



THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT BOARD OF CALIFORNIA

The Physician Assistant Board protects and serves consumers through licensing, education, and objective enforcement of the Physician Assistant laws and regulations.

WE PROTECT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF CALIFORNIANS THROUGH:



Licensing—Reviewing applications for licensure and issuing licenses.



Enforcement—Reviewing and investigating complaints; disciplining physician assistants who violate physician assistant laws and regulations.



Education—Educating consumers, licensees, physicians, and interested parties regarding physician assistant practice.



Regulation—Reviewing and updating laws and regulations regarding consumer protection and physician assistant practice.



Diversion—Administering a drug and alcohol monitoring program for licensees with chemical dependency issues.



Administration—Providing administrative services that support the operational functions of the Board.



PAB

PHYSICIAN
ASSISTANT
BOARD

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT BOARD OF CALIFORNIA

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
CONSUMER
AFFAIRS

PDE_24-317



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WHAT IS A PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT?

A physician assistant (PA) is a licensed and highly skilled health care professional. PAs are academically and clinically prepared to provide health care services as members of collaborative health care teams. They make clinical decisions and provide a broad range of diagnostic, therapeutic, preventive, and health maintenance services. A PA works with a supervising physician to provide comprehensive medical services and guidance needed by a patient.



WHAT TYPES OF SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY A PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT?

A PA performs many of the same diagnostic, preventative, and health maintenance services as a physician. These services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Taking health histories.
- Performing physical examinations.
- Ordering X-rays and laboratory tests.
- Ordering respiratory, occupational, or physical therapy treatments.
- Performing routine diagnostic tests.
- Making diagnoses.
- Treating and managing patient health problems.
- Administering immunizations and injections.
- Instructing and counseling patients.
- Providing continuing care to patients in the home, hospital, or in an extended care facility.
- Providing referrals within the health care system.
- Performing minor surgery.
- Providing preventative health care services.
- Acting as first or second assistants during surgery.
- Responding to life-threatening emergencies.
- Ordering medications that are authorized by a physician.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

To become a PA, you must graduate from an Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) accredited PA program. PAs are educated at the master's degree level, and admission into a PA program requires a bachelor's degree and completion of prerequisite courses in basic and behavioral sciences.

Many PA programs also require prior health care experience with direct patient care. Qualifying experience may include working as a medical assistant, emergency medicine technician, paramedic, phlebotomist, emergency room technician, surgical technician, military medic/corpsman, or certified nursing assistant.

Most PA programs have the following prerequisites: anatomy, physiology, biology, microbiology, chemistry, genetics, and statistics.

The PA school curriculum is modeled on the medical school curriculum, and involves both didactic (classroom) and clinical education training. The didactic phase includes classroom instruction on courses in basic medical sciences, diagnostic and procedural skills, pharmacology and therapeutics, behavioral sciences, and behavioral ethics. In the clinical phase, students complete clinical rotations in medical and surgical disciplines; these include family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, general surgery, emergency medicine, and behavioral medicine/psychiatry.

PA graduates are eligible to take the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA). To obtain a state license, all states require that PAs graduate from an accredited PA program and pass the PANCE.