

# Texas Academy of Physician Assistants Pre-PA Manual



Congratulations on your desire to become a future member of the health care profession! Providing quality health care is a very rewarding experience and your desire to serve others is applauded. As a pre-Physician Assistant student, you may feel overwhelmed with the application process and how best to make yourself a competitive applicant. TAPA has created this pre-PA manual to assist you on your journey to becoming a physician assistant!

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# Pre-PA Manual

## Mission of TAPA

- The mission of the Texas Academy of Physician Assistants (TAPA) is to represent and serve PAs statewide and promote the PA profession through education, quality services and advocacy of optimal healthcare. TAPA advocates the unique alliance of the physician/physician assistant team.

## Health Care Reform and Impact on the PA Profession

- Current health care reform measures plan to offer over 32 million Americans access to health care. The Association of American Medical Colleges projects that the supply of physicians will be unable to keep pace with the projected increase in demand. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the demand for PA services will increase 49% by 2014. Physician assistants will play a critical role in supplying the need for well trained, qualified health care providers.

## Physician Assistant Definition

- Physician assistants (PA) are healthcare professionals licensed by the state to practice medicine as part of a healthcare team with physicians. PAs deliver a broad range of medical and surgical services, including, but not limited to:
  - conducting physical exams
  - obtaining medical histories
  - diagnosing and treating illnesses
  - ordering and interpreting tests
  - counseling patients on preventive health care
  - assisting in surgery
  - prescribing medications
- Upon graduating from an accredited physician assistant program, PA students are eligible to sit for the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE) administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. Physician assistant students must pass the PANCE to receive a license in Texas.
- According to the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) 2012 census, the number of practicing physician assistants has reached 83,466, a 100% growth over the last 10 years. The average yearly income for a full time practicing PA is \$96,876/year and \$78,405/year for new graduates.

## Where to Begin?

- Before Applying:
  - Many PA programs require health care experience prior to admission.
  - While a college degree is not always required, there are some required college-level courses to include but not limited to basic sciences, math, English/writing, anatomy/physiology, microbiology, and statistics. Applicants should research the prerequisite requirements of each program of interest.
  - Many programs require shadowing exposure prior to admission. See below for further information on shadowing opportunities.
- In the words of Thomas Edison, “*Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work*”. Gaining admission into a PA program requires hard work and dedication. Many programs receive 800 – 1000 applicants every year, offer interviews to 150 – 250, and accept 30 – 90 students (program specific). Competitive applicants should research each PA program of interest to determine prerequisite requirements. In addition, competitive applicants will familiarize themselves with each program’s PANCE pass rates, accreditation status, and class sizes.
- Prospective students are encouraged to apply to multiple programs; thereby increasing their chances of being accepted to a PA program. The Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) is a centralized application service which allows applicants to apply to multiple PA programs across the country simultaneously. <https://portal.caspaonline.org> Note, some PA programs require a supplemental application in addition to the CASPA application.

## Texas PA Programs

### Baylor College of Medicine

Office of Admissions  
One Baylor Plaza, MS: BCM110  
Houston, TX 77030  
(713) 798-4842  
<http://www.bcm.edu/pap/>

### Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

Physician Assistant Program  
3600 North Garfield  
Midland, TX 79705  
(432) 620-9905  
<http://www.ttuhscc.edu/sah/mpa/>

### University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth

Physician Assistant Studies Program  
3500 Camp Bowie Blvd.  
Fort Worth, TX 76107-2699  
(817) 735-2003  
<http://www.hsc.unt.edu/education/pasp/>

### University of Texas Health Science Center - San Antonio

School of Allied Health  
Dept. of PA Studies  
7703 Floyd Curl Drive  
San Antonio, TX 78229-3900  
(210) 567-8810  
<http://www.uthscsa.edu/shp/pa>

### The University Of Texas Medical Branch

Physician Assistant Program  
Galveston, TX 77550  
(409) 772-3046  
(409) 772-9710 (fax)  
<http://shp.utmb.edu/PhysicianAssistantStudies/>

