



Physical Therapist Assistant Program

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2025-2026





Dear Incoming PTA Student,

Welcome to the River Valley Community College's Physical Therapist Assistant program! We are glad that you chose us. We hope to both challenge you and share our passion for this profession.

This Physical Therapist Assistant Program Handbook has been developed to introduce you to the policies and requirements of our program. Please read the information carefully. Once you have completed and understand the materials provided in this package, you will be asked to sign and return the enclosed signature sheets as part of one of your courses in your first, fall semester. It is your responsibility to have read and understand the policies before signing anything. We encourage you to ask any questions you have about program policies prior to starting in the program.

This PTA Program Handbook is a supplement to River Valley Community College's Student Handbook (<https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/student-handbook>) and the policies outlined by the Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH) (<https://www.ccsnh.edu/about-ccsnh/policies/>). All PTA students are expected to abide by all college and system policies and procedures.

Every effort is made to ensure that students are provided with the most up-to-date policies and procedures. However, items within are subject to change during your tenure as a PTA student.

The field of Physical Therapy is a progressive and exciting aspect of allied health. We hope you enjoy your participation in the program and wish you much success!



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ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Since 1968, our college has provided quality education in an academic environment small enough to allow individualized attention. Students in the college's career-oriented degree, diploma and certificate programs gain highly specialized skills and knowledge necessary to confidently and successfully enter the job market in a number of technical, business and health oriented fields. It is the student with career goals clearly in mind who tends to excel and enjoy the educational experience at RVCC.

River Valley Community College (RVCC) is one of a system of seven community colleges in the state, collectively referred to as the Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH). RVCC has campus locations in Claremont, NH where the PTA program is housed; in Lebanon, NH, and Keene, NH. The college is ADA accessible.

The College views itself as serving the needs of both the region and the state. It cooperates with local industry, business, service and health organizations to meet those needs. The college's expected outcomes are found at the following link:

<https://www.rivervalley.edu/about/river-valley-principles/>

SYSTEM & COLLEGE GUIDING STATEMENTS

The PTA program supports both the mission of the Community College System, and the mission (and philosophy) of the college. Here are those statements:

Mission Statement of RVCC:

River Valley Community College transforms lives by providing a quality and affordable education through innovative personal approaches to lifelong learning and career pathways.

Mission Statement of CCSNH:

Our purpose is to provide residents with affordable, accessible, high-quality education and training that aligns with the needs of New Hampshire's business and communities, delivered through an innovative, efficient and collaborative system of colleges. CCSNH is dedicated to the educational, professional and personal success of its students; a skilled workforce for our state's businesses; and a strong New Hampshire economy.

The College's Education Philosophy:

Since the College serves a diverse student population possessing a wide range of academic and physical abilities, the College is committed to providing a variety of educational approaches, instructional methods, supplementary services, and co-curricular activities to meet those diverse needs. In the context of a student-centered

environment, the primary aim of the college is to assist students to become self-reliant, self-confident skilled workers and educated persons.

The College believes that the educated person is able to read critically, write clearly and comprehensively, reason analytically, and utilize mathematical and scientific skills to solve life's problems. The educated person functions as a responsible and ethical member of society, recognizes, and copes with ambiguities of life, and appreciates diversity. The educated person moves from concrete to abstract levels of thinking, fosters integration and synthesis of knowledge, interchanges roles as both learner and teacher, and utilizes contemplative thought.

By embracing an understanding and appreciation of self in today's socially and technologically complex world, and through the stimulation of intellectual curiosity, learners will be able to improve their lives and contribute something of value to the community of which they are a part.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

The PTA Program follows the Non-Discrimination policy of the CCSNH found here: <https://www.ccsnh.edu/non-discrimination-policy/>

The Community College System of NH does not discriminate in the administration of its admissions and educational programs, activities, or employment practices on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability, gender identity and expression, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or marital status. This statement is a reflection of the mission of the Community College System of NH and refers to, but is not limited to, the provisions of the following laws:

- **Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended**
- **The Age Discrimination Act of 1967 (ADEA)**
- **Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972**
- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**
- **The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)**
- **Section 402 of the Vietnam Era Veteran's Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974**
- **NH Law Against Discrimination (RSA 354-A)**
- **Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008**

Inquiries regarding discrimination may be directed to the following:

Jennifer Cournoyer, Vice President of Student and Academic Affairs
River Valley Community College, One College Place, Claremont, NH 03743
jcournoyer@ccsnh.edu; 603.542.7744 x5331

Sara A. Sawyer, Director of Human Resources for the CCSNH
26 College Drive, Concord, NH 03301
ssawyer@ccsnh.edu; 603.230.3503

US Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights,
J.W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse, Room 701, 01-0061,
Boston, MA, 02109-4557
ocr_boston@ed.gov; 617.223.9662, FAX: 617-223-9669, TDD:617-223-9695

NH Commission for Human Rights, 2 Chennell Drive, Concord, NH 03301
603-271-2767, FAX: 603-271-6339

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, JFK Federal Building, 475
Government Center, Boston, MA, 02203
617-565-3200 or 1-800-669-4000, FAX: 617-565-3196,
TTY: 617-565-3204 or 1-800-669-6820.

RVCC PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM

Authorization

The college has been authorized by the New Hampshire General Court to provide postsecondary education. The Board of Trustees for the Community College System in the state has authorized this campus to provide the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) education program since 1976. The PTA program graduated its first class in 1976 and has had approximately 500 graduates enter the profession since then.

Current Accreditation Status

The Physical Therapist Assistant program at River Valley Community College is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), 3030 Potomac Ave., Suite 100, Alexandria, VA 22305-3085; telephone (703) 706-3245; email: accreditation@apta.org; website: <http://www.capteonline.org>.



Our current accreditation extends through 2027. Questions about accreditation can be made to the PTA program director, Kim-Laura Boyle, PT, DPT (kboyle@ccsnh.edu) or 603-542-7744 x5434

PTA Program Mission, Vision, Philosophy

Mission Statement

The Physical Therapist Assistant program at River Valley Community College is committed to providing high-quality education through innovative and personalized learning approaches. We prepare graduates with essential knowledge, skills, and professional behaviors to become competent, ethical, and compassionate entry-level Physical Therapists Assistants who embrace life-long learning and professional growth within the evolving healthcare landscape.

Vison Statement

The RVCC PTA program will be known in the region as a program which fosters exemplary healthcare professionals dedicated to improving lives and communities.

PTA Program Philosophy:

The Philosophy of the PTA program states that its faculty and students believe:

- that a combination of the liberal arts and professional education help prepare the student for critical thinking, responsible citizenship and employment.
- the program is committed to graduating knowledgeable, competent, self-assured, adaptable, service-oriented individuals who are respectful of diversity and possess relevant skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the profession.
- the education of the PTA student should be based upon the identifiable and verified roles and responsibilities of a PTA.
- that PTA education should provide opportunities for integration and application of learned concepts, attitudes, values and skills in real life experiences in the classroom and clinic.
- in the Standards of Ethical Conduct for the Physical Therapist Assistant as established by the American Physical Therapy Association.
- in the inherent value of interdisciplinary collaboration.
- in the inherent value of life-long learning

PTA Program Data

PTA Program Benchmarks

PTA programs nationwide are required by our accrediting agency to make public specific statistics (2 year averages for graduation rates, the graduates' success in passing the national examination and their success rate in obtaining employment after passing the national examination). The River Valley Community College PTA program uses at least these benchmarks to assess the quality of the curriculum and update the

minimally each September. You can view these benchmarks on the program page of the college website: <https://www.rivervalley.edu/program/physical-therapist-assistant/PTA Program Outcomes>

The design of the curriculum and activities undertaken by the faculty of the PTA Program at River Valley Community College will achieve the following outcomes:

- 1) Produce safe, competent, caring, graduates who possess entry-level skills as evidenced by successful completion of all PTA courses as per grade policy.
- 2) Graduation rate/Retention rate: $\geq 60\%$ of students admitted to program will graduate within 3 years (150%) (averaged over 2 years). Students who leave the program for other than academic reasons are not be counted in this calculation.
- 3) Ultimate passing rate of national exam: For those graduates who choose to take the Physical Therapist Assistant national examination, $\geq 85\%$ will pass the exam (averaged over 2 years).
- 4) Employment rate: $\geq 90\%$ of the graduates (averaged over 2 years) who seek employment as a physical therapist assistant will obtain a position that they are interested in within six months of passing the national PTA examination.

PTA Program Student Objectives

The PTA program is designed to prepare students to complete the national PTA licensure examination and to work safely with patients under the supervision of the Physical Therapist. The following chart documents the objectives we have set for the student and the graduate:

<i>PTA Program Student Specific Objectives</i>	
<i>Throughout the program, students shall:</i>	<i>Upon employment, graduates shall:</i>
1. learn about and model the role of the physical therapist assistant in the PT/PTA supervisory relationship	1. consistently demonstrate and implement appropriate role utilization of the physical therapist assistant in the application of established treatment interventions as directed by the primary physical therapist.
2. exhibit sensitivity to individual and cultural differences in accordance with the Standards of Ethical Conduct for the PTA	2. consistently demonstrate sensitivity to individual and cultural differences in accordance with the Standards of Ethical Conduct for the PTA in an effort to assure safe and proper conduct for all interactions within the profession.

