

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's Degree in nursing and clinical hours | Bachelor's degree and clinical hours | Bachelor's 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's 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. | \$38,190 | \$82,720 (varies greatly by state) | \$118,040 | \$117,381 | \$231,500 |
| 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 |