

PA Education and Licensure Requirements



As the number of physician assistants (PAs) in medicine grows, it's important for physicians looking to take on a PA to familiarize themselves with the educational and training requirements in their states.

All PAs, according to the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA), must have completed two years of college requirements before admission to any PA program. From there, a number of training options are available, with programs running an average of 27 months. Degrees awarded through PA training programs vary from associate's degrees to master's degrees. Some states mandate a minimum level of education for licensure. All programs must be accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant.

The educational process for PAs culminates with passage of the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE), administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA). After passage of the exam, PAs are certified by the NCCPA with the PA-C designation for two years. While some states have no minimum educational requirements for PAs, only graduates of an accredited PA training program are allowed to sit for NCCPA tests, making PA programs a de-facto standard where not addressed by a state's medical board.

"There is uniformity regarding how a PA is trained and maintains their certification. In order to practice, PAs must have attended an accredited PA program. PAs then must pass the national certification examination administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants," Society of Dermatology Physician Assistants president Kari Holyoak said. "PAs then need to obtain state authorization to practice through state licensure, registration, or certification. To maintain national certification, PAs must complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years and pass a recertification examination every six years."

For license renewal, states have adopted either their own CME requirements or the recommended CME requirements of the NCCPA. A small number require NCCPA-approved CME for prescribing.

Educational requirements



