



PA-OPA: The Distinctions

Practitioner	Physician Assistant (PA-C) ¹	Orthopedic Physician's Assistants (OPA-C) ²
Education Standards	A master's level graduate degree, ^{3,4} based on the physician education model that averages 27 months, including 12 months of didactic education and 15 months of clinical rotations.	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." ⁵
Accredited Educational Programs	154 ⁶	None
Accrediting Body for Educational Programs	Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant	None
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	None
Licensure	All 50 states & District of Columbia Guam, Northern Marianas Islands US Virgin Islands, American Samoa	Tennessee New York (Specialist Assistant Category) California (only graduates from OPA program between 1971-1974 grandfathered)
Certifying Body	National Commission for the Certification of Physician Assistants ⁷	National Board for the Certification of Orthopedic Physician Assistants ⁸
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	75,000 ⁹	550 ¹⁰ California (26), New York (31), Tennessee (34)
Scope of Practice Legislation		
• Licensure	Yes ¹¹	TN, NY, CA ¹³
• Prescribing	Yes ¹²	None
• Establishing Diagnosis	Yes	None
• Ordering/Interpreting Diagnostic Tests	Yes	None



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Practitioner	Physician Assistant (PA-C)	Orthopedic Physician's Assistants (OPA-C)
Reimbursement/Billing <u>Medicare Part B Covered Services</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment as provider of physician (Part B) services • Ordering/Referring Provider • Prescribing Provider • Assist at Surgery • Evaluation and Management Services • Telehealth Services • Joint Injections • Fracture Care • X-ray Interpretation 	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes	No No No No No No No No No
<u>Reimbursement</u>	Medicare reimburses services provided by PAs at 85% of the Physician Fee Schedule.	Some services provided by OPAs may be covered as “incident-to” a physician.
<u>Supervision</u>	A physician is <u>not</u> required to be on-site in order to bill Medicare for services provided by a PA-C. ¹⁴	A physician <u>must</u> be on-site in order to bill Medicare for services provided by an OPA-C. ¹⁵

Notes:

- ¹ The Physician Assistant-Certified® (PA-C®) designation is a mark of professional accomplishment, indicating the achievement and maintenance of established levels of knowledge and clinical skills. <http://www.nccpa.net/PDFs/2010%20PANCE%20booklet%20and%20app.pdf>
- ² Certification of Orthopaedic Physician's Assistants (OPA-C) by the National Board for Certification of Orthopaedic Physician's Assistants (NBCOPA). <http://asopa.org/certification.cfm>
- ³ Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) <http://www.paeaonline.org/index.php?ht=d/sp/i/194/pid/194>
- ⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos081.htm#training>
- ⁵ American Society of Orthopaedic Physician Assistants (ASOPA) <http://www.asopa.org/certificationexam.cfm>
- ⁶ Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) http://arc-pa.com/acc_programs/
- ⁷ National Commission for the Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) <http://www.nccpa.net>
- ⁸ ASOPA <http://asopa.org/recertification.cfm>
- ⁹ NCCPA <http://www.nccpa.net/Public.aspx>
- ¹⁰ NBCOPA <http://asopa.org/pdfs/NBCOPACertListWeb092310.pdf>
- ¹¹ All 50 states, the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories (with the exception of Puerto Rico), license and authorize the practice of physician assistants.
- ¹² All 50 states, the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories that license PAs (with the exception of the U.S. Virgin Islands) authorize prescribing by physician assistants.
- ¹³ The practice of OPAs is unregulated with the exception of Tennessee, a few PAs 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.
- ¹⁴ Medicare Benefit Policy Manual, Chapter 15, §190 (C) <http://www.cms.gov/manuals/Downloads/bp102c15.pdf>
- ¹⁵ Medicare Benefit Policy Manual, Chapter 15, § 60.1(B) <http://www.cms.gov/manuals/Downloads/bp102c15.pdf>

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