant to the position that is being investigated. Thus, for different positions there may be different questions to be considered with information gathered from multiple sources. For example, some of the responses to the questions may be found on a facility's/practice's website or in their annual report or organizational literature. Some of the considerations may be more appropriate as follow up questions on a second interview. Users who access this resource should be aware that there may be situations where a facility/practice may not readily have a response because the information may be confidential.

This document can also be used as a teaching resource for physical therapist and physical therapist assistant education programs to provide helpful information to students to consider when seeking their first position as a new graduate/new hire. Some of these questions might be helpful for students to pose of CIs when trying to learn more about clinical facilities before completing a clinical experience. The questions may also provide students with ideas if there is an opportunity to practice their interview skills during their clinical education experiences.

This resource document will be undergoing periodic revisions as ongoing efforts continue to link resources and references to questions so that member users may access relevant information to make more informed decisions when seeking positions as a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant. This document incorporates content included in the document, [Guidelines and Student Employer Contracts](#) (HOD G06-92-14-280), as well as incorporating contemporary and specific issues in practice including professional development and quality of care. This resource has been created to provide you with essential questions and information to facilitate your decision making process when seeking a position as a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant.

Below is a comprehensive list of potential questions that are sorted into the following categories:

- Section I.** [Financial Considerations](#)
- Section II.** [Professional Development Considerations](#)
- Section III.** [Ethical and Legal Considerations](#)
- Section IV.** [Quality of Care Considerations](#)

Section I. Financial Considerations

- A. How is the facility/practice managed?
 - 1. Who owns the facility/practice?
 - 2. Who makes critical decisions about the physical therapy practice?
 - 3. What are the current programs and services?
 - 4. Is the facility accredited by an external organization, if appropriate (eg, CARF, JCAHO, etc)?
- B. What opportunities are associated with practice equity and ownership?
 - 1. Is there an opportunity to acquire equity in the facility/practice?
 - 2. Is there a history of additional owners being added?
 - 3. Is this practice an exclusive arrangement or are other practice opportunities permitted?
 - 4. What are the implications to practice equity and ownership if the facility/practice is sold?
- C. What are the employer's/owner's responsibilities?
 - 1. How is time allocated between clinical practice and management responsibilities?
 - 2. Are management responsibilities shared among employers, owners, supervisors, and practitioners?
 - 3. What are the employer's/owner's specific management responsibilities?
- D. How is scheduling managed within the facility/practice?
 - 1. What are the hours of the facility/practice?
 - 2. Are there coverage schedules?
 - 3. Are there on call schedules?
 - 4. How is scheduling managed within the facility/practice?
 - 5. Who controls each PT's and PTA's schedule?
 - 6. Is there flexibility in scheduling patients?
 - 7. Are there scheduling considerations that are associated with productivity requirements?
- E. What are the compensation and benefit incentives?
 - 1. What compensation is associated with the position?
 - a. Is the salary competitive within the geographic region, type of facility/practice, and earned degree(s)?
 - b. Is salary non-discrimination/pay equity based on gender and race?
 - c. How frequently is the PT or PTA paid?
 - d. Are there merit increases, bonuses, or cost of living raises?
 - e. Are there performance outcomes associated with salary and/or increases?
 - f. Who authorizes merit increases, bonuses, or cost of living raises?
 - g. What is the frequency of these adjustments?
 - h. Is compensation sensitive to market analyses?
 - 2. What are the benefit incentives?
 - a. Are there retirement benefits such as a 401K?
 - b. Are there life, health, dental, vision, and disability insurance?
 - c. Is there vacation, family leave, and sick time?
 - d. Are APTA membership dues provided as a benefit?
 - e. Is there reimbursement for costs associated with licensure/certification?
 - f. Are there salary benefits for advanced clinical training or board specialist certification?
 - g. Is there support for professional development (eg, mentorship, patient case rounds, in-service program, and support to attend continuing education)?
- F. Who provides for malpractice insurance benefits?
 - 1. Is malpractice insurance provided as a benefit?
 - 2. If the employer provides malpractice insurance, what kind of policy is provided (claims made or occurrence)?