3. learn about and model the Standards of Ethical Conduct/Standards of Practice for the PTA	3. consistently demonstrate the Standards of Practice for PTAs in an effort to assure safe and proper conduct for all interactions within the profession.
4. learn about and model entry-level competence, critical thinking, and skill in the timely implementation of a comprehensive treatment plan as developed by the physical therapist	4. consistently demonstrate competence, critical thinking and skill in the timely implementation of a comprehensive treatment plan as developed by their supervising physical therapist(s)
5. learn about and apply strong critical thinking in appropriate communication with the supervising physical therapists regarding patient progress and treatment modifications.	5. consistently demonstrate competence while regularly reporting to, and communicating with, supervising physical therapists regarding patient progress and treatment modifications in accordance with changes in patient status.
6. learn about and apply strong critical thinking in data collection procedures, and integrate the findings of such procedures into the patient's plan of care.	6. consistently demonstrate competence in data collection procedures, integrating the findings of such procedures to the patient's plan of care.
7. learn about and model different teaching techniques to various audiences including peers, faculty, guests, healthcare professionals, patients, and their families.	7. consistently demonstrate professional behavior during interactions and teaching with healthcare professionals, patients, and their families while providing the desired psycho-social support among diverse populations.
8. learn about and model timely, effective and accurate written and verbal communication skills in documenting the relevant aspects of patient care.	8. consistently perform effective and accurate written and verbal communication skills in documenting the relevant aspects of patient care, including patient response and progress.
9. learn about and apply strong critical thinking in the use of professional literature for evidenced-based physical therapy interventions.	9. integrate information obtained from professional literature review into clinical practice as evidenced-based practitioners of physical therapy.
10. prepare for successful performance on national licensure exam	10. practice as entry-level physical therapist assistants who exhibit continued growth as professionals throughout their careers.
11. learn about continued educational pathways in the profession.	
12. learn about continuing education requirements to maintain PTA licensure	
13. understand the importance of maintaining awareness of current trends in physical therapy, and will recognize the connection between promoting physical therapy and involvement in the APTA	

PTA Program Overview

The RVCC PTA program prepares individuals to work in the health care profession under the supervision of a Physical Therapist (PT) in a variety of settings including acute care hospitals, rehabilitation and long term care facilities, private practices, school systems, and home health care. Primary responsibilities of the PTA include the implementation of treatment procedures in the rehabilitation of injured, ill, and debilitated individuals.

While in the program, students will gain competence in: patient mobility; therapeutic exercise to gain strength, flexibility, cardiovascular endurance, and balance/coordination; the safe application of therapeutic modalities such as heat, cold, electricity, ultrasound; measurement, adjustment, and instruction in the use of ambulatory aids; and measurements of joint range of motion, muscle strength, length, girth, and vital signs. Strict adherence to standard health and safety precautions is mandated throughout the curriculum.

Upon successful completion of the PTA program, students will be able to demonstrate full understanding of the role of the PTA in the profession and perform all learned procedures safely and appropriately following the physical therapist's plan of care. Students will also demonstrate an understanding of ethical behavior (integrating this knowledge into their professional behavior), demonstrate awareness of the legal responsibilities in patient care, demonstrate a basic understanding of the psychological effect of disease or injury on an individual, and communicate effectively and competently within the Physical Therapy setting.

The PTA program has an integrated curriculum. Students complete core liberal arts and program specific courses at the same time. The core liberal arts courses required in the program are identified by their prefix (e.g. ENGL for English courses) and may be offered during the day or evening. The program specific courses within the program are identified by two prefixes: AHLT or PTAC and are highlighted in light blue on the program map provided later in this document. These are scheduled Monday-Friday during the day. Because Physical Therapy is a hands-on profession; most, if not all, of the professional courses are in a class-room format. During the AY 2021-2022 this may still be adapted to meet the safety standards surrounding Covid, and program specific lectures may be offered online while labs are offered face to face. Students in the PTA program should consider the schedule when arranging work, commuting and family responsibilities.

Associate degree programs, such as the PTA program, traditionally can be completed in two years. Our program includes an 8-week full time (40 hours per week) clinical experience during the summer between the first and second academic years. There is a similar 10-week full time clinical experience during the final semester prior to graduation. These clinical experiences are scheduled based upon the supervising clinician's schedule and may require long days, weekend work, or a non-traditional

schedule.

Students may spread the course work over three years. In that situation, students admitted to the program will complete at least the seven core liberal arts courses in the first year. The hands-on professional courses will be scheduled closer to when the student needs the information for actual patient care. Once the professional courses have begun in year two, the program must be completed in two years unless there is a course failure. Special permission is otherwise required from the program director to continue for a third year. Testing of competencies is required after a leave of absence or a prolonged period of study. Spreading the course work over three years will likely affect the financial aid package.

Each student will work with the Program Director to develop a personalized program map that fits their individual situation and outlines the order in which courses will be taken. This program map ensures that students progress through the program in a logical order, and ensures the completion of any pre-requisite work as needed.

Students who successfully complete and graduate from the PTA program will receive an Associate in Science (A.S.) degree. In most states, only graduates of an accredited PTA program are eligible to sit for the national PTA licensure exam (the “Board Exam”). All states require the physical therapist assistant graduate to pass the national PTA licensure exam as part of the licensure process (Colorado certifies, not licenses, the PTA). The states of New Hampshire and Vermont require PTAs to be licensed. Check with the state in which you plan to work to find specific requirements: www.fsbpt.org.

PTA Program Expenses

Cost Estimate to Attend PTA Program at RVCC

The total cost of the PTA program includes tuition, other college fees, and program-related expenses such as books. This estimate does not include travel expenses, housing, meals or personal health insurance (required for clinical education experience courses). This estimate also does not include the post-graduation cost of the national licensing examination or cost to obtain the PTA license (both of which occur after graduation, and estimate about \$700-\$800). Out-of-state attendees to RVCC who live within 50 miles of one of our main campus or 2 academic centers may be eligible for in-state tuition. Veterans may also be eligible for certain expense reductions. Please consult with Admissions.

Students on a two-year track who receive financial aid must keep in mind that the summer semester between year 1 and year 2 actually begins the senior year 2. Financial aid given for year 2 must be managed to cover summer, fall and spring semesters.

Financial disclosure information for the program can be found at the following link:
https://016d7dc4.rocketcdn.me/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2022-2023_RVCC_PTA-Student-Financial-Fact-Sheet.pdf

Item	In-state	NE Regional	Out-of-State
Tuition (assumes student is required to take all courses in program)	69 credits X \$230/credit = \$15,870	69 credits x \$345/credit = \$23,805	69 credits x \$505/credit= \$34,845
Degree/Certificate Acceptance Fee (Tuition deposit)	\$100	\$100	\$100
Academic instruction fee *	22 x \$110 = \$2,420	22 x \$110 = \$2,420	22 x \$110 = \$2,420
Comprehensive student services fee**	\$639	\$639	\$639
Clinical Surcharge Fee***	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
1 year liability insurance****	\$25	\$25	\$25
Books (estimate)	\$1000	\$1000	\$1000
Totals for entire program.	\$21,054	\$29,019	\$40,029

*Please note fees may vary slightly based on number of credits of individual Liberal Arts Courses

Additional Academic Fees

Students in the PTA program are subject to additional fees as outlined in the RVCC student handbook including:

- Academic Instruction Fee: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/academic-instruction-fee>
- Clinical Surcharge Fee: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/clinical-surcharge-fee>

- Comprehensive Student Services Fee: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/comprehensive-student-services-fee>
- Additional Fees: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/additional-expenses-to-consider>

Licensing Information and Expenses

Once a student has successfully completed and graduated from RVCC's PTA program, they are eligible to sit for the national PTA licensing exam, "the Board Exam". The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT) and individual states manage the application process, and the fees for the test. Once a student has successfully passed the Board Exam, they are eligible to be licensed in any state in which they choose to practice as a PTA. Each state has different licensure requirements and fees. During your final year, the PTA faculty will work with you regarding registering for your Board Exam and also discuss how to begin the license application process. There is a fee to take the exam, and a fee for the licensing process (estimate total of \$700 - \$800). Student choosing to be licensed in multiple states must pay fees in each state.

This licensing exam is given quarterly (January, April, July and October). PTA graduates take their test in July or October and need to be saving up as soon as possible for these additional expenses.

Be aware that many states now require FBI background checks during the license application process. New Hampshire also requires applicants to disclose history of mental illness. All licensing agencies have the right to withhold licensure for any person deemed a public safety risk. New Hampshire's law related to disclosure of a criminal background for licensure can be found here:

<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XXX/332-G/332-G-13.htm> Many RVCC graduates choose to work in Vermont or may choose to get dual licensure. Information on Vermont's background check requirements can be found here:

<https://sos.vermont.gov/opr/regulatory/reducing-barriers/criminal-backgrounds/>

Students should be aware that a background check which limits their ability to obtain licensure will also impact their ability to progress in the program, including limiting their ability to attend clinical rotations. Any student who is concerned about this situation should speak with Program Director, Kim-Laura Boyle, PT, DPT during their first semester to determine the best course of action.

