

# Impact of Scope of Practice Laws on Compensation and Productivity for Physician Associates

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## Introduction

The AAPA identifies four practice environments for physician associates (PAs)<sup>1</sup>:

- **Optimal:** Allow PAs to “practice to the full extent of their medical education, training and experience” but must “collaborate, consult and refer to physicians”
- **Advanced:** Allow PAs to practice to “full extent” with few restrictions and have three or four flexible practice components - but also require collaboration
- **Moderate:** PAs have two or three flexible practice components and additional administrative requirements
- **Reduced:** Limit PAs in at least one element of practice and require physician collaboration/supervision

This analysis seeks to understand if the differences in state practice regulations impact PA total cash compensation (TCC) and productivity (wRVUs).

## Methods:

This analysis used data from SullivanCotter’s 2023 *Advanced Practice Provider Compensation and Productivity Survey*.<sup>2</sup> Data represents nearly 32,000 PAs from 586 organizations throughout the US and is obtained from employer human resources information system that was submitted by the organization to the annual survey. State practice environments were identified by maps created by AAPA.<sup>1</sup> The variance between practice environments was analyzed using a one-way ANOVA and Tukey test.

## Results:

The analysis revealed **statistically significant differences between practice environments** in both TCC and wRVUs for PAs. However, **these differences did not correlate with the flexibility in practice environment.**

- Moderate was the highest paid by \$3,944, followed by Advanced and then Optimal (only \$631 less at mean)
- Reduced was lowest for PAs by \$3,545 at mean (p < 0.001)

While the differences for productivity were statistically significant, they were smaller (<300 wRVUs on average) and didn’t correlate with practice environment.

- Optimal had the lowest productivity level by 115 wRVUs at mean - but the sample was small with fewer than 300 PAs
- Moderate was the highest (215 more wRVUs at mean) followed by Reduced and Advanced
- The only statistically significant relational shift was Optimal to Moderate (p < 0.001)

Practice environment maps revealed **regional trends** such as more flexible environments in the Northeast, North-Central and West, and more restrictive environments in the South.

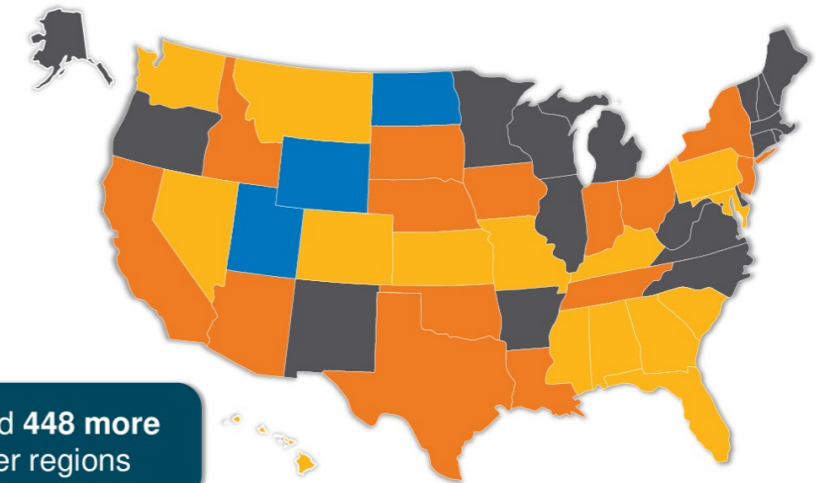
- ANOVAs for regional differences showed **statistically significant differences** between five regions (Northeast, North-Central, Southeast, South-Central and West) for both compensation and productivity
- **The West was the highest-paid region**, followed by Northeast and South-Central

**Regional differences** were also larger than the practice environment differences (p < 0.001).

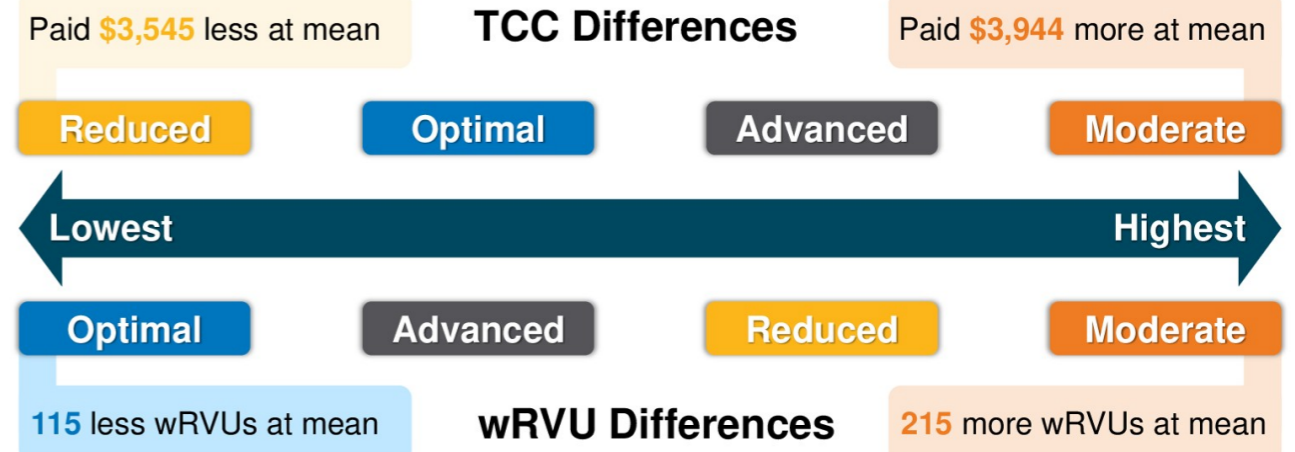
- **Regional differences in productivity** were most pronounced with PAs in the South-Central region producing 448 more wRVUs at mean than other regions (p < 0.001)

## Scope of Practice Map<sup>1</sup>

- Optimal Practice
- Advanced Practice
- Moderate Practice
- Reduced Practice



The South-Central region produced **448 more wRVUs at mean** compared to other regions



## Conclusion:

State practice acts continue to evolve rapidly and the impacts on PA practice are not always known.<sup>3</sup> This analysis suggests that the lack of significant and consistent differences in compensation and productivity between the various practice environments indicate there are other more impactful contributors such as geographical region, cost of living/labor, specialty, and hospital bylaws. For example, while the differences in compensation between Moderate and Reduced practice states were statistically significant, the effects were much smaller than the geographical differences. While these results deviate from previously published studies, the large sample size of this population suggests that additional analysis is needed to understand the drivers of PA compensation and productivity.<sup>4</sup>

## References:

1. American Academy of Physician Associates. (2024). PA State Practice Environment. <https://www.aapa.org/advocacy-central/state-advocacy/state-maps/pa-state-practice-environment>.
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3. Valentin VL, Najmabadi S and White R. (2022). State scope of practice laws and PA employment. *JAAPA*. 35(12),1. DOI: 10.1097/01.JAA.0000896808.05639.5c
4. McCall T. (2020). Practice Barriers in State Laws are Associated with Lower PA Salaries. <https://www.aapa.org/news-central/2020/02/practice-barriers-in-state-laws-are-associated-with-lower-pa-salaries>.