



# Entry-to-Practice Guide

*A Resource for Physician Assistants in Canada*

2017 Version  
Canadian Association of Physician Assistants  
capa-acam.ca



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## Abbreviation List

CAPA	Canadian Association of Physician Assistants
PA	Physician Assistant
PACCC	Physician Assistant Certification Council of Canada
PA Cert Exam	Physician Assistant Entry to practice Certification Examination
CMA	Canadian Medical Association
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
AAPA	American Academy of Physician Assistants
CV	Curriculum vitae

*The Canadian Association of Physician Assistants (CAPA) would like to thank the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) for their willingness to share their material. In this document you will find some information that has been referenced to AAPA.*

## **Introduction**

This Entry-to-Practice Guide has been created by the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants (CAPA) as a resource for those entering into the workforce as Physician Assistants in Canada. The following provides an overview of certification, licensure, professionalism and employment.

As a Physician Assistant, you are part of an emerging profession that is proving to be a source of quality healthcare for Canadians. Welcome to the profession and to the practice in Canada.

## Certification and Maintenance of Certification

### Why Certification?

Certification is a process designed to confirm the qualifications of Physician Assistants (PAs) and to ensure that they meet an established national standard of care. This in turn safeguards patients. Certification is a requirement for practice in many jurisdictions across Canada.

### PACCC Certification Examination

The Physician Assistant Certification Council of Canada (PACCC) is a Council of CAPA that administers and maintains the PA certification process. This includes the PA Entry-to-practice Certification Examination (PA Cert Exam), written upon the successful completion of an accredited PA program. The PA Cert Exam is administered independently of any training facility to ensure that the PA meets the standard set out in the National Competency Profile (NCP) for the PA profession.

The PA Cert Exam is offered once annually in various locations throughout Canada.

It is 4 hours in duration and is comprised of 250 multiple choice questions.

Visit the CAPA website at [capa-acam.ca](http://capa-acam.ca) for further information including exam eligibility, scheduling, online registration, exam content and resources.

### Continuing Professional Development

Upon successful completion of the PA Cert Exam, a PA will receive the certification designation of Canadian Certified Physician Assistant (CCPA). Through a partnership with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, certified PAs are able to track their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credit hours for the maintenance of certification using the Royal College's online tracking system. The current PACCC requirements state that all participants **MUST COMPLETE**:

- **400 credits** over the course of your five-year cycle by participating in educational activities that meet the identified needs of your professional practice.
- **40 credits** of CPD activities per year, even in the years after you have reached the 400-credit minimum requirement.
- **\*Note: The 25 credit/section rule cited in the Framework does NOT apply to CAPA members. Activities may still be completed in all of the sections, including Section 3; however, having a minimum number of credits in each section is NOT a condition for meeting CCPA CPD requirements.**

Further details are included on the CAPA website.

## Provincial Regulation and Licensing

Before a PA can practice, they must typically apply for and obtain authorization from the province in which they desire to work. This process is called “registration” and/or “licensure”. At present, four provinces allow PAs to practice medically. Below are the general provincial guidelines for practice as well as the contact information for the local registering or licensing authorities.

### Alberta

In Alberta, there is a voluntary register for PAs through the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA) however; the province does not yet regulate the PA profession. Registered PAs must have graduated from an accredited PA program and be either certified CCPA or PA-C by PACCC or National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta  
2700 - 10020 100 Street NW  
Edmonton, AB T5J DN3  
Phone: (780) 423 4764 Fax: (780) 420 0651  
<http://www.cpsa.ca/>

Registration criteria and forms are available at the above website using the keyword search “**physician assistant**” or you may simply use the following link:

<http://www.cpsa.ca/physician-assistants/>

### Manitoba

In Manitoba, PAs are registered then licensed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba (CPSM). In order to be eligible for registration, a PA must be a graduate of a PA program which council deems acceptable. At present, certification is only required for American trained PAs. PAs are not permitted to practice in Manitoba until the Certificate of Practice is issued by the CPSM. Without a license (Certificate of Practice) a PA may not practice medicine or perform any of the identified Restricted Acts in the Regulated Health Profession Act. Proof of CPD is also a requirement for license renewal. We encourage you to contact the CPSM directly for requirements, details and status of your application. See <http://cpsm.mb.ca/physician-assistants>

