

CAREER PROFILE

JOB DESCRIPTION

Physical Therapy Assistants work under the direction of a physical therapist. They:

- Help patients do specific exercises and functional activity training to improve patient mobility and movement.
- Treat patients using a range of techniques, such as therapeutic exercise, functional training, or soft tissue massage. PTAs may also provide electrotherapy, ultrasound, and other treatments when included in the plan of care for the patient.
- Observe patients before, during, and after therapy and document it.
- Use knowledge of body systems for safe and effective rehabilitation and to promote health. Have an interest in anatomy, exercise and physical fitness.
- Perform tests and measures to collect data about patient progress.
- Collaborate with members of the healthcare team to improve patient outcomes.
- Use devices and equipment effectively to help patients, such as walkers.
- Educate patients/family members about what to do after treatment.

PAY

The median annual wage for physical therapy assistants was \$64,080 (\$30.80/hour) in May 2023.

JOB OUTLOOK

19% (Much faster than average) 2022-2032

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PHYSICAL THERAPY AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY:

Physical therapy deals specifically with physical disorders of the body and helps to restore weakened muscles and normal movement and decrease pain.

Occupational therapy focuses on daily activities and interventions to help patients function more easily in their environment.

EDUCATION/TRAINING

All states require physical therapist assistants to have an associate degree from a program accredited by the [Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education](#). Programs typically last about 2 years and include coursework in anatomy, physiology, and kinesiology. Students also gain hands-on experience during supervised clinical work. Once you graduate with the Associate of Applied Science in Physical Therapist Assisting degree, you are eligible to take the National Physical Therapy Licensure Examination (NPTE) for PTAs, which is required for state licensure.

IMPORTANT SKILLS

- **Compassion.** They must have empathy to help their patients who are often in pain.
- **Detail-oriented.** Physical therapist assistants should be organized, keep accurate records, and follow written and verbal instructions carefully to ensure optimal care.
- **Dexterity.** Physical therapist assistants should be comfortable using their hands to provide manual therapy and therapeutic exercises.
- **Interpersonal skills.** Physical therapist assistants spend much of their time interacting with patients, their families, and other healthcare practitioners and should enjoy working with people.
- **Physical stamina.** Physical therapist assistants are on their feet and moving as they work with patients. This includes kneeling, stooping, bending, and standing for long periods.

ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

BRYANT & STRATTON COLLEGE

Parma

Associate of Applied Science Physical Therapist Assistant

The program includes in-depth classroom learning experience which focuses on two integrated clinical experiences and two full-time, terminal clinical experiences which address a variety of settings.

<https://www.bryantstratton.edu/degrees/healthcare/aas-physical-therapist-assistant/>

ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS *(continued)*

CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Cleveland Metropolitan Campus

Associate of Applied Science degree in Physical Therapist Assisting Technology

Physical Therapist Assisting is considered full-time and the PTAT technical courses are only offered during the day. The PTAT technical courses take two years to complete and must be taken in sequence.

<https://www.tri-c.edu/programs/health-careers/physical-therapist-assistant/index.html>

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

Ashtabula Campus (Also offered at East Liverpool Campus)

Associate of Applied Science degree in Physical Therapist Assistant Technology

The integrated curriculum includes lecture, lecture/lab, seminar and practicum courses. Major course content is cumulative and taught in four sequential semesters in a two year cycle.

<https://www.kent.edu/ashtabula/pta>

LAKELAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Kirtland

Associate of Applied Science in Physical Therapist Assisting degree

The Physical Therapist Assistant program consists of five semesters, the first of which consists of prerequisites which students must complete before being admitted into the program.

<https://www.lakelandcc.edu/web/about/physical-therapist-assistant>

LORAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Elyria

Associate of Applied Science Physical Therapist Assistant

Program runs for five consecutive semesters (two years). The program does not select students based on a waiting list system. Students are selected for the program annually through a selective or competitive entry process. The curriculum for the physical therapist assisting program consists of a combination of didactic and clinical learning experiences.

<https://www.lorainccc.edu/health/physical-therapist-assistant-2/>

STARK STATE COLLEGE

North Canton

Associate of Applied Science Physical Therapist Assistant

<https://www.starkstate.edu/academics/programs/physical-therapist-assistant/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

<http://www.apta.org/>

COMMISSION OF ACCREDITATION IN PHYSICAL THERAPY EDUCATION

Has a listing of accredited schools in the U.S.

<https://www.captionline.org/>