RVCC PTA PROGRAM ACADEMIC POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Course Definitions

All information about courses is found on the college's published schedules. Course schedules show dates, times, campus locations, room number, and modality of instruction of courses. Course schedules are posted on the college website : <https://www.rivervalley.edu/admissions/course-schedules/>) and each student can access their individual schedule through the Student Information System (SIS)

The following terminology is used to describe the modality of instruction of courses offered at RVCC :

- **Online:** This course is offered as a traditional online course in an asynchronous manner and will not meet face to face. The syllabus and all course material will be posted in Canvas (the Learning Management System used by RVCC) in the course “shell”. This format requires the student to be hyper-responsible to stay on track
- **Synchronous Online :** This course is offered in the online environment but on a set schedule where you will log into a virtual classroom via Zoom meetings at the time listed on the college schedule/syllabus. Invitations to classroom meetings will be sent by the professor or linked in the Canvas shell. For example, if you have a Synchronously Online course that meets on Monday’s from 8 – 10 AM, you should be prepared to log into the class Zoom link and be seated in the virtual classroom as if you were attending the lecture in a traditional classroom setting.
- **Hybrid:** This course meets partially via face to face meetings as listed with the remainder of the content being delivered via an online learning management system.
- **Claremont/Keene/Lebanon:** If a town is listed as the modality, this means that the course meets in a traditional face to face, in-person fashion at the location listed. This is how all labs in the PTA program will be offered for AY2022-2023.

Computer Requirements

Computer work will be required in almost all courses in the PTA program and are a requirement for any Online or Synchronous Online classes. Access to reliable internet is also required. Computer labs are available for student use in Claremont, Lebanon, and Keene. RVCC and the PTA faculty regularly require the use of Canvas for accessing course work, Respondus for proctoring of exams, Zoom for participation in online/hybrid courses and Microsoft Office for completing assignments. Microsoft Office 365 is provided free for students and information on how to download the suite is provided during the college orientation. Chromebooks, while popular and affordable, are not recommended as they do not meet the technological requirements for many of the computer applications used in the program. Please review the following requirements recommended before purchasing a computer for use in the program:

<https://www.ccsnh.edu/browser-and-operating-system-requirements/>

Program of Study :

The chart on the next page is called the **program of study**. It lists all the courses, by semester, that are required for graduation from the PTA program. The program director (your advisor) will customize a program map for you, reflecting course work you may already have completed and your choice to complete the program either part-time or full-time. It is your responsibility to assure that all courses have been successfully completed for graduation. You can find your progress through the program by checking

RVCC Degree Works in SIS.

It is important to recognize that a college level full time course load traditionally is 12-15 credits for a full semester (and 6 credits for summer). Please note that PTA students on a standard 2-year plan take a heavier course load, and need to make a serious commitment to time management for successful course completion. Students (even those with transfer of credits) should plan on being on campus at least 5 days/week during the first year, and at least 3 days/week during the fall semester of the second year. Each course syllabus will outline the anticipated time outside of class that should be dedicated to homework, study, and practice of hands on skills.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM OF STUDY

Classes marked with an * have a lab

FALL #1 (18 Credits)

ITEM #	TITLE	PRE/CO REQUISITE	CREDITS
ENGL 102R	*College Composition	None	3-4
BIOL 201R	*Anatomy & Physiology I	A&P Prep Course or equivalent	4
AHLT 104R	Introduction to OT/PT	ENGL 102R	1
AHLT 112R	Clinical Conditions for OT/PT	BIOL201R	3
AHLT 135R	*Foundations in Rehabilitation	AHLT104R	3
PTAC 112R	*Physical Therapy Procedures I	Matriculation in the PTA program	3

SPRING #1 (17 Credits)

ITEM #	TITLE	PRE/CO REQUISITE	CREDITS
MATH 106R	*Statistics I	Math Self-Assessment	3-4
BIOL 202R	*Anatomy & Physiology II	BIOL201R with C or better	3
AHLT 123R	*Functional Kinesiology	BIOL201R	3
PTAC115R	*Therapeutic Exercise	PTAC122R	3
PTAC122R	*Physical Therapy Procedures II	PTAC112R	3

SUMMER #1 (7 Credits)

ITEM #	TITLE	PRE/CO-REQUISITE	CREDITS
PTAC 190R	PTA Clinical Practicum I	P:PTAC115R	6
PTAC 192R	PTA Clinical Practicum I Seminar	C: PTAC 190R	1

FALL #2 (17 Credits)

ITEM #	TITLE	PRE/CO REQUISITE	CREDITS
XXXXXXR	Humanities/Language/Art Elective	Per individual course	3
PSYC 101R	Introduction to Psychology	None	3
PSYC 114R	Human Development	None	3
AHLT 210R	PT/OT Management	OCTA190R or PTAC190R	2
AHLT 220R	*Clinical Neurology	PTAC115R	2
PTAC221R	Clinical Neurology Lab for the PTA	C: AHLT220R	1

SPRING #2 (10 Credits)

ITEM #	TITLE	PRE/CO-REQUISITE	CREDITS
PTAC 250R	PTA Clinical Practicum II Senior Seminar	C: PTAC292R	2
PTAC 292R	PTA Clinical Practicum II	All Programmatic courses	8

TOTAL CREDITS

67-69

Transfer of Credit Policy

The policy for transfer of credits for matriculated students is described in the Student Handbook: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/transfer-of-credit>

Per policy, it is the students's responsibility to work with their program advisor to get courses transferred. Please note that courses that are over ten years in age may not transfer in. Courses earning a C- or below will not transfer in.

If you feel that credit should be earned for work previously completed from other institutions, it is your responsibility to work with your program advisor to complete the "Request for Evaluation of Transfer of Credits" form that can be provided to you by your advisor. For courses to be considered for transfer; students must arrange to have official transcripts sent to RVCC.

FYI: the program director has initiated the request for transfer review for Fall '25 students. If you complete any course work at another college during Summer '25 or later, please make sure to communicate with your advisor and plan to have an official transcript sent to the college for additional credit review.

Student Advising

Upon admission (matriculation) into the PTA program, you were assigned the PTA Program Director Kim-Laura Boyle, PT, DPT as your advisor. If you are experiencing any difficulties with any of your courses, please bring this to the attention of your advisor. On occasion, you may be referred to another advisor for assistance.

It is your responsibility to maintain communication with the advisor, and to keep track of all courses in the PTA curriculum. It's a good idea to touch base with your advisor at least once a semester.

All hard copies of semester course registration forms are signed by the Program Director. Course registration can also be done electronically via SIS (Student Information System) (without advisor's signature).

Program Hour Requirements

Incoming students are encouraged to look over the expanded program map on a following page with a bit more focus. The list of courses is the same as above in the program map. Please note that class/lab hours are reflected as "hours per week" but some courses are not held over the full semester so the course may require more hours per week for fewer weeks. It is also important to pay attention to the number of "in school hours" in the right hand column. This reflects the number of hours students are in class or lab. It does not include additional hours students may be required to be on campus for activities scheduled outside of the class or lab (e.g. practical exam testing, extra credit activities, time used to practice hands-on skills with equipment, etc.).

Each course syllabus will outline expected study times for students. The formula used is roughly 2-3 hours of outside of class study time for each credit hour. For example, a 3 credit course will require approximately 6-9 hours of time outside of class hours, while a 4 credit course will require 8-12. For any hands on lab course, you will need to schedule additional time to practice hands on skills with classmates.

Students who plan to work at the same time they are in the PTA program are cautioned about over-committing to work. Lack of sufficient study time is the major reason students are not successful in the program. For example, in the first semester, students should be committing 72 hours/wk to the program. We caution students to not plan to work more than 12-15 hours/wk.

Students who decide to work more hours than recommended are strongly advised to back off to a 3-year plan. Please discuss your plans with Program Director, Kim-Laura Boyle, PT, DPT

RVCC PTA 2 Year Program of Study

First Year - Fall Semester	<u>CLASS</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>CR</u>	<u>Weekly in school</u>	<u>Total hours to commit to program:</u>
BIOL 201R Anatomy & Physiology I	3	3	4	6	24 hours in school + 48 hours studying at home and practicing in lab 72 hours/wk
ENGL 102R College Composition I	4	0	4	4	
AHLT 104R Intro to OT/PT	1	0	1	1	
AHLT 112R Clinical Conditions for OT/PT/MT	3	0	3	3	
AHLT 135R Activities of Daily Living	3	3	3	5	
PTAC 112R Physical Therapy Procedures I	2	3	3	5	
	2			24 hours	
First Year – Spring Semester					
MATH xxxR Math Elective	4	0	4	4	25 hours in school + 50 hours studying at home and practicing in lab 75 hours/wk
BIOL 202R Anatomy & Physiology II	3	3	4	6	
AHLT 123R * Functional Kinesiology	2	3	3	5	
PTAC 115R Therapeutic Exercise	2	3	3	5	
PTAC 122R Physical Therapy Procedures II	2	3	3	5	
				25 hours	
First Year - Summer Semester					
PTAC 190R Clinical Ed. Experience I (304 hours) (8 wks)	0	0	6	40	41 hours in clinic/ School + 10 hours homework 51 hours/wk
PTAC 192R Clinical Ed. Experience I Seminar # (8 hours x 2 days)	1	0	1	1	
				41 hours	
Second Year - Fall Semester					
PSYC 114R Human Development	3	0	3	3	22 hours in school + 44 hours studying/in lab practicing 66 hours/wk
HUMA xxxR Humanities/Fine Arts/World Language	3	0	3	3	
PSYC 101R Introduction to Psychology	3	0	3	3	
AHLT 210R PT/OT Management #	2	0	2	2	
AHLT 220R Clinical Neurology #	2	0	3	3	
PTAC 221R Clinical Neurology Lab for the PTA	0	3	1	3	
PTAC 211R Physical Therapy Procedures III #	2	3	3	5	
				22 hours	

Second Year - Spring Semester PTAC 250R Clinical Education Seminar# (8 hours x 8 days approx) PTAC 292R Clinical Ed. Experience II (40 hours/wk x 10wks = 400 hours) #	2 0	0 0	4 8	2 <u>40</u> 42 hours	42 hours in clinic/school + 10 hours homework 52 hours/wk
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Dual Degree:

Those interested in information on the Dual Degree (OTA/PTA dual Associates degrees) option should speak with the Program Director. Planning is critical for appropriate scheduling of classes, particularly with regards to the planning of PTA Clinical Practicum/OTA Fieldwork experiences. Please note that scheduling of the dual degree plan should consider the implications of graduation on ability for students to sit for their national board exam. The PTA Board exam is offered on fixed-dates four times per year, the OTA Board exam is offered on an as-scheduled basis. The timing of the national boards should be considered when planning as graduation dates for each program will vary depending on which degree students plan to complete first. Students interested in the dual-degree will need to plan a three-year program if they do not have general education courses already taken. This option is manageable for academically strong students.