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba  
1000-1661 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3J 3T7  
Phone: (204) 774-4344 Fax: (204) 774-0750  
<http://cpsm.mb.ca>

Criteria and registration forms are available at the above website; click on the tab “**Registration**” and then choose “**Categories of Registration**”. Finally choose “**Physician Assistant Register**”. You may also use the link provided below: <http://cpsm.mb.ca/physician-assistants/forms-for-physician-assistants-register>

For further information on PA Practice in Manitoba contact the Provincial Discipline Director Physician and Clinical Assistants, Mr. Russ Ives at [Rives@exchange.hsc.mb.ca](mailto:Rives@exchange.hsc.mb.ca)

## **Ontario**

Ontario currently has the highest number of practicing PAs of any Canadian province. At present, PAs work under physician delegation only. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) announced in December 2012 that a mandatory registry would be established for PAs in the province under the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO). The registry has not yet been established. We are hopeful that details regarding this will follow in 2017.

HealthForceOntario Marketing and Recruitment Agency  
163 Queen Street East  
Toronto, ON M5A 1S1  
Phone: 1 (800) 596 4046  
<http://www.healthforceontario.ca>

For further information, see the above website; under the heading “**Browse by Program**” click on “**Physician Assistant (PA) Initiative**”. You may also use the link provided below:  
[http://www.healthforceontario.ca/en/M4/Ontario%27s Physician Assistant Initiative](http://www.healthforceontario.ca/en/M4/Ontario%27s+Physician+Assistant+Initiative).

## **New Brunswick**

In New Brunswick, PAs are registered through the College of Physicians and Surgeons of New Brunswick (CPSNB) for employment within the Regional Health Authorities. PAs within the province must be either certified CCPA or PA-C by PACCC or NCCPA or must be “a graduate of another Physician Assistant training program acceptable to Council”.

College of Physicians and Surgeons of New Brunswick  
One Hampton Road, Suite 300  
Rothesay, NB E2E 5K8  
Phone: (506) 849-5050 or 1-800-667-4641 Fax: (506) 849-5069  
<http://www.cpsnb.org>

Registration information is found under the link “**Physician Assistant Register**”.

## Other Provinces and Territories

Several other provinces and territories are currently considering the utilization of PAs. CAPA has been in discussion with these provincial governments regarding the integration of PAs. Refer to the CAPA news bulletin and the CAPA website for updates.

## Practice Prior to Certification

In most provinces that support the PA profession, some form of provisional registration is available to those having completed training from an accredited program but who have not yet written the PA Cert Exam. Provisional registration is a temporary and time-limited license. Contact the appropriate licensing authority for further information.

## Prescribing

Before beginning work as a PA, it is important to know the prescribing restrictions within the province in which you will be working. It is also important to determine if you are allowed to dispense drugs and what the provincial regulations are regarding drug samples.

Prescribing privileges vary by province but the following general guidelines apply:

- Supervising physicians determine which prescriptions may be written by each PA.
- PAs may not prescribe any out-patient narcotics or controlled substances.
- Prescriptions must include the names and designations of both the PA and the supervising physician.
- In some instances it may be required to include the medical directive number associated with prescribing

## Supervision

Supervisory regulations also vary by province but in general, a supervising physician must have a predetermined minimum amount of contact with their PA. Regular meetings with the PA must be documented to provide evidence of adequate supervision. Again, it is important to know the exact regulations for your province.

Regulations also state that a PA may only perform procedures for which he/she has been trained **and** in which their supervising physician is competent. For example, a PA may not perform a chest tube insertion if he/she has not been trained to do so. Alternately, although a PA may be trained to perform a specific procedure, he/she may not undertake such responsibilities if it is not also in the supervising physician's skill set.

