

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

\$65,510 (\$31.50/hour) median annual wage in May 2024.

JOB OUTLOOK

19% (Much faster than average) 2023-2033

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 two 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 of time.

PHYSICAL THERAPY VS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



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.



ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

BRYANT & STRATTON COLLEGE (*Parma*)

Associate of Applied Science Physical Therapist Assistant

Program includes in-depth classroom learning experience and four clinical experiences. The program is 71 credit hours and approximately 20 months long.

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

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. 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 or 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/cats/pta>

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 a comprehensive curriculum 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

This is a two-year, 65-credit hour program consisting of both full- and part-time options. It combines classroom instruction, lab work and clinical experiences.

<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.capteonline.org/>