Advice from Recent Students

- Start a folder for important documents, such as the program map for each semester, and paperwork for your clinical rotations (CPR card & immunization records).
- Know when your CPR certification expires and take advantage of the CPR offered through the school. Don't wait until the last minute! Remember to look only for American Heart Association CPR refresher courses.
- Everyone told me that this program was hard, I'm a good student and never had difficulty with "hard" courses in the past – this is different! They mean it when they say it's hard.
- Join study groups; sometimes studying with friends is not the best but instead find people who study the same way you do.
- Organize your notebooks starting the first day of classes. The best notebooks are 3-ring binders. 3-hole punch all handouts and put them in your notebooks. Invest in some divider tabs to organize your notebook.
- Read the syllabus! PRINT OUT the course calendar and keep it in your notebook.
- Invest in a day planner or use a calendar on your phone/computer to help you keep track of assignment due dates, test schedules, etc.
- Check your college email – some stuff you can ignore but make sure you are reading things from your faculty.
- Go to class every day. Take notes, ask questions, be involved.
- Do the required reading.
- Talk with your teachers if you are having a problem. They are willing to work with

you if you ask for help and hold up your end of the bargain.

- Schedule time to be here on campus to practice hands on skills, not just for tests and practicals but also to keep previously learned skills up to expectations. The lab schedule is on the door to let you know when open lab hours are available.

Textbooks and Course Materials

Students can purchase books via the college bookstore or via internet sources. Pay attention to if used books are allowed, in some cases faculty will require new books (such as the Functional Kinesiology workbook). It is not recommended that you rent your required PTAC textbooks as they may be used in multiple semesters and/or will be important resources for use during clinicals and during study for the Board Exam. Students can find the list of books and other equipment requirements for each course via the bookstore: <https://www.rivervalley.edu/current-students/bookstore/> You will need the alpha-numeric course numbers to search for books. Be sure to check lecture and lab sections. In some cases, there will be no required textbook, the faculty are working hard to find as much open educational resources (free/low cost) as possible.

As mentioned above, many of the textbooks and lab manuals you purchase will become references for you during the program, as you study for the licensure exam, and long after graduation. In fact, the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy compiled a list of the most commonly used textbooks in PTA programs that the RVCC program faculty consult regularly. This list is used to determine what should be tested on the licensure exam. Your faculty strongly recommends retaining these books rather than selling them back at the end of the semester.

Accessibility Services

Students with disabilities may have had accommodations during public schooling via an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that was initiated by a teacher or parent. At the college level, students are responsible for requesting accommodations (Individual Reasonable Accommodation Plans – IRAP) each semester and presenting the approved, current, accommodation plan to each faculty member. No accommodations will be provided otherwise. Accommodations are not retroactive so students are encouraged to meet with the Accessibility Coordinator early. It is important to note that IRAP will not limit the essential skills required of the profession and may not be recognized during Clinical Practicums (more information on this will be covered later).

More information is available on the RVCC website: <https://www.rivervalley.edu/student-support/on-campus-resources/accessibility-disability-services/>

Pregnancy & Parenting Accommodations

The PTA Program follows the RVCC policy related to pregnancy and parenting for didactic courses: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/pregnancy-and-parenting-accommodations> Pregnancy accommodations related to clinical practicum courses will be discussed later in this handbook.

Essential Skills & Technical Standards

When you applied to the PTA program, the following information was in the PTA Program Application Packet. At that time, you signed the “Essential Skills” Form and turned it in. Please read it over again. **If anything has changed since the first time you signed the form, please meet with the program director to update your form.**

Essential Skills/Technical Standards for Applicants to the River Valley Community College Physical Therapist Assistant Program

Decisions made by the applicant to this educational program for physical therapist assistants should be made with consideration of the following essential skills. The physical therapist assistant (PTA) is the technically trained person in physical therapy, providing physical therapy interventions after a physical therapist has examined and evaluated the patient and established a treatment plan. The following standards reflect reasonable expectations of the PTA student for the performance of common physical therapy functions. These standards do not reflect all that may be required for employment of the graduate PTA.

In adopting these standards, the Physical Therapist Assistant Program is mindful of the patient's right to safe and quality health care by our students and graduates. The PTA student must be able to apply the knowledge and skills necessary to function in a broad variety of clinical situations while providing the spectrum of physical therapy treatments. Each candidate in this Associate in Science degree program must have the ability to learn and perform the following competencies and skills:

Essential Skills Required

Students must possess the following abilities or be able to perform the skills using compensatory techniques and/or adaptive devices. These essential abilities include:

Physical Skills:

- The ability to safely bend, twist, and lift to assist a patient moving from one surface to another.
- The ability to apply manual resistance to a patient's arm, leg or trunk during exercise.
- The ability to perform chest compressions necessary for CPR.
- The coordination, balance, and strength to safely guard and protect a patient negotiating stairs with an assistive device.

- The ability to crouch, kneel, reach, push/pull, and crawl to perform exercises with patients.
- The ability to climb when instructing or assisting a patient on the stairs.
- The agility to move quickly to ensure patient safety.
- The physical capacity to work a 40-hour week during clinical affiliations.
- Sufficient manual dexterity to safely grasp and manipulate small objects and dials.
- The ability to identify color changes on the skin.
- The ability to visually observe and assess a patient 10 feet away.
- The visual acuity to set and read scales, dials and digital displays on equipment, and to read from the medical record.
- The ability to respond quickly to a visual or auditory timer.
- The ability to respond quickly to a patient call button (visual or auditory).
- The ability to assess heart and lung sounds.
- The ability to respond to monitors, calls for assistance, timers, and verbal directions.
- The ability to detect odors such as equipment burning, smoke, spills, environmental hazards, and pathophysiological conditions.
- The ability to assess pulse, muscle tone, and bony landmarks.
- The ability to use writing instruments for documentation.
- The ability to navigate software programs on a computer for electronic medical records.

Cognitive/Behavioral Skills

- The ability to collect and integrate data about patients to problem solve safely and effectively as a PTA student.
- The ability to handle the emotional stress of working with patients in need of compassionate health care.
- The ability to read and comprehend patient information.
- The ability to prioritize and manage multiple tasks simultaneously.
- The ability to interact effectively with patients, families, supervisors, and co-workers regardless of their race, sex, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, sexual orientation, or disability.
- The ability to maintain personal hygiene consistent with the close personal contact associated with patient care.
- To abide by the policies and procedures of RVCC, as detailed in the RVCC Student Handbook, and policies of the PTA Program.
- To render assistance to individuals of all cultures from across the lifespan without prejudice.

- To comprehend and effectively communicate in the English language (orally and in writing), using appropriate grammar and vocabulary.
- The ability to portray professional behavior in all areas, including professional presentation, academic and professional responsibility, ethics, and commitment to learning.

Applicants to the Physical Therapist Assistant Program who have questions or concerns about these requirements are encouraged to contact the director of the Physical Therapist Assistant Program. The director can be called at (603) 542-7744 x5434, or contacted via email at kboyle@ccsnh.edu.

If there have been changes in your abilities to perform these skills, please meet with the Program Director, Kim-Laura Boyle, PT, DPT to discuss any changes and update your form. Failure to disclose changes to your abilities may necessitate removal from the program and/or prevention of attending clinical practicum.

Attendance Policy

The PTA program follows the course attendance policy as per the Student Handbook: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/attendance-policy> including a policy related to absence related to observations of religious holidays: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/absence-due-to-religious-observation>

The PTA program has in place additional guidelines for all PTA students which will be clearly outlined in the course syllabus. Instructors will take attendance at the start of each scheduled class/lab. Students are responsible for making up any missed material due to absence and are expected to talk with classmates to gain access to missing class notes.

The following policies relate to professional courses in the PTA and OTA programs (identified with AHLT, OTA and PTA prefixes) and will be included in each course syllabus:

- Attendance (lecture and lab attendance are combined for one course):
 - 3 points deducted for every absence from class or lab
 - 1 point deducted for every occasion of arriving late or leaving early
 - Students missing more than 20% of the course is grounds for withdrawal from the course, with an AF issued by the instructor. See the college Student Handbook. Extenuating circumstances may be discussed with the instructor.
 - Attendance in PTA Clinical Education Experience courses: Students are expected to adhere to specific attendance policies for these courses. The student is directed to the program's ***Student Clinical Education Experience Handbook***.

Leave of Absence:

If a student experiences a serious medical event that requires they stop attending school for a period of time, the program follows the RVCC Leave of Absence Policy: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/medical-leave-policy-michelles-law> Upon return, the student will meet with the program director to plan how the course work will be made up and how the leave may impact progression through the program. Student will be required to show competency of any clinical skills if their leave interrupts clinical placement timing. The required clinical skills testing will be at the discretion of the faculty and will be communicated in writing. Retaking of clinical practical skills prior to going into the clinic will follow the PTA/OTA Failed Grade Policy listed below.