It is important to note that although you only have one supervising physician, if you will be working with multiple physicians you will want to ensure that they all sign the medical directives. This will ensure that you are able to practice by way of delegation with all of the physicians employed within your facility.

## Professionalism

### Dos and Don'ts for the New PA

*(Adapted with permission from AAPA)*

#### Do

- Do always come to work prepared.
- Do show your patients that you care. An extra moment of your time, a simple explanation or a gesture of kindness can go a long way.
- Do continue to study even though you are no longer a student.
- Do arrive at least 10 minutes early.
- Do ask your supervisor questions, especially if you are unsure.
- Do display your credentials prominently.
- Do volunteer to take extra work or to work additional hours.
- Do be thorough even if it takes more time. With more experience, you will become faster.
- Do have a good attitude; consider it a privilege to be there.
- Do dress appropriately for your work setting and abide by your site's dress code.
- Do say "yes" when your supervisor asks you to do something.
- Do be courteous to your patients' families and loved ones.
- Do befriend the nursing and office staff.
- Do uphold patient confidentiality.
- Do demonstrate initiative to learn new skills/competencies to enhance your scope

#### Don't:

- Don't complain.
- Don't show up for work tired
- Don't be irritated when patients or staff are unaware of what a PA is. Take this as an opportunity to advocate for your profession.
- Don't get discouraged. The first couple of years as a PA involve a lot more learning.
- Don't forget to smile.
- Don't complain about your income. This is your chance to show what you are worth.
- Don't correct the supervisor, even when you think he or she is wrong; ask a question instead.
- Don't ever do something you feel uncomfortable doing.
- Don't talk on your cell phone in the room with patients, even if the doctor does.
- Don't think it will be easy, but always remember it will be worth it!

## **Code of Ethics of the Physician Assistant Profession**

CAPA recognizes the responsibility of its members to practice and maintain the highest standard of ethics in the delivery and provision of quality health care services to all patients. The Canadian Association of Physician Assistants Code of Ethics is available online at: <https://capa-acam.ca/about-pas/code-of-ethics-of-the-physician-assistant-profession/>

## Other Information about Ethics and the PA

The AAPA has an excellent article entitled “**Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the Physician Assistant Profession**”. It can be downloaded from the AAPA website at:

<https://www.aapa.org/workarea/downloadasset.aspx?id=815>

It addresses ethical topics such as the care of family members and co-workers, genetic testing and end of life.

## Scope of Practice

The PA is a healthcare provider with the knowledge, skills and attitude to undertake delegated medical services. PAs are highly skilled healthcare professionals educated in the medical model who work under the supervision of a registered physician in a variety of clinical team structures and settings, in accordance with the Medical Act of the province or territory in which they work.

The PA is a physician extender and not an independent practitioner. They work under the direction of supervising physicians within the client/patient-centered healthcare team. The PA has the skills and experience to deal with everyday healthcare needs and various specialty practice environments. The PA’s activities may include conducting patient interviews, histories, physical examinations; ordering diagnostic tests, performing diagnostic and therapeutic interventions (such as procedures), initiate treatment plans; and counselling on preventive healthcare. The individual relationship between the PA and the supervising physician becomes the essential determinant of each PA’s individual clinical role, within the context of the PA’s competencies, the PA scope of practice, and provincial jurisdictions.

To view the National Competency Profile (CanMEDS-PA), use keyword search “CanMEDS-PA” on the CAPA website ([capa-acam.ca](http://capa-acam.ca)).

## Performance within a Healthcare Team

Effective healthcare requires a team approach. PAs, by design, are ideal to work within such a setting as they do not seek medical autonomy but rather have chosen a field of medicine where team work is a requirement.

As a PA, it is therefore important to recognize the assets of each member within the healthcare team and to treat each member with respect. You must also understand your own role and equally important, your limitations.

## Employment

*(Adapted with permission from the AAPA)*

### Preparing For Your Job Search

You may begin looking for your first job as a practicing PA during your clinical rotations. At that time, you can begin to get a sense of where you would like to practice and with whom. Once you start your job search, the process can move surprisingly quickly. So, you should not only prepare your résumé or curriculum vitae (CV) for unexpected job opportunities, but also prepare yourself for the interviews that will follow.