3. What are the limits of liability and are those limits separate or shared?
 4. Is there a liability indemnification clause?
 5. Is the PT/PTA required to carry individual malpractice insurance in addition to what the facility/practice policy may cover?
- G. What are the terms of the contractual relationship and termination options?
1. Is there an opportunity for the PT's/PTA's attorney to review the contract?
 2. Is there a non-compete clause that limits the geographic area where the PT/PTA can provide services if the contract is terminated by the PT/PTA?
- H. What are the financial considerations for a new graduate/new hire?
1. Are there any contractual arrangements for the graduate/new hire? If yes...
 - a. What are the specific terms?
 - b. Is there a termination option?
 - c. Is there a penalty or payback requirement if the new graduate/new hire leaves before the contract is completed?
 - e. Does the new graduate/new hire owe the entire contract amount or is the remaining balance prorated in the event that he or she leaves prior to the completion of the contract?
 - f. In the case where a contract is negotiated prior to the student graduating, what will happen if the student fails to graduate?
 - g. Will there be any repercussions relative to references for future jobs if the new graduate/new hire leaves before the terms of the contract expire?
 - h. Is there a buy-out clause?
 - i. Is there a non-compete clause?
 - j. What are the tax implications, if any, associated with the contractual arrangement?
 2. Is assistance offered to manage education-related debt?
 - a. Is any assistance offered to defray costs associated with student loans?
 - b. Are there student loan forgiveness opportunities?
 - c. Is there an employment obligation and for how long?
 - d. What will happen to a student loan when he or she graduates, if the new graduate's/new hire's student loan is assumed by the facility/practice?
 3. What will happen if a new graduate/new hire fails to qualify for a license?

Section II. Professional Development Considerations

- A. Is professional development valued?
1. If so, how are incentives provided?
- B. Is there a formal orientation process for new staff members?
1. Is there an employee policy manual?
 2. How is a patient caseload determined?
 3. When is the graduate/new hire expected to accept a full case-load?
 4. Are new staff members supervised by a PT?
 5. Is CPR, AED, or other certifications (eg, ACLS, NCSA, etc) required?
 6. Are there other certifications that are encouraged?
 7. Is the orientation competency based?
- C. Does the evaluation of clinical advancement, career path development, competencies, and professional contributions include consideration of:¹
1. Patient satisfaction?
 2. Self-initiated education?

- a. Will there be opportunities to obtain certifications?
 - b. Does patient management allow for PTs to advance PTA skills in interventions that are within the scope of work of the PTA?
 - 3. Dissemination of clinical information (e.g. rounds, case presentations, journal clubs)?
 - 4. Improvement of clinical outcomes (1) and efficiency?
 - 5. Evidence-based practice?
 - a. Will there be opportunities to access and utilize resources to enhance patient care during patient care hours?
 - b. Will there be professional development resources
 - 6. Serving as a mentor, consultant, and clinical instructor to students and recent graduates?
 - 7. Ability to work in an interprofessional context with other health professionals?
 - a. Are there physicians and other health care professionals on staff?
 - b. Is there a mechanism for referral to other disciplines, if indicated?
 - c. What other health care providers are either involved in or involved with the facility/practice?
 - d. Are other professionals utilized to provide patient care (eg, athletic trainers, massage therapists, exercise physiologists, etc)?
 - e. Is there a strong network of providers that interact and work with the PTs and PTAs?
 - 8. Leadership role in facility/practice management and practice?
 - a. Is there an opportunity for shared leadership models?¹
 - 9. Activities associated with maintaining continued competence?
Licensure Information
- D. Is there a process for mentorship?
- 1. How are mentors selected or assigned?
 - 2. Are there available, accessible and experienced PTs and PTAs (as appropriate) to answer questions and provide mentorship?
 - a. If yes, what are their credentials and experiences?
 - b. How many Board Certified Clinical Specialists are available to provide mentorship?
 - c. How does the facility/practice support and reward attainment of Board Certified Clinical Specialist status?
 - 3. Is there co-treatment with experienced clinicians or clinical specialists?
 - 4. How often are meetings scheduled with one's supervisor for feedback?
- E. Are staff PTs and PTAs members of the APTA?
- 1. If I want to become involved in APTA activities, how flexible is the practice environment to accommodate these activities?
 - 2. How is time required to fulfill these activities addressed by the practice facility?
 - 3. Is staff involved in APTA activities?
 - a. If yes, how is staff involved in Association and profession activities?
- F. Are there opportunities to enhance learning through...
- 1. Regularly scheduled in-services?
 - 2. Continuing education programs with costs either fully or partially covered by the facility/practice?
 - a. On average, how often do staff attend CEU courses?
 - 3. Time off to attend continuing education courses?
 - 4. PT/PTA team interaction in providing patient management?
 - 5. Co-treatment with experienced clinicians or clinical specialists?
- G. Are there opportunities to assist with student clinical education through...
- 1. An active and ongoing student education program at the facility/practice?
 - 2. A volunteer program or through an ability to take part-time and/or full-time PT or PTA students?