Dress Code Policy

Students will be introduced to the program dress code for the OTA and PTA programs during the first fall semester, program courses (AHLT, PTAC, and OCTA course prefixes). Students are given a one-month grace period in which they will not be docked professionalism points in courses. This grace period is established to help refine expectations of professional dress. By the end of September of the first year of professional courses, all PTA students will abide by this dress code below. If the PTA and OTA faculty change this date, you will be alerted. This policy is in effect for all asynchronous lecture courses as well as face to face courses. Lab courses will have their own dress code requirements as outlined in the individual course syllabus.

The program faculty endeavor to put forth a professional image and to help students learn and model what a professional image looks like for the typical therapy clinician. Therefore, it is required that PTA and OTA students appear in **business casual dress** for all professional course classroom/lecture activities, whether guests are present or not. The business casual wardrobe is the accepted form of dress in most clinical sites used for clinical education experiences/fieldwork experiences within the program.

PTA & OTA PROGRAM DRESS CODES

Dress code for classes should follow typical clinic dress and current healthcare safety expectations. This includes:

1. Professional style pants that are solid color, free of rips/tears – no jeans or leggings.
2. Plain long or short sleeved shirts or polo shirts without excessive decoration or fabric.
3. Sweaters, jackets or sweatshirts **without hoods** are allowed as long as the logo is small and contained to one chest pocket area. Jackets/sweatshirts that have “thumb holes” are not allowed.
4. Sneakers or other sturdy, close-toed/close-heeled shoes no higher than the ankle.
5. Jewelry that is small and simple and does not dangle
6. Fingernails clipped below the tops of the fingers. Nails must be natural or may be covered with unchipped regular or gel polish only.
7. Working wristwatch – Smart Watches must not be connected to email/text during class.

Dress code for labs will be at the determination of the instructor.

All clothing should cover undergarments and at no time should skin be visible from the abdominal, waist, or chest area.

Fragrance-Free Environment

River Valley Community College is committed to maintaining a healthy and inclusive academic environment for all. To support individuals with chemical sensitivities, asthma, allergies, or other medical conditions, we ask that everyone refrain from using scented products in the (program, classroom, etc.). This includes (but is not limited to) perfume, cologne, aftershave, scented lotions, highly-scented hair products, and highly-fragranced laundry detergents or fabric softeners. We ask that you avoid smoking right before entering the building and ensure your clothing and belongings are free of smoke odor. Thank you for your cooperation in helping us create a comfortable and accessible environment for all.

Policies related to dress code, as well as policies related to facial hair, tattoos, jewelry and piercings will vary at each clinic; you are expected to follow those policies during clinical rotations and employment. Please also keep in mind that visible tattoos and piercings may prohibit a clinical placement or hiring.

Consequences of failure to comply with this dress code policy will result in points being deducted from the professionalism portion of the final grade.

Revised August 2025

Cell Phone Usage

Students must have cell phones and other electronic devices turned off or in silent mode during all scheduled class and laboratory periods, and during practicum/fieldwork hours. Students will receive a verbal warning for the first offense, and a written warning for the second offense. Third offenses will result in sanctions determined by the instructor. All electronic devices will be turned off and stored in backpacks during all testing. Emergency situations where you might need to be available via cell phone should be discussed with your faculty member.

Note that faculty are required to carry cell-phones for technology authentication purposes. Students may use cell-phones for technology authentication and at the discretion and with permission of the faculty for academic purposes.

Professional Behavior Development

The institution has policies and procedures related to the performance and conduct of students, which include, but are not limited to: attendance, classroom behavior, sexual harassment, drugs and alcohol, and computer usage. As students preparing for a career in the allied health field, you are expected to behave in a responsible and professional manner in the classroom as well as in the clinic, using the college's Student Handbook as the guide. Students in the program shall be governed by these rights and responsibilities. Please refer to the RVCC Student Handbook and/or the RVCC College Catalog for details. <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/student-handbook>

In addition to the rights and responsibilities identified by the institution, students in the PTA program shall also be governed by the following professional behavior guidelines: the American Physical Therapy Association's Standards of Ethical Conduct for the Physical Therapist Assistant (identifies basic expected ethical behaviors) and the American Physical Therapy Association's Guide for Conduct of the Physical Therapist Assistant (helps to interpret the Standards of Ethical Conduct document). See Appendix. These documents will be reviewed during AHLT 104R – Introduction to Occupational and Physical Therapy.

Two of the twelve **PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM**

Goals/Competencies (found on earlier pages) deal with professional behavior:

- Integrate into practice the Guidelines for Ethical Conduct/Standards of Practice for PTAs in an effort to assure safe and proper conduct for all interactions within the profession.
- Identify and demonstrate consistent behavior of interactions and teaching healthcare professionals, patients, and their families while providing the desired psychosocial support among diverse populations.

Through consistent standards and expectations, modeling of appropriate professional behavior by faculty and staff, discussion, assignments and mentoring, the PTA student is expected to also demonstrate professional behavior. Through the use of an assessment tool, the student will be asked to reflect on professional behavior strengths and weaknesses, and to create goals and strategies to improve areas of weakness. The PTA faculty will also have an opportunity to give feedback to the student. Professional behavior will usually be a factor in final grades of professional courses as outlined in the course syllabus.

Professional expectations also extend beyond AHLT and PTAC courses and clinical environments. Students are expected to engage professionally with all faculty and staff at the college. Behaviors which are deemed unprofessional by members of the college community, and reported to program faculty, will have grade consequences as part of the professionalism grade in at least one programmatic course in the semester in which the behavior is reported.

Alcohol, Controlled Substances, & Illegal Drugs

Substance Abuse in Classroom/Laboratory Settings:

The program follows the RVCC Drug Free Workplace policy outlined in the Student Handbook: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/drug-free-workplace-drug-free-schools-and-communities> If impaired behaviors are observed in the classroom setting, the procedures of the college policy related to student conduct are followed

Substance Abuse During Clinical Education:

In the event a student is intoxicated or under the influence of illegal substances during the clinical experience, policies are in place outlining the responsibilities of the college and the clinical facility (see contracts, riders and the Student Clinical Education Experience Handbook).

Prescription Medications:

In instances where a student may have a legal prescription for drugs that will show up on a drug test (pain medication or certain seizure medications), it is important to discuss this with the Director of Clinical Education, Amanda Couitt, PT, DPT as early as possible to ensure that correct process is followed prior to clinical placements. This may require students to provide proof of medication needs from their physicians and proof of a prescription **prior** to drug testing.

Medical/Recreational Use of Marijuana:

While many states may have passed laws regarding medical or recreational use of marijuana, it continues to be illegal to possess or use on a federal level. Therefore, employers can set their own policies on this issue. Employers have asked if they are required to accommodate marijuana use as a reasonable accommodation under disability law. Courts and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have consistently held that employers are not required to permit medical marijuana use as a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act. That was the same position courts had taken under state law even in states where marijuana use was legal. So, even if the student has a medical marijuana prescription, the clinical site can still prohibit the student from attending a clinical experience at that site.

CBD:

While CBD is not the same as marijuana, some CBD products do have small amounts of THC (the psychoactive component of marijuana) and CBD can legally be sold even with these small amounts of THC in them. Even these small amounts of TCH may cause a student to test positive on a drug test. Students need to be aware that drug tests can not differentiate between TCH in their system as a result of CBD cross-contamination or as a result of marijuana use.

Drug Testing:

Students must be aware that clinical sites may drug test employees (and will require same of students at the clinical site, though they are not employees). Students who have a positive drug test will be denied a clinical rotation until the next time that specific Clinical Practicum course is offered, provided they can pass a drug test at that time. They may also be referred to the Judicial Committee of the college.

Additional Information Related to Substance Abuse:

PTA students shall be aware of the following:

1. The college's Drug Free Workplace and Drug Free Schools and Communities statement (see college Student Handbook).
2. The legal use of medications or drugs prescribed by a licensed practitioner is permitted provided that such use does not adversely affect the student's performance or endanger the health and/or safety of others.
3. The school will maintain the confidentiality of all records and information related to the student's suspected abuse.
4. The PTA faculty will assist students desiring to address a substance abuse problem.
5. A student who refuses to comply with substance abuse policy/procedure will be subject to dismissal from the PTA Program.

Grading Policy

The college's Student Handbook <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/student-handbook> has information regarding college grading policies under the tab titled "Grading." In this section, students can find information on grading systems, the grade appeal process and academic standards. Additionally, this section outlines further detail regarding "in good standing", "probation", "suspension" and "dismissal". Students in the PTA program are subject to that policy.

PTA students are subject to additional grading and academic probation policies set forth by the program to ensure the highest quality of graduates. Grades within the PTA program are obtained through quizzes, exams, laboratory exercises, homework assignments, practical tests of technical performance, and clinical educational experiences, in addition to attendance, participation, and professional behavior. Course syllabi outline specific policies for each course. The core liberal arts and program specific courses within the program are graded on the traditional ten-point scale.

