

Oregon State University | College of Public Health and Human Sciences

PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSISTANT

What does a Physical Therapy Assistant do?

The PTA works under the supervision of a licensed Physical Therapist, helping implement treatment plans, conducting patient intake evaluations and helping ensure the accurate performance of exercises and the safety of a patient.

What is the difference between a PT Assistant and a PT aide?

PT Assistants must have an associate's degree from an accredited program. All states require PTAs to be licensed or certified.

Physical therapist aides need at least a high school diploma and receive on-the-job training. Their work typically includes preparation and cleaning of therapy areas, clerical functions such as filing, scheduling appointments and answering phones, and bringing patients into the treatment room.

How do I become a PT Assistant?

A two-year Associate's Degree through an CAPTE-accredited program is required. These can be found at some community colleges and a few universities. In Oregon, there are only two programs: Lane Community College and Mt. Hood Community College. After completion, candidates take a national licensure examination.

What are the pre-requisite courses for entering a PTA program?

Requirements will vary slightly between programs, but if you have a Bachelor's degree, you should have met most pre-reqs. WR 121 (or higher), Human Anatomy & Physiology (2 terms min.), General Psychology and Medical Terminology are expected. These courses must be completed at time of application, along with a minimum of 20 - 25 hours of work or observation experience.

How long is the program?

Typically, two years, full time, with a summer term often included.

How competitive are PTA programs?

Using Lane and Mt. Hood as examples, MHCC accepts 27 students into the program, which starts each fall. Licensure rates of graduates are 85-100% pass on their first attempt. LCC accepts 24 students, and also collaborates with Rogue CC to offer classes online, with labs taken at Table Rock campus in White City. You must be a resident of Josephine or Jackson counties. LCC does not publish their pass rates.

Where do PTAs find jobs?

Any setting a PT works – including outpatient clinics, acute and long-term care hospitals and rehabilitative facilities and through home health agencies.

What is the average salary of a PTA?

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median wage for PTAs in 2014 was \$55,170 in 2015. PTAs in skilled nursing facilities drew the highest income.