The résumé or CV is typically the first opportunity PAs have to make an impression on potential employers. Whether you need a résumé or CV depends upon the positions for which you apply. It is more likely that as a new PA graduate seeking a clinical position you will use a résumé. CVs are generally used in scientific and academic settings where it is necessary to provide detailed information about teaching, research, publications and presentations.

A résumé is a condensed list, usually one or two pages, highlighting and summarizing previous and current jobs or other relevant experience. Résumés highlight information that specifically relates to the job for which you are applying. Résumés should include:

- Contact information
- Your objective
- Employment history
- Education information
- Additional clinical training
- License/certification information

A CV is a longer, more detailed document designed to demonstrate expertise and authority. This compilation might include information that is not specifically related to the job but is important to your professional career. CVs generally include:

- Contact information
- Employment history
- Education information
- Professional qualifications
- Awards
- Publications
- Presentations
- Professional memberships
- Interests

A cover letter is a way to introduce yourself and your work to prospective employers. Cover letters should be direct, concise and tailored to each position for which you apply. Although each cover letter will include different specific information, all cover letters follow a general format:

- Each letter should be about one page long, consisting of about three paragraphs.
- You should maintain an enthusiastic yet professional tone throughout.
- The purpose of your letter should be stated in the first paragraph.
- In the body of the letter, explain how your skills will benefit the practice or organization.
- Mention areas of excellence that are listed on your résumé or CV and explain them further.
- Close with proposed next steps, such as calling to follow up within a week.

Not only is the job interview your chance to market yourself to an employer, but it is also an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the practice or organization.

As you interview for positions, be sure to consider the balance of quality of life, quality of practice (autonomy, philosophy) and level of compensation each position offers. Also, remember that before you can begin working you may need authorization from the province (a license, registration or certification), liability coverage and possibly hospital privileges.

#### **Before the interview:**

- Prepare a list of references as well as copies of your relevant certificates (PA program, CCPA, etc.).
- Familiarize yourself with the laws and regulations governing PA practice in your province.
- Review the licensure application to know whether the supervising physician will need to submit paperwork.

#### **During the interview:**

Questions an interviewer may ask you:

- What are some of your strengths? Weaknesses? Career goals?
- Why do you feel you are a good match for this position? How would we benefit from hiring you?
- Why did you decide to become a PA?
- What did you do before you became a PA (especially regarding medically related jobs)?
- What have you been doing during the time that you have not been working as a PA? (if there is a gap in your employment history)
- How do you envision your role in this position? What type of duties do you enjoy most? What do you hope to gain from this position?
- How would you describe yourself? What are your professional interests?

- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- As a supervising physician, what is my liability?
- Do I need to add you to my liability insurance, or will you have your own policy?
- Can we bill for your services? Will the income you generate cover your costs to the practice?
- How soon could you start working?
- How much do PAs earn?

### **Questions you should ask the employer:**

- Have you worked with PAs before? What is your vision of what PAs do?
- What do you know about the PA profession?
- How will you supervise me? How often will we interact? Will we establish a practice agreement?
- What hours will I be expected to work?
- What roles will I be expected to play? What would my primary duties be?
- In which practice settings would I be working?
- Do you envision my role or responsibilities changing over time?
- Who is in charge of scheduling? How will patients be assigned? Who will decide and how? Will I have my own panel of patients?
- How does the telephone triage system work?
- How is the staff structured? Who are the other employees and partners? What are their roles? Who would be available to assist me?
- Is the staff familiar with PAs? If not, how do you plan to educate them on the role of a PA? Is there anything I can do to help?
- How many PAs have been in this position in the past few years?
- Is the practice for sale? Is a sale possible in the next year? Is it merging with a health system?
- Will you be offering a written contract?

### **After the interview:**

- If you are interested in the position, send a thank you letter or e-mail reaffirming your interest and restating the contributions you can make to the organization or practice.
- If you are no longer interested, send a letter to thank the interviewer for his or her time and to notify him or her of your intentions.

