

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

ISSUE BRIEF



PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT SCOPE OF PRACTICE

Each physician assistant's (PA's) scope of practice is defined by education and experience, state law, facility policy and the needs of the patients at the practice. **State laws allow physicians broad delegatory authority, which fosters customized team care.** Educated in the medical model, PAs practice with physicians in every specialty and setting. In facilities, PAs are usually credentialed and privileged through the medical staff.

PAs are integral members of the healthcare team. But what exactly do PAs do? And who decides? The boundaries of each PA's scope of practice are determined by four parameters: education and experience; state law; facility policy; and the needs of the patients at the practice. Each boundary must be adequately constructed in order to promote effective patient-centered care.

THE PA'S EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

PA scope of practice should always be limited to those tasks for which they are

adequately prepared. This preparation is achieved through education and training in an accredited PA program, working with physicians in clinical practice and continuing medical education (CME).

PA education is modeled on physician education. Matriculants to PA programs must have completed at least two years of undergraduate courses in basic science and behavioral science as prerequisites to PA training. This is analogous to premedical studies required of medical students. PA programs are located at medical schools and teaching hospitals, and **PA students commonly share classes, facilities and clinical rotations with medical students.**



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