

Physical Therapist Assistant

Nature of the Profession

The physical therapist assistant (PTA) is a technically educated health provider who assists the physical therapist (PT) in the provision of physical therapy and may perform physical therapy interventions selected by the supervising physical therapist. The PTA works under the direction and supervision of the PT, helping manage conditions such as back and neck injuries, sprains/strains and fractures, arthritis, burns, amputations, stroke, multiple sclerosis, birth defects, injuries related to work and sports, and others.

APTITUDES

- Ability to learn the techniques needed to assist a physical therapist
- Good verbal and numerical skills
- Ability to influence others
- Good space and form perception and manual dexterity
- Ability to make decisions based on observations and data
- Ability to relate to a variety of people and work as part of a team

EDUCATION

Physical therapist assistants must complete a two-year education program, typically offered through a community or junior college. Candidates receive an associate's degree upon graduation. The course of study usually includes one year of general education and one year of technical courses on physical therapy procedures and clinical experience.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN NEBRASKA

- Clarkson College – Omaha (A)
- Northeast Community College – Norfolk (A)
- Nebraska Methodist College – Omaha (A) Program expected to begin in 2008

LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION

Physical therapist assistants are licensed by the Nebraska Board of Examiners in Physical Therapy. To be licensed, an applicant must be at least 19 years old, have graduated from an approved program, and have passed the national exam.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

American Physical Therapy Association

Web Address: www.apta.org

Nebraska Physical Therapy Association

Web Address: www.npta.org