Failed Grade Policy for PTA and OTA Programs

1. The PTA and OTA programs use a 10-point scale when assigning grades in all professional courses in the PTA or OTA programs. These courses are identified with an AHLC, PTAC or OCTA prefix. The 10-point scale used:

A 93 – 100	B- 80 – 82	D+ 67 – 69
A- 90 – 92	C+ 77 – 79	D 63 – 66
B+ 87 – 89	C 73 – 76	D- 60 – 62
B 83 – 86	C- 70 – 72	F Below 60

2. To remain in good standing in the college, the student must not be on academic probation or academic suspension. The Student Handbook explains the college's academic standards.
3. There are further expectations of students in the OTA or PTA program. To remain in good standing in the OTA or PTA program, students must demonstrate success in all coursework as defined by the following criteria:
 - a. Students who earn less than a "B-" grade for any professional course must repeat that course. Students who repeat the course for the second time and earn less than a "B-" grade will be suspended from the program for one semester.
 - b. Students who earn less than a "C" grade for any liberal arts course must repeat that course. Students who repeat the course for a second time and earn less than a "C" grade should refer to the Student Handbook policy. **See information below regarding reinstatement.**
 - c. Students who earn less than a "C" for any two courses during the same semester will be suspended from the program for one semester. **See information below regarding reinstatement.**
 - d. Within the professional courses, students may be required to complete hands-on practical examinations to demonstrate competencies. Students must pass each practical exam as defined by the instructor. Students who fail a practical examination must practice, come back and re-test. Failure of a practical examination includes any grade less than 80%.

When the student repeats a practical the exam and successfully completes it, the recorded grade will be an average of the failed and successfully completed practicals.

If the student is unable to successfully complete a practical exam after 2 attempts, the student will need to complete a 1:1 review with the instructor. The amount of review time will be determined by the instructor, not to exceed two hours.

A student who is unable to successfully complete a practical exam after 3 attempts will earn a 69 (= F) for the course and will need to repeat the course.

A PTA student who is not successful on the third attempt of a comprehensive practical will receive a 69 (= F) grade for the applicable course (PTAC122R or PTAC211R), and will have to retake the course the next time it is offered. The student will not progress, nor be able to register for PTAC190R or PTAC292R.

4. **Reinstatement:** As per the college Student Handbook, students suspended from the PTA or OTA program:
 - a. may continue to take non-PTA or OTA professional courses outside of the program, as non-matriculated students.

- b. must show evidence of having successfully completed 2 three-credit courses with a “C” or better grade before reapplying for matriculation into the PTA or OTA program.
- c. As per the college Student Handbook, suspended students can re-apply to the PTA or OTA program after 1 semester. Reinstatement is not automatic and is based on space availability. The applications from suspended students will be managed by the same deadline and/or selection process as all applicants to the OTA or PTA program.
- d. The re-testing of competencies is required after a leave of absence. Students matriculated back into the PTA or OTA program will be required to repeat all practical tests from successfully completed professional courses (designated with AHLT, and PTAC or OCTA prefixes) before registering for other professional courses.
- e. A student who withdraws or is suspended/dismissed from the program may request reinstatement only once. A student suspended/dismissed from the program or withdrew for academic reasons a second time, may not return to the program.
- f. Students will be dismissed from the OTA or PTA program if the student has been found in violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Students dismissed from the program for these behaviors may not re-apply to the program.
- g. The policy for reinstatement to the PTA or OTA program will include conditions for reinstatement that will be determined by program faculty at the time a student is dismissed from the program. The student will receive a letter from the Program Director outlining the conditions and procedures for reinstatement to the program. The student will be required to sign a statement of understanding of the conditions. Prior to reinstatement, the program director will determine if the conditions for reinstatement were met. Students satisfying the conditions for reinstatement will be allowed to return to the program if or when space is available. If the conditions are not satisfied, the student may not be permitted to return.

Revised August 2025

Academic Integrity

The public expects its healthcare workers to be of good moral character and to be competent in their jobs. Good moral character includes honesty and integrity. We expect all students in the program to live up to those ideals. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. There are several documents that guide the student in this area:

- College Student Handbook: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/academic-integrity>

- Student Code of Conduct Section C: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/student-code-of-conduct>
- American Physical Therapy Association's Standards of Conduct for the Physical Therapist Assistant Standard 4a (see Appendix)

Academic Integrity Policy

The OTA and PTA Programs follow the College's policies on academic integrity, including but not limited to plagiarism and cheating. All students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and ethical behavior in their work. For details on the College's Academic Integrity Policy, please refer to the following link: <http://catalog.rivervalley.edu/academic-integrity>

Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity Policy

The public expects its healthcare workers to be competent in their jobs and ethical in their approaches. Faculty in the rehabilitation services department expect all students to live up to those ideals. Students are expected to complete all assignments, projects, exams, and other assessments using their own knowledge and skills.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as chatbots, text generators, or other generative AI-assisted technologies) to complete or generate any part of coursework, unless explicitly permitted by the instructor, constitutes academic dishonesty and will be addressed according to the college policy for cheating and plagiarism. If a student presents AI-generated content as their own original work, it will be treated as plagiarism. Tools that simply identify errors in spelling, grammar, and sentence structure without automatically changing the content of the paper are generally acceptable.

Examples of prohibited use of AI includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting AI-generated work as one's own
- Submitting AI-generated work without citation
- Using AI to generate any or all components of assignments, essays, or projects that are presented as the students' original student work.
- Using AI to circumvent other learning or assessment processes.

Resources to guide students in this area:

- College Student Handbook: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/academic-integrity>
- Student Code of Conduct Section C: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/studentcode-of-conduct>
- American Occupational Therapy Association 2020 Code of Ethics (Appendix I)
- Standards of Ethical Conduct for Physical Therapist Assistants (Standard 4A)

Instructors in your courses may utilize Turnitin. Turnitin is a tool approved by the Community College System and is integrated into Canvas. Turnitin checks submissions for originality by comparing against a database of web content, student work, and other publications. It checks content to determine whether it appears to be human versus AI generated.

By checking the “end-user license agreement” box when submitting assignments in Canvas, you are consenting to the inclusion of your work in Turnitin’s database. If you do not consent you must contact your instructor to discuss the potential for alternative arrangements.

Students may also be asked to comply with a specific set of directions for the type of documents required for submission. Different instructors may have different requirements. For example, some instructors may require .docx, .pdf etc. It is the students’ responsibility to check the assignment requirements and submit in the correct document format.

Created August 2025 for implementation Fall 2025

Safety

Infectious Disease Policy: PTA/OTA

Students in the PTA and OTA programs will adhere to Universal Precautions, CDC guidelines and facility policy on infectious diseases when out on clinical fieldwork experiences. Instruction in these topics will be covered in the program. Additional instruction may occur as part of orientation to clinical practicum sites. As future healthcare workers, students understand that exposure to infectious disease is possible in their clinical fieldwork experiences.

Potential Hazards in the Profession:

As you begin your training for this profession, we also want to draw your attention to potential risks and hazards of the occupation. As a PTA you will be on your feet all day, and may be involved in moving or lifting patients. There is a risk of injury to you during these activities. Learning appropriate body mechanics and using assistive devices can help, but we cannot guarantee your safety. Please use good judgement in deciding whether to participate.

While it will be the clinical education site’s responsibility to assure adequate policies and plans are in effect to protect you, our job is to begin educating you on ways to avoid these hazards.

Students in the PTA program must also recognize that PTs and PTAs working in a physical therapy clinic are at risk for exposure to blood and other body fluids or a work environment that could lead to injury (e.g. slips, falls).

OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) recognizes that PTs and PTAs may be exposed to these potential hazards in the workplace:

- Exposure to hazardous chemicals.
- Exposure to bloodborne pathogens such as HIV, Hepatitis B, and C.
- Exposure of eyes or body to injurious corrosive materials.
- Exposure to wet surfaces and potential slips and falls.
- Lack of Personal Protective Equipment.

All students will be introduced to OSHA blood and body fluids safety standards. In addition, any clinical site will orient the student to specific policies and procedures regarding workplace safety. The student is also referred to the following website for more information: <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/hospital/expert/expert.html>

General Safety Information:

The college's Student Handbook covers general safety topics listed below. Students are responsible for reading this information and abiding by the information.

- Parking & Traffic Regulations: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/parking-traffic-regulations>
- Campus Security: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/campus-security>
- Incident Reports: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/incident-reports>
- Clery Act: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/clery-act-crime-statistics-reporting-a-crime-or-incident-on-campus>
- Drug Free Workplace: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/drug-free-workplace-drug-free-schools-and-communities>
- Codes of Conduct, Including Harassment: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/student-code-of-conduct>
- Safety and Fire Regulations (including fire drills): <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/safety-and-fire-regulations>
- Unattended Children: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/unattended-children-on-campus-policy>

Medical Care:

Though there is no formal health system within the college, there are many resources available in the area. Costs and eligibility requirements vary, so you are urged to call for this information in advance, if possible. Students are responsible for any costs incurred for medical transportation or medical services.

The College is located approximately one mile from a medical facility, Valley Regional Hospital. This facility is utilized for any emergency medical problems during the day or evening hours. The College is not responsible for the physical welfare of the student off-campus except as outlined in the Clinical Education Student Handbook,

In addition to the college's regulations, students in the PTA program are also governed by safety regulations in the program. Students in the PTA program should be aware of/follow these regulations identified below:

General Environment Safety:

- Walking areas will be uncluttered. Book bags, backpacks, etc. should be stored out of the travel areas.
- Treatment tables, chairs and equipment will be returned to their positions at the end of class/lab.
- Floors will be dry, and will be maintained with a non-skid wax.
- Emergency/evacuation plans will be posted by doors leading to hallways.
- All cleaning solutions will be appropriately labeled, including:
 - Name
 - Concentration
 - Date of expiration, if applicable
 - Manufacturer (if commercially purchased)
- First Aid Kit: A first aid kit is located in the PTA lab (room 205) on wall near the hand washing sink. The kit is inspected and restocked by a vendor company every three months. If additional supplies are needed, please go to the front office.