### UT Southwestern Medical Center

Physician Assistant Program  
5323 Harry Hines Blvd.  
Dallas, TX 75235  
(214) 648-1700  
<http://www8.utsouthwestern.edu/utsw/cda/dept48945/files/54102.html>

### University of Texas - Pan American

Physician Assistant Program  
1201 W. University Dr.  
Edinburg, TX 78539-2999  
866-441-8872  
[http://portal.utpa.edu/utpa\\_main/daa\\_home/hshsme/pasp\\_home](http://portal.utpa.edu/utpa_main/daa_home/hshsme/pasp_home)

## Texas PA Programs

There are 159 accredited physician assistant programs in the United States, seven are located in Texas. PA education consists of intensive didactic study, as well as clinical practice. PA education is modeled after medical school, albeit shorter in duration; medical school education averages 155 weeks, PA education averages 115 weeks.

The left column lists the PA programs in the state of Texas (listed alphabetically). Each program has subtle differences regarding prerequisites, application deadlines, supplemental application, selection criteria, and curriculum. Some programs offer information sessions, campus tours, or open houses to allow applicants to familiarize themselves about the program. Refer to each program individually to learn about the specifics of their program (prerequisite requirements, application deadline, supplemental application requirement, start dates, length of program, graduation dates, tuition rates, etc...)

**\*\*Note: any posted dates are approximate deadlines and subject to change at the discretion of each individual program. Check each PA program's website for specific application deadlines.**

- ❖ For additional information on PA Programs throughout the United States, contact the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) or go to [www.aapa.org](http://www.aapa.org). The AAPA, as well as individual programs, can provide information regarding financial aid.
  - Pre-PA Website - [http://www.aapa.org/your\\_pa\\_career/becoming\\_a\\_pa.aspx](http://www.aapa.org/your_pa_career/becoming_a_pa.aspx)
  - Student Websites – [http://www.aapa.org/your\\_pa\\_career/pa\\_students.aspx](http://www.aapa.org/your_pa_career/pa_students.aspx)  
<http://pastudentessentials.com/>
- ❖ Prospective students can also view the online PA program directory posted by the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) at the following website  
<http://www.paeonline.org/index.php?ht=d/sp/i/25515/pid/25515>

## Competitive Applicants

- All physician assistant programs are looking for the best applicant to invite and matriculate through their program. Most PA programs have an admissions committee to review the applications in depth following a preliminary screening or transmission from CASPA. Programs may also require additional supplemental applications and conduct interviews with qualified admission candidates. Please refer to each PA program for specific admission requirements and processes.' Most PA programs view a competitive applicant as being someone who:
  - demonstrates academic competitiveness (i.e. GPA (science and overall), course loads, advanced science courses, GRE scores)
  - has had direct patient care or health care experience (volunteer or compensated time)
  - has devoted time to PA mentorship / shadowing experiences
  - demonstrates a clear understanding of the role of PAs in health care
  - has received honors, achievements, or awards
  - demonstrates professionalism, integrity and empathy

## Shadowing opportunities

- Shadowing a clinically practicing physician assistant is an integral part of becoming a competitive applicant for PA program. Often times it is difficult to find a PA in your area to shadow. There are several ways to find a PA to shadow.
  1. Contact the local teaching hospital to see if there is a shadowing program already in place.
  2. Volunteer at the local hospital. This opens the door to networking and potential shadowing opportunities.
  3. Contact the local / regional PA society.
  4. Contact personal health care provider – they may employ a PA or know of one who allows prospective students to shadow.
  5. Contact [www.pashadowonline.com](http://www.pashadowonline.com) This is a free service where to locate practicing PAs who are willing to have prospective students shadow them.
  6. Let friends and family know about your interest in pursuing the PA profession. Chances are someone knows or has had care provided by a PA at some point. The best way to make connections and learn about opportunities is through making your intentions known.

Again, congratulations on your decision to become a physician assistant.

*“The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather in a lack of will.”*

–Vincent T. Lombardi



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