3. An opportunity to teach at a local PT or PTA program?
 4. An opportunity to provide in-services to nursing or other professions regarding physical therapy with or without productivity implications?
 5. An opportunity for clinical instructor training and credentialing?
 - a. How many staff have earned the APTA Clinical Instructor Credential?
 - b. How many staff have earned the Advanced Clinical Instructor Credential?
- H. Are there opportunities to expand physical therapy programs and services?
1. What are the current available programs and services?
 2. What are the conditions under which program expansion could be considered?
 3. What are the conditions for which new services or specialty area of practice could be considered?
- I. Are there opportunities to conduct research and publish the results in the facility/practice?
1. Who oversees and manages research conducted at the facility/practice and publication of the results?
 2. Are there opportunities to collect data as a part of research conducted outside of the facility/practice?
 3. Does the facility/practice have an institutional review board that oversees the integrity of clinical research?
 4. Is there assistance and guidance provided in writing proposals for external funding?

Section III. Ethical and Legal Considerations

- A. What business practices are used by the facility/practice?
1. How are billable services determined?
 2. What resources are used for billing?
 3. Is there access to claims billed for services if the PT/PTA requests to view those claims?
 4. What is the responsibility of the PT/PTA for denied claims?
 5. What is the facility's/practice's payment mix for reimbursement (eg, payer mix, cash, combination thereof)?
 6. Related to billing and productivity, what is the ratio of PT to PTA and to other support personnel?
 7. Does the facility/practice use business metrics (eg, ratios, productivity standards)?
 - a. If yes, how?
 8. Is compensation based on the value of services and production (such as payment methods, productivity standards, etc)?
- B. Do PTs have control over all clinical decisions related to physical therapy?
1. Are patients permitted direct access to physical therapy services?
 2. How are referrals provided to the facility/practice?
 3. Do PTs have a provider number?
- C. How are PTAs, aides, and other support staff utilized in this facility/practice?
1. How is the daily supervision and direction of the PTA conducted?
 2. How is the PT supervisor of record determined for the PTA?
 3. How does the PT/PTA team function in this facility/practice?
 4. How is the daily supervision of aides and other support staff provided?
 5. What are the responsibilities of the aides and other support staff?
- D. Do business relationships of the facility/practice avoid all potential conflicts of interest (eg, personal financial interests)?
1. Is compensation (i.e. salaries, particularly those in a position to refer) based on fair market value?
 2. Is compensation based on the volume or value of referrals?

