

Physician Assistant vs. Nurse Practitioner vs. Medical Doctor

Category	Medical Assistant	Nurse (RN, BSN)	Nurse Practitioner	Physician Assistant	Physician (Family Practice)
Prerequisite Education	None	None	Bachelor Degree in Nursing and clinical hours	Bachelor Degree and clinical hours	Bachelor Degree
Learning Model	-	Medical-Nursing	Medical-Nursing	Medical-Physician	Medical-Physician
Time in Classroom	134 hrs	varies greatly by program	500 hrs	1000 hrs	2 years
Time in Clinic	160 hours	varies by program	500-700 hrs	2000 hrs	2 years
Total Post High School Education	1-2 years	2-4 years	6-8 years	6-7 years	8 years
Residency	None	None	None	Optional 1-2 years	3-8 years
Degree or Certificate Awarded	Certificate or Associate Degree	Associate or Bachelor Degree	Master's Degree planned transition to Doctorate	Master's Degree PA-C	Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) or Osteopathy (D.O.)
Recertification	60 education points or exam every 5 years	1000 hours practicing in area of certification or exam every 5 years	1000 professional practice hours and 12 CE credits per year OR exam every 5 years	100 education hours every 2 years and exam every 10 years	MD: 50 education hours/year and ABMS certification recommended
Base Salary U.S	\$29,708	\$66,220 (varies greatly by state)	\$97,990	\$97,280	\$185,151
Independent Practitioner			18 states allow NPs to practice independently		Yes
Complicated or High Risk Cases			Varies	Varies	Yes
Perform Surgery			Assist	Assist	Yes
Deliver babies			Yes	Varies by State	Yes
Write Prescriptions			Yes	Yes	Yes
Prescribe Controlled Substances			Varies by State	Varies by State	Yes
Conduct Physical Exams		Assist	Yes	Yes	Yes
Diagnose			Yes	Yes	Yes
Treat Illness		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Order and Interpret Tests		Assist	Yes	Yes	Yes
Patient Counseling		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes