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## WHAT CAN I DO WITH A MAJOR IN ... PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

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### OCCUPATIONAL OVERVIEW:

The [UNM Physician Assistant website \(2013\)](#) states, “Physician assistants (PAs) are health professionals licensed to practice medicine with physician supervision. PAs are qualified through graduation from an accredited physician assistant education program and certification by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants”. Furthermore, “Within the physician/PA relationship, physician assistants exercise autonomy in medical decision-making and provide a broad range of diagnostic and therapeutic services” ([UNM Physician Assistant website, 2013](#)). [The Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\) \(2013\)](#) explains that PAs are, “formally trained to examine patients, diagnose injuries and illnesses, and provide treatment. PAs work in all areas of medicine, including primary care and family medicine, emergency medicine, and psychiatry. The work of PAs depends in large part on their specialty and what their supervising physician needs them to do”.

### EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

A postgraduate professional degree is required formal education for Physician Assistants ([BLS, 2013](#)). “Physician assistants typically need a master’s degree. Most applicants to master’s programs already have a bachelor’s degree and some work experience. Then, they must complete an accredited program for physician assistants. That usually takes at least 2 years of full-time study and typically leads to a master’s degree. All states require physician assistants to be licensed” ([BLS, 2013](#)).

### THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO:

UNM offers a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree. You can find further information on the [UNM Department of Family and Community Medicine website \(2013\)](#).

### INDUSTRIES & TARGET EMPLOYERS:

A variety of employers specifically recruit UNM students and alumni. Consult UNM’s [Lobo Career Connection](#) for a complete list of employers and current job postings. Speak with a Career Development Facilitator at the [UNM Office of Career Services](#) for help with identifying employers or additional resources for your occupation of choice.

#### Healthcare

Hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centers, acute care, neuro-rehab, out-patient, residential treatment centers, assisted living facilities, sports medicine facilities, group or private practices, K-12 school systems

#### Public Health

Occupational health and safety, community health workers

#### Education/Research

Research laboratories and institutes, University/college teaching/administration, consultation

#### Management

Administrator, manager, director

#### Government

National Institutes of Health, Armed Services

### SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

- Throughout your undergraduate degree, gain volunteer/paid hours of hands on experience/observation by volunteering or working in a healthcare setting where licensed physician assistants are employed.
- Shadow physician assistants of interest to gain a better understanding of their occupation and to build relationships with professional mentors.
- Maintain high achievement in undergraduate science courses such as: anatomy, physiology, biology, chemistry, and physics.
- Build your network and get involved on campus through student organizations and campus events. Find organizations and events at the [Student Activities Center website](#).

- Attend career related campus events such as career fairs, company information sessions, and or career workshops.
- Students who are interested in physical therapy should maintain a high undergraduate GPA, high “science” GPA, and perform well on the GRE (graduate entrance exam) as well as develop relationships with faculty and community leaders.
- Speak with mentors and faculty about career opportunities.
- Job leads can be found on your department’s website, list-serv, newsletters, and social media sites.

**STATE AND NATIONAL WAGES:**

Adapted from CareerOneStop (2013)

**PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT**

Location	2013				
	10%	25%	Median	75%	90%
United States	\$62,400	\$78,600	\$90,900	\$108,600	\$124,800
New Mexico	\$31,600	\$62,300	\$82,900	\$99,900	\$116,300

**INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES:**

American Academy of Physician Assistants Information Center  
National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants  
New Mexico Medical Board  
The University of New Mexico Physician Assistant Program

<http://www.aapa.org>  
<http://www.nccpa.net>  
<http://www.nmmb.state.nm.us/>  
<http://hsc.unm.edu/pap/index.shtml>



<http://online.onetcenter.org>



<http://www.bls.gov/oco/>

**REFERENCES**

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, (2012, March 29). *Occupational Outlook Handbook, Physician Assistants*. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/ooH/Healthcare/Physician-assistants.htm#tab-4>

State of Minnesota, U. S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (2013). CareerOneStop, Occupation Profile, Physician Assistants. Retrieved from [www.careerinfonet.org](http://www.careerinfonet.org)

University of New Mexico School of Medicine, Physician Assistant (2013). Department of Family and Community Medicine. Retrieved from [http://fcm.unm.edu/physician\\_assistant\\_program/index.html](http://fcm.unm.edu/physician_assistant_program/index.html)