Lab Equipment Safety

- MSDS forms for commonly used substances within PTA program are available on the college's RVCC 100% Online MSDS desktop information link:
<https://msdsmanagement.msdsonline.com/ebinder/?SearchTerm=W&UserSearchSuggestID=0&DocumentSourceTypeID=0&DocumentApprovalTypeID=0&ArchivedStatus=A&LocationLevel=0&LocationID=0&LocationStatus=0&GroupID=0&IndexedDataTypeID=0&IndexedDataID=0&QuickFilterTypeID=0&ReturnNarrowResults=false&SmartSearchTermID=0&PageSize=100&PageNumber=1&SortFieldID=0&SortHow=desc&CustomSearchTerm>. The Maintenance department and program faculty can obtain other substances MSDS forms via www.MSDSonline.com. or www.ilpi.com.
- Linens will be folded neatly and stored in the store room.
- Plinths will be wiped down at the end of each lab session with a spray bottle of commercially available solution or hard surface cleaner.
- Soiled linens will be placed in the laundry hamper.
- All electrical treatment equipment will be maintained in safe operating condition, and tested annually for safety.
- Any faulty electrical equipment will be set aside, a note placed on it stating "Do Not Use", and will be repaired as soon as possible.
- Electrical equipment will be unplugged when not in use.
- Equipment manuals will be available for use in the PTA lab file drawer labeled "Modality Manuals".
- The hot pack machine will be emptied and cleaned each summer (more often as

needed).

- All equipment parts, lead wires, electrodes, etc. will be stored neatly near the appropriate machines.
- Extension cords will not be allowed for patient-related interventions.
- Food and drinks will not be allowed on any equipment.
- All electrical wires will be inspected for cracks, broken plugs, etc.
- All containers (lotion, etc.) are closed and safely stored.

Safety in the laboratory

PTA students in the program will have the opportunity to perform actual interventions on fellow classmates. In fact, to facilitate effective healthcare education, this practice is a necessity in order to fully grasp most didactic concepts. At all times during such interactions, students shall conduct themselves in an appropriate and safe manner. All students shall receive proper education from faculty or staff prior to use of laboratory equipment. This education shall come in the form of a general orientation and via specific orientation to equipment that pertains to didactic topics.

Healthcare education is enhanced by the active participation of all students in the classroom and laboratory. It is expected that all students will volunteer to participate in both the PTA role and the mock patient role. If religious or ethical beliefs or medical conditions preclude a student from doing so, that student must inform a member of the PTA program faculty.

When performed improperly, interventions (such as manual therapies, modalities, etc.) may cause harm to one's health. PTA students should not perform any intervention without proper faculty instruction and supervision in the classroom and laboratory settings.

Students shall always act in a safe, responsible manner and immediately alert a faculty member if an injury or unsafe situation arises.

Students participating as mock patient

Students who are participating as mock patients during laboratory and clinical experiences are to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. If medical conditions preclude a student from participating as a mock patient, that student must inform a member of the PTA program faculty. Regardless of setting, subjects and evaluators must never jeopardize the safety of themselves or others. All laboratory and clinical site rules must be adhered to. All PTA program students shall be made aware of this policy.

Non-students participating as mock patients

Non-students who are participating as mock patient during laboratory and clinical experiences are to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. Regardless of setting, subjects and evaluators must never jeopardize the safety of themselves or others. It

shall be the policy of the program that non-students sign a waiver outlining their rights and responsibilities as a mock patient.

Multimedia Recordings

At times in healthcare education it is necessary to videotape, audiotape, photograph and/or otherwise image individuals for instructional purposes. Any product of these practices is to be used only for the purposes of healthcare education. They may not be sold, copied or otherwise distributed including uploaded to media sharing sites or social media sites. Students will give their permission if their likeness will be used for any purpose.

Supervision in the lab:

The PTA faculty will make every effort to provide opportunities for students to practice skills related to course work outside of regularly schedule lab times. Generally, these are during normal business hours when other PTA classes are not scheduled. Students are directed to the “room in use” schedule outside the lab door, room 205.

The presence of the PTA program faculty (licensed PTs) during practice of skills, and the ability of a student to practice skills is dependent upon the following guidelines.

- Students may never use equipment in the laboratory that has not been included in a lecture or laboratory session. For example, if students have not had lecture or laboratory instruction in electrical stimulation, then those students should not, under any circumstances, use that equipment.
- A PTA faculty member must be available for **direct, personal supervision** (defined in the NH Physical Therapy Rules 302.04 as “the supervisor is physically present and can observe, direct and supervise tasks related to client management continuously throughout the time that the tasks are performed”) when students are practicing “real” electrical stimulation, mechanical traction or ultrasound interventions in the laboratory, but have not yet successfully passed the hands-on competency testing for the interventions. Only under these conditions (directly supervised by a faculty) may a student:
 - plug in any electrical stimulation, mechanical traction or ultrasound machines, and
 - attach the electrical leads to the device, attach the electrical leads to electrodes, attach the electrodes to self or peer, and press the “start” button on any device, or
 - apply ultrasound gel to the skin and press the “start” button which begins real intervention. When practicing ultrasound interventions, students will keep the intensity at or below $0.5\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$, and limit the timer to 2 minutes.

- If a PTA faculty member is not available for **direct, personal supervision** (defined in the NH PT Rules 302.04 above):
 - students may only plug in and turn on any electrical stimulation, traction or ultrasound machine in order to practice setting up the machine parameters. Whenever the machine is plugged in and turned on, students **may not** attach the electrical leads to the device at the same time as they have also attached the electrical leads to the electrodes, attached the electrodes to self or peer, or pressed the “start” button on any device.
 - students are allowed to apply ultrasound gel to the skin and practice moving the transducer head on the skin, but may not press the “start” button which begins real intervention.

- The PTA faculty must provide **direct supervision** under the situations listed below. Direct supervision is defined in the NH Physical Therapy Rules 302.05 as the “physical therapist is physically present and immediately available for direction and supervision”. For our purposes “physically present” is interpreted to mean “in the building”.
 - Once a student has successfully passed a practical hands-on test of the electrotherapy, traction or ultrasound interventions, the student is encouraged to continue practicing the skill. The student is required to ask permission of the PTA program faculty to use the equipment, and is required to assure no contraindications are present prior to using the equipment with proper precautions and safe technique. When practicing ultrasound interventions, students will keep the intensity at or below $0.5\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$, and limit the timer to 2 minutes.
 - Students who have been in the appropriate lecture/lab session regarding hot and cold packs, paraffin, ice massage and other non-electrical/ultrasound modalities and equipment, may use/practice these interventions, provided that proper precautions, contraindications and safety procedures are followed. Students must request permission of the PTA program faculty to practice with these interventions.

- The PTA faculty do not need to be on site or give permission under the situations listed below. In all of these situations, students are practicing on healthy self or peers.
 - Students wishing to practice bed mobility, goniometry, manual muscle testing, massage.
 - Students wishing to practice gait training on level surface and stairs, transfer training, and balance or other therapeutic exercise activities. Students practicing these skills will always properly guarding the mock patient and use a gait belt.
 - Students wishing to use the laboratory as a quiet place to study.

These laboratory usage rules shall be posted in the PTA laboratory.

Off Campus Educational Experiences

From time to time, students may be scheduled to attend off-campus educational experiences, such as off-campus laboratories, observation experiences or field trips. Students are expected to represent the PTA program and the college with professionalism in both appearance and behavior. The instructor for the off-campus activity will assure that all students have read and signed the required form: *“Assumption of Risk and Liability Release for On or Off Campus Activity”*.

Students also attend two Clinical Education Experience courses during matriculation in the PTA program. These courses take place in PT clinics with the student providing interventions to patients under the supervision of a PTA or PT. Contractual agreements between the clinic and the college are completed beforehand. These contracts identify who is responsible for student safety in the clinic. Off-campus clinical sites shall be screened by the faculty/staff to ensure, to the best of the program’s ability, that off-campus environments are safe. All students will also be covered by a blanket malpractice liability policy. Students are encouraged to report any witnessed unsafe behaviors at an off-campus clinical education site to any member of the PTA program faculty. Again, students are expected to abide by all safety policies in the clinic.

Students have the right to expect the same level of safety they would find in on-campus educational experiences, regardless of whether they are clinical education courses or field trips. If a student feels at any time that he or she has been placed in an unsafe situation in an off-campus environment, that student has the right to remove himself/herself from that location. The student then has a responsibility to inform a member of the program faculty of the unsafe situation.

Students shall be prepared and responsible for their own safe behavior by reading and familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook, this manual and the Clinical Education Experience Handbook (will be provided to student).

The program faculty will arrange a brief safety orientation at each off-campus facility the students are required to attend for any off-campus scheduled activity (other than Clinical Education Experience courses). This should include the location of exits, fire and emergency procedures, and any other pertinent safety information.

Access to Emergency Services

Students in off-campus educational experiences have the right to access emergency services if necessary. The student shall be responsible for the cost of emergency services.

PTA Program Health Policy

Surgery/Medical Conditions:

In the event that a student has surgery, a hospitalization or emergency room visit, a significant change in medical status, or becomes pregnant, the student must notify the program director immediately. The program director requires that the student have permission from his/her medical physician to participate in class, laboratory or clinical experiences. Please note that certain medical conditions may require the postponement or rescheduling of class, laboratory or clinical experiences and can result in a later completion of the program/graduation. Students will be directed to the Accommodation Coordinator for any event that impacts participation in class.

