

# PAs: A Safe Provider & Prescriber

## Summary<sup>1</sup>

Even as the number of PAs increases, the ratio of PAs disciplined by a state licensing agency continues to decline in recent years. When the discipline ratio of states that allow PAs full prescriptive authority is compared against states with restrictions, states with restrictions actually have a higher discipline ratio in all but one year in the past four years.

## Background

### What is a PA?

PAs are healthcare providers who are nationally certified and state licensed to practice medicine and prescribe medication in every medical and surgical specialty and setting. PAs practice and prescribe in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and all US territories with the exception of Puerto Rico. PAs are educated at the graduate level, with most PAs receiving a Master's degree or higher. In order to maintain national certification, PAs are required to recertify as medical generalists every 10 years and complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years.

### How are PAs regulated?

Every state has enacted laws licensing, regulating, and disciplining PAs similar to other healthcare professionals. These state laws are generally administered by an independent PA board or a medical licensing board. Generally, PAs are represented on the board with a seat or there is a separate PA committee that has varying degrees of influence over PA-related issues.

### What can a PA prescribe?

PAs may issue prescriptions in every US jurisdiction. However, in eight states, there are restrictions on what or how PAs may issue prescriptions.

<sup>1</sup> Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Practitioners Database retrieved 4 February 2016.

## PA Discipline Trends

Based on annual federal data, the number of PAs continues to increase every year in nearly every jurisdiction. Even with this significant growth, the ratio of PAs disciplined *continues to trend downwards*.

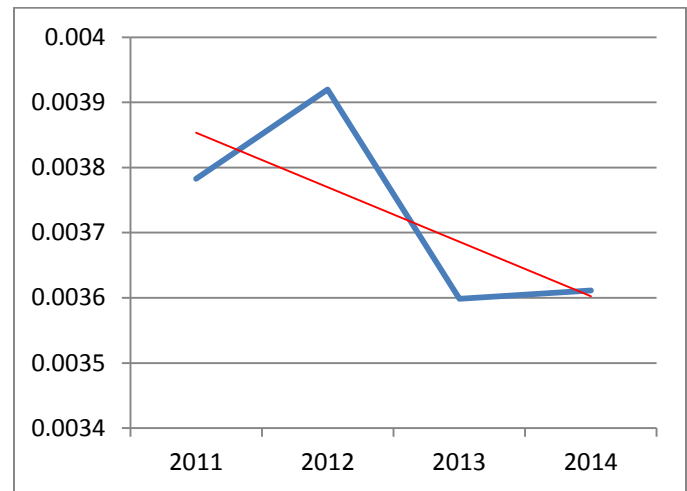


Figure 1. Ratio of disciplined PAs to total PAs in all jurisdictions. The linear trend line is shown in red.

As the absolute number of PAs has increased, trend of the ratio of PAs disciplined decreases over the past four years.

When the discipline ratios of states that grant PAs full prescriptive authority are compared against states that impose restrictions, states with full prescriptive authority have lower discipline ratios over the past four years.

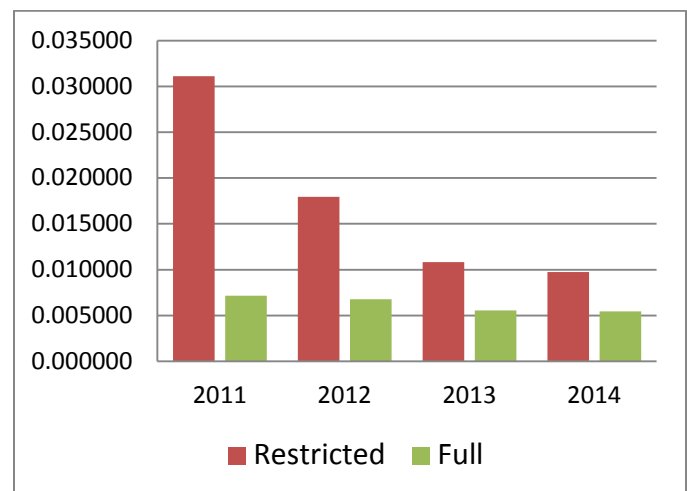


Figure 2. Discipline ratio of states that allow full PA prescriptive authority and states with restrictions.