



PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS in ALABAMA

WHO WE ARE

Physician Assistants (PAs) are highly trained medical professionals who practice medicine in collaboration with physicians and other members of the healthcare team. PA education follows a nationally standardized, medical-model curriculum designed to deliver safe, high-quality, and cost-effective care across medical and surgical specialties.

PA Education & Training

- ✓ **Graduate-level medical education** (Master's degree required)
- ✓ Profession founded in **1965 at Duke University** by Dr. Eugene Stead to address physician shortages, particularly in primary care
- ✓ **Competitive admissions:** bachelor's degree, rigorous science prerequisites, and extensive hands-on healthcare experience required
- ✓ **Accredited by ARC-PA** ensuring national standards for curriculum, faculty and outcomes
- ✓ **Didactic phase:** intensive, in person medical sciences training comparable to foundational medical school education
- ✓ **Clinical phase:** 2,000+ hours of supervised clinical rotations in family medicine, internal medicine, emergency medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, women's health and surgery
- ✓ **Surgical training** is a required component of PA education, enabling graduates to **function as first assistants in any surgical setting without the need for additional certification**, contributing immediately to surgical team efficiency and patient care

Certification & Licensure

Graduates must pass the **Physician Assistant National Certification Exam (PANCE)**

Ongoing **continuing medical education** required

Recertification exam every 10 years to ensure lifelong competency

State **licensure required** to practice

Why PAs Matter

Expanded access to care, especially in rural and underserved communities

Improved healthcare team efficiency and patient access

Numerous studies show **PA-provided care is safe, effective and comparable in quality** to physician care

Retaining PA graduates is a **cost-effective workforce solution** already available in Alabama

ALABAMA SNAPSHOT

4 PA Programs: University of Alabama at Birmingham (1967), University of South Alabama (1996), Samford University (2019), & Faulkner University (2020)

1300+ licensed PAs in the state

Only **16% practice in primary care**

The University of South Alabama PA Studies Program's mission emphasizes **primary care** and service to **rural and medically underserved communities** across Alabama. 100% of students complete at least 1 clinical rotation in rural medicine.

55 of 67 counties are classified as rural and face persistent provider shortages

Over **150 PAs graduate annually**, yet many leave the state due to limited job opportunities tied to misunderstanding of PA training and scope

Scope of Practice

PAs are educated as **generalist medical practitioners** and are trained to:

Take medical histories and perform physical exams

Diagnose illness and injury

Order and interpret diagnostic tests

Develop and implement treatment plans

Prescribe medications

Assist in surgery and perform procedures

Provide preventive care and patient education

Broad training allows PAs to adapt quickly, move between specialties with on-the-job training and meet workforce needs - especially in underserved areas.

The Opportunity

As Alabama works to address healthcare workforce shortages - particularly in primary care, women's health, pediatrics and rural medicine - policies that support the **full and effective utilization of PAs** offer a practical, evidence-based solution. PAs are ready to serve Alabama patients today. Understanding their role will strengthen access, improve outcomes and better meet the needs of our communities.

MORE ABOUT US

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