

Recommended Patient Care Experience

Applicants to graduate programs must complete a minimum of 500 hours of direct patient contact and 100 hours of shadowing experience by June 1st of the year of matriculation to the graduate program. Through their experience, graduate physician assistant program applicants should be familiar with health care environments, medical documentation, and the role of physician assistants.

Experience may be paid or volunteer, but ideally provides the applicant with hands-on contact with patients in a healthcare environment. **Hours required to complete coursework, for which an individual receives course credit, or required to obtain a certification, are not counted by most graduate PA programs.**

Healthcare experience is evaluated on an individual basis for each applicant based on descriptions provided in your CASPA application. Most programs accept and encourage observing or shadowing a PA, MD, DO or NP. The following list includes some professions which will provide you with the contact you need:

- Physical Therapist or Physical Therapy Aide
- Occupational Therapist or Occupational Therapy Aide
- EMT/Paramedic
- Respiratory Therapist
- Patient Health Educator
- Military corpsman/medic
- Phlebotomist
- Patient Care Technician/Assistant
- Medical Assistant
- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)/Nurse's Aide
- Home Health Aide
- Athletic Trainer
- Clinical Research Assistant (with patient contact)
- Surgical/OR Technician
- ER Technician
- Radiology Technician
- Optometrist Technician
- Cardiac Rehabilitation
- Medical Scribe

Experience that is not usually acceptable as direct patient care experience includes:

- Pharmaceutical representative or technician
- Ski Patrol or Lifeguard
- Aerobics instructor/personal trainer
- Patient greeter/sitter/companion
- Non-clinical research positions
- Hospital volunteer
- Veterinary technician
- Dental technician
- Medical billing/coding

These lists are meant to serve as examples, but are by no means exhaustive. Please contact the Program directly if you have a question about your particular experience(s).