



DHS PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

PRESENTATION

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PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PRESENTATION GOALS

To ensure that all talented clinicians have the opportunity to work within DHS, regardless of their professional title or designation.



WHAT IS A P.A.

A Physician Assistant (PA) is a licensed medical professional with advanced clinical training who provides direct patient care. Practicing in every medical and surgical specialty, PAs diagnose and treat a wide range of conditions, prescribe medications, perform minor procedures, and assist in major surgeries.

PA TRAINING



Physician Assistants (PAs) are trained under the medical model, with a strong emphasis on in-person clinical education. Accreditation standards for PA programs mandate hands-on learning, ensuring that candidates are well-prepared across both primary care and specialty disciplines. In particular, PA residency programs provide rigorous, immersive training that makes PAs exceptionally qualified for surgical specialties.

Despite this, the County has not consistently afforded the PA profession equitable consideration when filling clinical vacancies. Prioritizing the most qualified candidate—regardless of title—is essential to delivering high-quality patient care and upholding the County's commitment to excellence in health services.

THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF INCLUSIVE PA RECRUITMENT

The Physician Assistant (PA) profession stands as a model of inclusive, merit-based recruitment—welcoming candidates from a wide array of backgrounds and prior occupations. This approach not only broadens access to medical careers but also strengthens the healthcare workforce by drawing in individuals with diverse lived experiences, skill sets, and perspectives.

Unlike pathways that rely on a single feeder profession, the PA model minimizes disruption to other essential workforce sectors. Candidates are selected based on their ability to meet rigorous science prerequisites and excel in the medical model of didactic training—not on their previous job title. This flexibility ensures that high-potential individuals can transition into clinical roles without depleting other critical fields.

DHS APP staffing changes

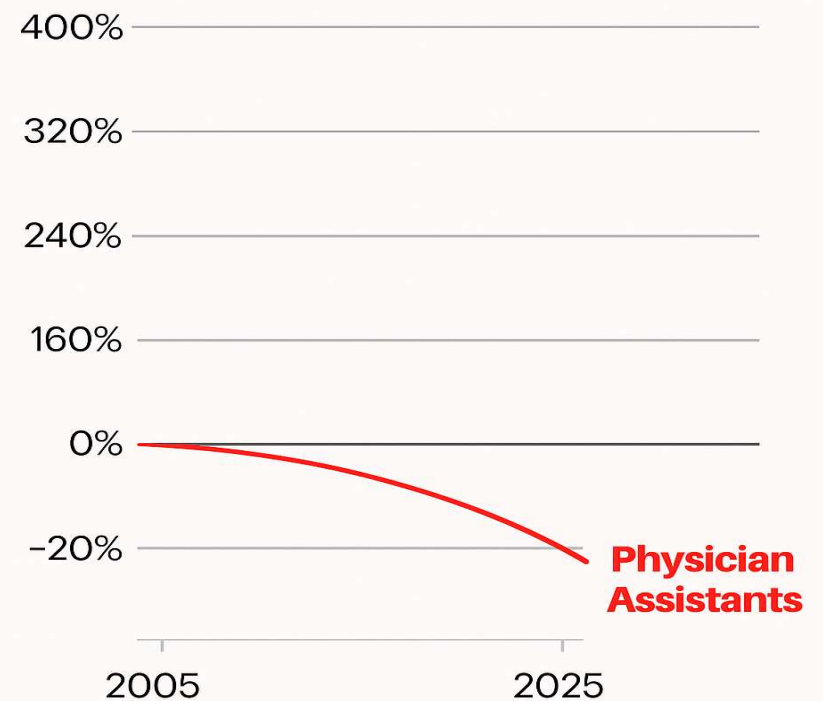
**ESTIMATE
FROM 2005-2025**

2005 100 PA's

2025 80 PA's

No creation of new physician assistant items since 2005

**Percent Change in Numbers of
Physician Assistants, 2005 to 2025**



Pending RFI data for confirmation

DHS STAFFING IRREGULARITIES

Available provider positions are not being offered to all eligible candidates

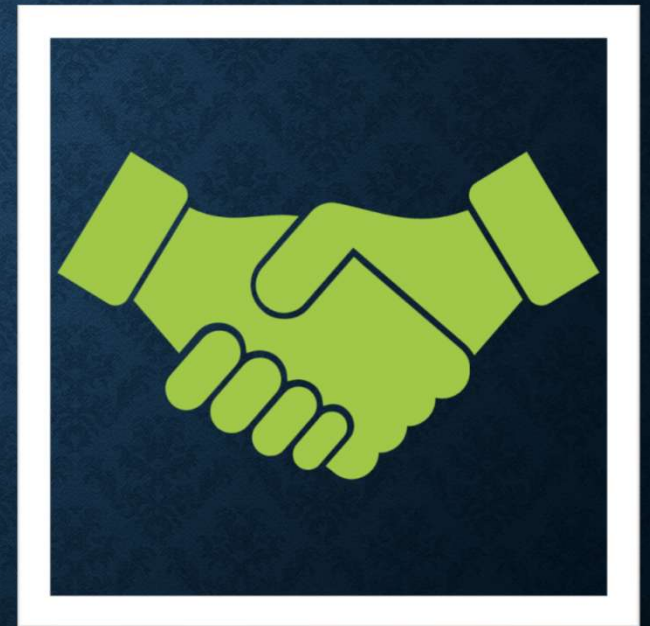
Experienced PA candidates are not being contacted for interviews.

DHS has been utilizing contracted Physician Assistants, indicating that there are eligible physician assistants that DHS can hire physician

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RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Despite the critical role Physician Assistants (PAs) play in clinical care delivery, DHS has not actively prioritized PA recruitment nor maintained competitive compensation for experienced Advanced Practice Providers (APPs). These gaps have contributed to attrition within the PA workforce. Furthermore, the PA Joint Labor Team has not been consistently engaged in provider staffing initiatives or granted equitable access to APP leadership pathways—limiting opportunities for representation and advancement.



THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVELY RECRUITING AND FILLING PROVIDER VACANCIES WITH PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

To fill the gap of provider shortages, PAs play a vital role in team-based care—expanding access, improving outcomes, and strengthening health equity. They serve in all 50 states and across diverse clinical settings, helping deliver high-quality care to communities nationwide.