### **Career Opportunities**

Please visit the CAPA website for up to date career opportunities. Additional positions may be found advertised on the provincial websites listed earlier in this guide.

## Contract Negotiations

PA compensation plans vary as widely as the multitude of specialties and settings in which PAs practice. Although oral contracts are common, putting all agreements into a written contract protects you if disagreements arise later. The contract should not be written until all parties have agreed on the essential components.

It is advisable to hire a lawyer to review any contract you intend to sign. Retain a lawyer who has knowledge of contracts, particularly healthcare contracts, and who can help you understand the responsibilities and expectations outlined in the contract. A local lawyer is best; he or she is more likely to be familiar with local laws. It is also important to know if the lawyer has handled medical professional contracts before and how many years of experience he or she has had in the area of contract law.

### Terms and Termination

The term, or length, of the contract must be stated, including your starting date and the duration of the initial contract. Perhaps more important, the contract should state whether it can be terminated early if notice is given. If so, the amount of notice and reasons for justifying early termination should be carefully described. Termination provisions are either “with cause” or “without cause.”

Termination without cause means the contract can be ended by either party at any time without reason. Typically, a 90-day notice is required. You may be able to negotiate for a buyout option that provides extra compensation.

Termination with cause provisions protect employers from liability due to employees who engage in illegal or illicit behaviour. Legitimate causes for dismissal should be clearly defined.

Payment of bonuses, severance pay, and vacation or sick time reimbursement should be addressed. Liability insurance premiums should be mentioned to ensure you are not required to refund money your employer has paid for these premiums.

The contract should state how often a formal job performance review will be conducted – for a new position, this is typically at one-month, three-month, and six-month intervals.

### Contract Renewal

Every contract should include an option to renew or a provision to renegotiate based on a performance evaluation. Performance criteria should be included or attached to the contract.

### Employee versus Independent Contractor

Laws vary by province. It is important to specify the relationship, however, because your employer’s liability regarding employment taxes and pension benefits will be affected. Canada Revenue Agency has guidelines that you and your tax advisor should examine. For more information please visit: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/menu-eng.html>

### Services to Be Provided

The area of medicine in which you practice, your duties and your obligations should be clearly defined. This includes working times, sites, and practice responsibilities. Requirements for rounds and on-call duties should be clearly stated. Be sure to address whether clauses that may prohibit holding a second job apply to volunteer healthcare or nonmedical employment. Before you begin practicing it is recommended that a set of medical directives are established with your supervising physician. Medical directives are a set of tasks and/or procedures which the physician has delegated permission for you to undertake. Medical directives are specific to each PA and location of employment. Medical directives help to define your scope of practice not only for you and your supervising physicians' benefit but also for other healthcare professions you work with. Medical directives can evolve as the experience of the PA grows and often the expectation is that the PA will assist in creating these. Medical directives are not compulsory, however, are highly recommended. A useful resource to help in creating these can be found on the CAPA website in the members area under resources.

### Credentials and Privileges

The contract should specify the professional credentials, for example, CCPA or PA-C certification designations that you must possess and the specified time frame in which you must obtain these. It should also specify whether you must apply for privileges at certain hospitals.

### Compensation

More disagreements arise over compensation than perhaps any other issue. Will you be paid a salary, an hourly rate, a percentage of fees billed or collected, or salary plus bonus based on productivity? If your compensation will be based on a percentage of fees billed, specify which fees will be included in the calculation. If you will be paid an hourly rate, include a minimum number of hours per week or per month to ensure adequate income.

Terms should be clearly defined in the contract – not only the amount (and/or percentage of productivity income) but also the frequency of calculation and payment.

### Liability Insurance

Who will pay for liability insurance? How much will it cost? Will you be listed on your supervising physician's policy or have your own policy? Be sure to compare the options before you sign the contract. It is also advised that you purchase your own professional liability coverage through CAPA. Some policies provide coverage for the institution for a maximum amount and not individuals. This could potentially present a problem if the institutions coverage is exceeded.

