

CAREER GUIDE FOR PHYSICAL THERAPIST AIDES

SOC Code: 31-2022

Pay Band(s): 2 and 3 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Under close supervision of a physical therapist or physical therapy assistant, perform only delegated, selected, or routine tasks in specific situations. These duties include preparing the patient and the treatment area.

Physical Therapist Aides positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to the following Roles in the [Direct Service Career Group](#):

[Direct Service Associate II](#)

[Direct Service Associate III](#)

While Physical Therapist Aides within the Commonwealth are all located within the Direct Service Career Group, individuals may want to pursue other opportunities within the Commonwealth depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Group(s) that may be of interest are:

[Rehabilitation Therapies](#)

[Administrative and Office Support](#)

[Laboratory and Research Services](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: *The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Physical Therapist Aides commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

1. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
2. Teaching others how to do something.
3. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
4. Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
5. Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
6. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
7. Actively looking for ways to help people.
8. Selecting and using training/instructional methods and procedures appropriate for the situation when learning or teaching new things.
9. Generating or adapting equipment and technology to serve user needs.
10. Using scientific rules and methods to solve problems.

Knowledge

Note: The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Physical Therapist Aides commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The **Knowledge** of:

1. Principles, methods, and procedures for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of physical and mental dysfunctions, and for career counseling and guidance.
2. Principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
3. Principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
4. Administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.
5. Plant and animal organisms, their tissues, cells, functions, interdependencies, and interactions with each other and the environment.
6. Human behavior and performance; individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; learning and motivation; psychological research methods; and the assessment and treatment of behavioral and affective disorders.
7. Structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.

Abilities

Note: The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Physical Therapist Aides commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The **Ability** to:

1. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
2. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
3. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
4. Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
5. Speak clearly so others can understand

Tasks

Note: The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Physical Therapist Aides. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.

1. Administer active and passive manual therapeutic exercises, therapeutic massage, and heat, light, sound, water, and electrical modality treatments, such as ultrasound.
2. Arrange treatment supplies to keep them in order.

3. Assist patients to dress, undress, and put on and remove supportive devices, such as braces, splints, and slings.
4. Clean and organize work area and disinfect equipment after treatment. Instruct, motivate, safeguard and assist patients practicing exercises and functional activities, under direction of medical staff.
5. Maintain equipment and furniture to keep it in good working condition, including performing the assembly and disassembly of equipment and accessories.
6. Observe patients during treatment to compile and evaluate data on patients' responses and progress, and report to physical therapist.
7. Perform clerical duties, such as taking inventory, ordering supplies, answering telephone, taking messages, and filling out forms.
8. Record treatment given and equipment used.
9. Secure patients into or onto therapy equipment.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

Occupations as Physical Therapy Aides are considered **Social** occupations and frequently involve working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

These occupations are **Realistic** occupations and frequently involve work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Generally licensure is not required for Physical Therapist Aide positions in state government. However career advancement opportunities and career progression in the field of physical therapy as an assistant or therapist requires a license. Licensing information for Physical Therapist Assistant or Physical Therapist can be found on the Department of Health Profession's web site at <http://www.dhp.state.virginia.us/>

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

According to the Department of Health, Bureau of Statistics:

Physical therapist assistants and aides perform components of physical therapy procedures and related tasks selected by a supervising physical therapist. These workers assist physical therapists in providing services that help improve mobility, relieve pain, and prevent or limit permanent physical disabilities of patients suffering from injuries or disease. Patients include accident victims and individuals with disabling conditions such as low-back pain, arthritis, heart disease, fractures, head injuries, and cerebral palsy.

Physical therapist aides help make therapy sessions productive, under the direct supervision of a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant. They usually are responsible for keeping the

treatment area clean and organized and for preparing for each patient's therapy. When patients need assistance moving to or from a treatment area, aides push them in a wheelchair or provide them with a shoulder to lean on. Because they are not licensed, aides do not perform the clinical tasks of a physical therapist assistant.

The duties of aides include some clerical tasks, such as ordering depleted supplies, answering the phone, and filling out insurance forms and other paperwork. The extent to which an aide or an assistant performs clerical tasks depends on the size and location of the facility.

This occupation requires a high school diploma and some vocational training. Many of the skills are acquired through on-the-job instructions provided by the Physical Therapist or Physical Therapist Assistant.

Physical therapist assistants typically earn an associate degree from an accredited physical therapist assistant program. For career progression, individuals may want to consider further education to become an assistant.

The Virginia Area Health Education Centers Program lists the following Virginia Educational Institutions that offer Physical Therapy Aide educational programs: Arlington Career Center, Augusta Health Care, Community Memorial of Healthcenter, Greenville Memorial Hospital, Mediacorp Health System, Rockingham Memorial Hospital, Twin County Regional Hospital, Virginia Medical Education Center, and Winchester Medical Center.

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to: http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example: **Physical Therapist Aide**

PAY BAND	ROLE		
2	Direct Service Associate II		
3	Direct Service Associate III		

Sample Career Path

Direct Service Associate II

The Direct Service Associate II role provides career tracks for health care support technicians, such as physical/occupational therapist aide and others who perform health care support responsibilities ranging from entry-level to journey-level. Duties are varied, requiring either knowledge in a variety of areas or specialized knowledge to perform tasks in assigned specialty areas.

Direct Service Associate III

The Direct Service Associate III role provides career tracks for health care support specialists that are either service delivery experts or supervisors. As service delivery experts, employees provide or lead specialized services that support the work of interdisciplinary treatment teams,

licensed clinical staff, and professional counselors. As supervisors, employees supervise other Direct Service Workers, develop staff schedules, evaluate staff performance, serve as members of interdisciplinary treatment teams, make minor changes in treatment and program plans, write reports, make oral presentations, and review client records for appropriate documentation.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET (Occupational Information Network)

http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_search_page

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network <http://www.vacrn.net/>

Department of Health Profession's

<http://www.dhp.state.virginia.us/>

Professional Organizations

American Physical Therapy Association

<http://www.apta.org/>

Virginia Physical Therapy Association

<http://www.vpta.org/>