3. Is rental space and equipment leased or purchased at fair market value?

Business Skills in Physical Therapy – Legal Issues

Section IV. Quality of Care Considerations

- A. What are the PT's/PTA's responsibilities in the facility/practice?
 1. How many PTs and PTAs provide services at this facility/practice?
 2. How many administrative personnel work in this facility/practice?
 3. What is the average length of experience of the professional staff?
 4. What is the frequency of staff turnover?
 5. What were the reasons for the last few staff leaving?
 6. Is there an opportunity to meet with and/or observe PTs and PTAs in this facility/practice as a part of the interview process?
 7. What is the typical PT to PTA ratio?
 8. What is the typical caseload for the PT and PTA in this facility/practice?
- B. How does the facility/practice recognize the value of PTs and PTAs on clinical care quality and patient outcomes?¹
 1. How are PTs and PTAs held accountable for quality care?
 - a. Does the PT perform the patient's/client's examination/evaluation?
 - b. How much time is available for patient/client examination/evaluation and treatment per visit?
 - c. Does the physical therapist explain the patient's/client's plan of care and goals?
 - d. Are concerns, treatment including functional goals addressed during the time the patient/clients spend with the physical therapist?
 - e. What clinical information system is used to document patient/client care?
 - f. Do PTs and PTAs feel that their practice is supported by up-to-date clinical care technology?¹
 - g. What are the documentation policies and procedures?
 - i. What is the format for documentation?
 - ii. Is the patient/client management model used in providing and documenting care?
 - iii. Is there electronic documentation? If yes, what system?
 - h. Are patient/client privacy and confidentiality maintained?
 - i. Are there outcome assessments/quality improvement measures for standardized systematic assessment of outcomes?
 - i. If so, how are staff involved in this process?
 - ii. How do physical therapists measure patient outcomes?
 - iii. How does the facility/practice monitor patient satisfaction?
 - iv. Are there internal peer review and chart review mechanisms?
 2. Do PTs and PTAs provide input into policy development and operational management of issues related to quality of care, continuity of care, and patient-staff ratios?¹
 - a. When are related patient care activities beyond case management (direct care) completed (eg, documentation, time to seek evidence, etc)?
 - b. Is there access to the Internet to seek and review evidence?
 - c. Are patient/clients assigned to one therapist or PT/PTA team or are they seen by "whoever is available"?
 - d. Are professional and education credentials for the PT and PTA recognized by titles on an identification badge?¹
 - e. Are PT and PTA licenses/certificates posted in a visible location?
 - f. What is the PT and PTA staff-to-patient ratio?
 - g. Does the facility/practice's written philosophy and mission statement reflect an emphasis on quality, safety, interprofessional collaboration, continuity of care, and professional accountability?

3. Is there a risk management and/or quality assurance program in place?
 - a. Does the facility have a risk manager?
 - b. Is there a safety committee or other standing body that addresses quality of care and patient/client and personnel safety issues?
 - c. Does the facility/practice have established safety-related policies and procedures?
 - d. Does the facility/practice comply with state and federal regulations?
 - e. Does the practice support other activities such as community service, teaching, marketing new programs, clinical research, etc?
 - f. Is the facility accredited by the relevant agency (ie, JCAHO, CARF, etc)?
 - g. If so, what are the facility's accreditation scores, if applicable?

- C. Does the facility/practice follow the positions, standards, guidelines, policies, and procedures of the APTA regarding clinical practice?
 1. [PROVISION OF PHYSICAL THERAPY INTERVENTIONS AND RELATED TASKS](#)
 2. [INTERVENTIONS PERFORMED EXCLUSIVELY BY PHYSICAL THERAPISTS](#)
 3. [DIRECTION AND SUPERVISION OF THE PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT](#)
 4. [PROFESSIONALISM IN PHYSICAL THERAPY: CORE VALUES](#)
 5. [CODE OF ETHICS HOD S06-00-12-23](#)
 6. [GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT](#)
 7. [STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR THE PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT](#)
 8. [THE GUIDE FOR CONDUCT OF THE PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT](#)
 9. [STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY](#)

¹Adapted with permission from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. *Hallmarks of the Professional Nursing Practice Setting: What Every Nursing School Graduate Should Consider When Seeking Employment*. 2004. Accessed from www.aacn.nche.edu/PNN/hallmarksbrochure.htm on January 11, 2007.

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