Become familiar with both occurrence and claims-made policies. An occurrence policy covers alleged negligence that occurs during the policy period, regardless of when claims are reported. Claims-made policies cover incidents that happen and are reported while the policy is in force; for an extra premium, often a large one, tail coverage will protect you against claims filed after the policy ends.

Your liability policy should cover liability for services rendered (or not rendered) and all legal costs, regardless of the suit's outcome or whether the suit was fraudulent. Try to obtain an ultimate net-loss policy, which will cover all legal fees.

Adequate liability insurance is critical for all healthcare providers. As stated earlier CAPA has a partnership with an insurance company to provide up to \$10 million in coverage to individual PAs in Canada. Eligible PAs must be certified through either PACCC or NCCPA and they must be CAPA members. Please visit the CAPA website (<https://capa-acam.ca/practicing-physician-assistants/liability-insurance/>) for further information.

### **Fringe Benefits**

The contract should describe both included and excluded fringe benefits. Typical benefits include vacation and education leave, travel expenses related to education leave, professional dues, licensure fees, hospital medical staff fees, books and professional journals, CAPA fees, health insurance, disability, life insurance, and retirement plans.

### **Sick Leave and Disability**

The contract should specify if you will continue to be paid if you become sick or disabled, and, if so, for how long. Often practices have different disability policies for physicians and other employees; it is important to understand which one will cover you.

### **Restrictive Covenants**

A restrictive covenant, sometimes called a “non-compete clause,” prohibits you from practicing in a given geographic area or given medical specialty after you leave a practice. This is usually for a defined period of time, often a few years after leaving the practice.

These clauses are enforceable in most provinces if the terms are considered reasonable. A 10-mile restriction might be reasonable in a rural area but not in a metropolitan area. Consider the following red flags for undesirable arrangements: exclusions from practicing in entire countries or provinces and territories; a prohibition from practicing at a particular hospital; or an employer who says, “Oh, don’t worry about signing that; we would never enforce it.” If you must negotiate a contract with a restrictive covenant, be sure it is something you can live with. Consider adding a clause that declares the restrictions void if you are dismissed without cause.

### **Disputes**

Check that the contract specifies whether disputes between you and your employer will be settled by mandatory arbitration or in court and whether the prevailing party will receive lawyer’s fees and costs. The contract should also include a clause that allows you and your lawyer access to patient medical records if a lawsuit is brought against you after you leave the practice. Otherwise, your lawyer may have to subpoena the records, which is a costly process that can take months.

### **Summary**

After meeting with your prospective employer, drafting a contract, reviewing the employee handbook, and discussing the contract with your lawyer, ask yourself if you are ready to sign on the dotted line. Perhaps as you review each section of the contract, imagine situations that could arise. Ask yourself, “What would happen if...?” Then make your decision based on a knowledgeable review of the contract and good common sense.

## Pre-Employment Checklist

*(Adapted with permission from the AAPA)*

Use the following checklist to help you analyze your employment options when you begin your job search. Ask these questions and get satisfactory answers before making an employment decision.

### Practice Issues

#### Hours and location?

- Number of office locations? Will PA work in all?
- Hours of operation?
- Expected number of work hours per week?
- On-call schedule: flexible?
- How will holidays be covered?
- Weekends begin and end at what time?
- Hours and location?

#### Responsibilities

- Type of work the PA wants to do?
- Physician's expectations of what the PA will do?
- How will physician and PA interact?
- How will supervision be provided?
- Availability of physician?
- Relationship to others in the office? Any supervisory responsibilities?
- Number of hospitals where physician is privileged? Will PA be privileged there, too?
- PA's hospital responsibilities? (Rounds, ED evaluations, deliveries, surgical assisting?)
- Is hospital committee work a possibility?
- Number of nursing homes where physician follows patients?
- PA's nursing home responsibilities?

#### Legal Issues

- Necessary paperwork filed with provincial licensing board or department?
- Provincial regulations reviewed with physician?
- Rules, regulations and "gray areas" discussed?
- Nursing home regulations reviewed?
- Will there be a probationary period?
- Written contract provided?
- Physician's malpractice policy type and coverage reviewed and discussed with PA?
- PA's liability policy type and coverage discussed and acquired?
- Tail coverage provided, if needed?

