



PA-OPA: The Distinctions

Practitioner	Physician Assistant (PA-C) ⁱ	Orthopedic Physician's Assistants/Orthopaedic Assistants (OPA-C/OA-C) ⁱⁱ
Education Standards	A master's level graduate degree based on the physician education model that averages 26.3 months, including 59 weeks of didactic education and 54 weeks of clinical rotations. ⁱⁱⁱ	None "Although not a requirement, it is highly recommended that candidates have at least two years of college work in the sciences before sitting for the Certification Examination for Orthopaedic Physician's Assistants." ^{iv}
Accredited Educational Programs	218 ^v	0 ^{vi}
Accrediting Body for Educational Programs	Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant	N/A
Education Program Accreditation Participating Organizations	American Academy of Family Physicians American Academy of Pediatrics American Academy of Physician Assistants American College of Physicians American College of Surgeons American Medical Association Physician Assistant Education Association	N/A
Licensure	All 50 states & District of Columbia Guam, Northern Marianas Islands US Virgin Islands, American Samoa	Tennessee New York (Registered under Specialist Assistant Category) California (only graduates from OPA program between 1971-1974 grandfathered) ^{vii}
Certifying Body	National Commission for the Certification of Physician Assistants ^{viii}	National Board for the Certification of Orthopedic Physician Assistants/National Board for Certification of Orthopaedic Assistants (NBCOPA/NBCOA) ^{ix}
Certifying Body Participating Organizations	American Academy of Family Physicians American Academy of Pediatrics American Academy of Physician Assistants American College of Emergency Physicians American College of Physicians American College of Surgeons American Hospital Association American Medical Association American Association of Medical Colleges Physician Assistant Education Association Federation of State Medical Boards United States Department of Veterans Affairs	None
Number Certified in United States	115,500 ^x	510 ^{xi}

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- ^{ix} The National Board for Certification of Orthopaedic Physician's Assistants (NBCOPA) / The National Board for Certification of Orthopaedic Assistants (NBCOA) <http://nbcopa.org/board-certification.html>
- ^x As of December 31, 2016 per NCCPA email communication. Verification of PA certification is available online at <https://www.nccpa.net/verify-pa>
- ^{xi} As of March 20, 2012 per NBCOPA, last accessed February 2015 at <http://www.asopa.org/pdfs/NBCOPACertListWeb032012.pdf>. [Note: The link is no longer valid and the Certification list is not posted on the NBCOPA website. There are directions posted, should one wish to verify OPA/OA certification, at <http://nbcopa.org/verification.html> .]
- ^{xii} All 50 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories (with the exception of Puerto Rico), license and authorize the practice of physician assistants.
- ^{xiii} All 50 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories that license PAs authorize prescribing by physician assistants.
- ^{xiv} The practice of OPAs is unregulated with the exception of Tennessee, a few OPAs grandfathered in California, and OPAs who are registered in New York under a broad category of “specialist assistants.” OPAs may not prescribe, establish diagnoses, or order tests.
- ^{xv} Medicare Benefit Policy Manual, Chapter 15, §190 (C) <http://www.cms.gov/manuals/Downloads/bp102c15.pdf>
- ^{xvi} Medicare Benefit Policy Manual, Chapter 15, § 60.1(B) <http://www.cms.gov/manuals/Downloads/bp102c15.pdf>

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