## Business/Benefits

### Insurance

- Liability coverage? Type, limits of liability?
- Personal, (tail coverage not necessary), or Personal claims-made policy with paid tail coverage, or Rider on physician's policy?
- Health insurance provided? For dependents?
- Dental insurance provided? For dependents?
- Life insurance provided?
- Disability insurance provided?

### Leave

- Annual leave?
- Name of each paid holiday?
- Sick leave?
- Maternity leave?
- Family leave?
- Unpaid leave policy?
- Number of paid jury duty days?

### Professional Expenses

- Certification exam expense?
- Maintenance of certification expense?
- CAPA Annual Conference expenses? Days off?
- CPD program expenses? Dollar amount available?
- CAPA annual membership dues?
- Professional activity in local national PA organizations permitted?
- Liability insurance paid?

### Income

- Base salary amount? How often paid? How often reviewed? (See section on Compensation below for further information.)
- Partnership available?
- Bonus plan available?
- Profit-sharing plan available?
- Pension provided?

## Compensation

Salaries vary greatly depending on the area of specialty, hours to be worked and location. In general, wages are higher for remote locations and industry jobs.

At present, entry level salaries range from \$75,000 to \$90,000 per year, assuming a 40 hour work week. A typical contract could also allow approximately \$2000 annually for professional expenses (CPD expenses and CAPA membership dues). If your contract does not provide for professional expenses you may be able to claim your CAPA membership dues as professional dues on your income tax. For additional information please contact the Canada Revenue Agency: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/menu-eng.html>.

## Integration

Joining a team as a new PA can be exciting, however may also be challenging. Due to the fact that PAs are a relatively new healthcare professional within the public healthcare system, in many cases the staff and even the supervising physician may not be familiar with your role and how best to utilize your skills to ensure that you are practicing to your full potential. There may even be some apprehension from patients who are not aware of PAs. In addition you may experience some animosity from some of your colleagues, who have formed opinions about PAs based on preconceived notions. Each site, whether it is a community health centre, hospital emergency department, or specialty practice, will present its own set of challenges.

CAPA would like to encourage you to take a leadership role in your workplace and to work with your supervising physician to educate your new colleagues about yourself and the role you will play. CAPA can assist you in doing this. We can help you and your supervising physician prepare for your first day on the job and provide tools and tips on how to best integrate yourself so you can be seen as a valuable member of the team. CAPA has developed a resources section in the Members Area of our website that will help you to educate your colleagues, supervising physicians and patients about your role and the benefit you can bring to the team and to improving access to quality patient care. Some of the resources available to members include: a PA power point presentation, which is ideal for defining your scope of practice and describing your role to the facility staff; a brochure that will help to explain your role to patients; as well as the CAPA/CMA Physician Toolkit which can be a very useful guide for your supervising physician. We can also assist by helping to connect you with other PAs from similar backgrounds and specialties who may have encountered similar obstacles and can provide advice on how to approach certain situations.

## **CAPA and All It Has to Offer**

CAPA is a national professional organization that advocates for PAs and represents its membership across Canada and globally. It is committed to facilitating improved access to healthcare for Canadians through quality standards and competencies for PAs and establishing the profession within the national health care framework.

Whether you are a new graduate or an experienced PA, CAPA strives to assist you as a professional. This Entry-to-Practice Guide is designed to ease PAs as they transition into the workplace in Canada.

This guide is just one of many benefits you will receive as a member of CAPA. Other benefits include discounts on products and services as well as significant savings on home, auto and professional liability insurance. CAPA also offers networking opportunities and value added CPD such as the CAPA Annual Conference and monthly subscription to the JAAPA medical journal. To find out more about what your membership can do for you visit the CAPA website ([capa-acam.ca](http://capa-acam.ca)).



## **Entry-to-Practice Guide**

A Resource for Physician Assistants in Canada

**Canadian Association of Physician Assistants**

[capa-acam.ca](http://capa-acam.ca)

Version 2017