If an injury occurs in the clinical education setting, students may be required by the facility to seek medical attention for that injury; the financial responsibility will still belong to the student (whether by personal health insurance or by personal payment).

All new students entering the PTA program will be educated regarding proper procedures to follow when handling potentially infectious materials.

A statement of acknowledgment will be signed by all incoming students stating that hazards are recognized and safety precautions are understood.

Frequent hand washing will be enforced, and is expected prior to any practical exam and prior to contact with patients in the clinical setting.

Gloves (latex or latex-free) are mandatory for all procedures in which biologically potentially hazardous materials (blood and other body fluids) are being handled.

Students will recognize situations during the clinical education affiliation when aerosol or droplet transmission might be present, and will utilize correct mask and eye wear protection.

Immunizations

RVCC has a standard immunization policy outlined in the Student Handbook which the PTA program follows: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/immunization-policy> More information on Immunization requirements will be discussed later in this Handbook under the Clinical Education section.

Programmatic Teaching of Safety Skills

In many of the professional courses (with AHLT or PTAC prefixes), you will have hands-on exams, called practical exams, in addition to written tests, quizzes and homework. These hands-on exams test that you can do the manual skills required of a PTA student or graduate in the clinic. The table on the following page shows the professional course and the topics included in the laboratory practical exams. The **bold font** items identify the safety/critical skills that must be demonstrated. In many instances, failure to perform these bold-faced safety skills competently will result in a failure of that practical.

Course	Practical Exam Topics
PTAC 112 PT Procedures I	Preparation of self Preparation of space Preparation of patient: explanations, positioning Pain assessment Sensory assessment Therapeutic heat and cold Ultrasound Electrotherapy Transdermal drug delivery Traction Biofeedback Intermittent external compression Hand-washing Draping Contraindications for modalities Patient safety during application of modalities (e.g. skin checks)
AHLT 135 Foundations of Rehabilitation	Body Mechanics Bed positioning Bed mobility Transfers Guarding Ambulatory aids Functional mobility Wheelchair competency Hand-washing Use of gait belt Proper guarding and transfer technique Patient wearing appropriate footwear Applies wheelchair brakes Instructs in weight-bearing status
PTAC 122 PT Procedures II	Goniometry Osteokinematics Manual Muscle Testing of foot/ankle, knee, hip/pelvis, spine, shoulder, elbow/forearm, wrist and hand, face Gait training, guarding and gait analysis Soft tissue management: e.g. therapeutic massage and other manual techniques Hand-washing Inter-tester reliability in goniometry and manual muscle testing Locking brakes on wheelchair Correct fitting of ambulatory aids Proper guarding during transfers and gait training Correct instruction on use of ambulatory aid, weight bear status and gait training Contraindications for massage

PTAC 114 Therapeutic Exercise	ROM Stretching exercises Strengthening exercises and progressions Balance and coordination exercises and progressions Aerobic conditioning exercises and progressions Neuromuscular control/stabilization exercises and progressions Return to function exercises and progressions Plyometrics and progressions and progressions Core stabilization exercises and progressions Hand washing Contraindications Use of gait belt Proper guarding Safe progressions
PTAC 211 PT Procedures III	PNF Amputation/prosthetics and exercise progressions Residual lower extremity wrapping Wound care Postural drainage Create a sterile field in wound care Contraindications for postural drainage
AHLT 221 – Clinical Neurology Lab for the PTA	Assessment and data collection related to nervous system structures Rehabilitation of specific conditions (SCI, TBI, Stroke, Sensory deficits, Motor deficits) Rehabilitation by treatment approach (PNF, NDT, Nerve Glides) Hand washing Contraindications of treatment Proper guarding & safety

In addition to the laboratory-based courses listed above, there are safety/critical skills during the two clinical education courses. The **bold font** items identify the safety/critical skills that must be demonstrated.

Course	Safety/critical skills
PTAC 190 Clinical Educational Experience I	Professional behavior/attitude; safety
PTAC 292 Clinical Educational Experience II	Professional behavior/attitude; safety

Complaints / Grievance Policy

Students having a grievance against the PTA program or faculty will follow the Grievance Procedures (<https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/student-rights-grievance-procedures>) or the Grade Appeal process (<https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/grade-appeal-process>) as outlined in the college's Student Handbook.

Complaints from the community about the PTA program, the general quality of the curriculum, the general performance of students or faculty, and practical preparation of the student should first be addressed to the PTA Program Director via the webform found on the program webpage.

Should the complaints include the behavior or performance of the Program Director, the complaints should be addressed to the Chairperson of the Rehabilitation Services department or alternately, the Vice President of Student and Academic Affairs.

The person receiving the complaint will be responsible for conducting a thorough investigation of the complaint and evaluation of the problem as it has been described. Any personnel on campus will be involved in this process to the extent that their input would aid in the resolution of the concern. The complaining party will be kept apprised of the process as it evolves and will be notified of the ultimate resolution of the concern in a timely fashion (excepting in cases of confidentiality). A record of the complaint, the ensuing evaluation and investigation process and the ultimate resolution of the complaint will be retained in the Program Director's files with a copy sent to the Chairperson of the Rehabilitation Services Department

Criminal / Sexual Offender Background/Drug Testing Information

Criminal Background Check Policy

Background check and drug testing are required by many facilities prior to Work Based Learning (WBL) experiences. Failure to undergo a background check/drug testing prior to an assigned work-based learning experience may result in inability to progress in a program. Should an agency refuse to place a student based on the outcome of the background check, the college/program shall have no responsibility for arranging an alternate clinical/ fieldwork or practicum placement. Students may appeal the decision and will be given the opportunity to present information to dispute the background check. Students must agree that all results will be available to the program and the sites associated with the program. The background/drug check may be required several times during a two-year program and may be required for employment and/or licensure and/or certification. Cost for the background/drug check will be the responsibility of the student. Students should work with their Program Directors or the Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education for assistance. Note: some agencies require a state and federal background check.

Certain convictions in a court of law may also prohibit eligibility for PTA licensure. The student is strongly encouraged to discuss questions or concerns with the PTA faculty as soon as possible. Let's not waste your time and money.

Student Mailboxes

It is standard operating procedure in the program for all tests, homework, notices, messages, etc. to be returned to students via the student mailboxes (hanging files). These are located in the file cabinet in the PTA lab. These mailboxes are not secure. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. It is expected though, that students will not go through anyone else's mail box. If you prefer to have your papers returned to you in person rather than through the mailbox process, please put your request in writing to the Program Director, Kim-Laura Boyle, PT, DPT. You will also be asked to periodically submit paperwork to your electronic mailbox in Canvas, these too are visible to others and you are strongly encouraged to only work in your own mailbox.

Employment within a Physical Therapy Department

Students who seek regular employment in physical therapy departments and clinics as physical therapy aides must be aware of the legal ramifications. A physical therapist assistant student working as a physical therapy aide:

- is acting as an independent agent, not as a representative of the River Valley Community College
- may not wear a River Valley Community College name tag
- is not covered by the River Valley Community College liability policy.
- may not sign physical therapy notes
- is not acting in an official capacity as a physical therapist assistant student, but rather as a physical therapy aide
- may provide service only to the extent allowed by state statutes, rules and regulations.

For further information on the legal definition and permissible roles for a physical therapy aide refer to that state's Statutes (Practice Act) and Rules relating to Physical Therapy. To find that information, the reader is directed to www.fsbpt.org. Click on "licensing authorities". Scroll down to the state of interest and follow information for "contacts" or "website". Information on the scope and role of the Rehabilitation Aide will also be provided in AHLT 104R – Introduction to OT/PT.

Retention & Remediation

The faculty of the PTA program support and encourage student success. Simply "getting by" by performing only the minimum required work will not fully prepare you for the national exam. Patients may not be safe in your care if your goal is just to "get by". Don't waste your time and money by just "getting by". You are expected to perform to the best of your abilities, with excellence as your goal. Following these guidelines will help increase your chances of success in the program, on the national exam and in the clinic.

To help decrease the number of students requiring academic probation, the PTA program's retention and remediation plan includes the following elements:

Orientation:

All new PTA students are strongly encouraged to participate in the college's Orientation program. The program faculty feel that the orientation serves to start students on a solid foundation. All students are required to attend the PTA program orientation prior to the start of their first year if they are on a full-time (2 year) pathway, and prior to the start of their second year if they are on a part-time (3 year) pathway.

Advising:

PTA students are assigned to a full-time faculty advisor, Kim-Laura Boyle, PT, DPT, the Program Director upon enrollment in the program. The advisor is there to assist not only with academic planning, but also to talk to regarding any other situations that impact your participation in the program. While Dr. Boyle has an open door, drop-in policy, it is always best to schedule an appointment to discuss specific issues to ensure there is enough time to address any concerns fully.

Tutoring/Office Hours:

The college has an Advising, Career, and Tutoring Center (the ACT Center) located on the first floor of the Claremont building) which is a free service to all enrolled students. In addition, students are encouraged to meet with faculty instructors as needed during office hours. Tutoring requests can be made online:

<https://www.rivervalley.edu/student-support/tutoring/>

Body Mechanics (PTA) Club:

All students enrolled in the PTA program are encouraged to participate in the Body Mechanics Club. The purposes of the club are to support the students and to promote the profession. This student-run club will be organized and meet at the discretion of student members and with support from club advisor, program director Kim Boyle. The club must follow policies and procedures outlined by the RVCC Student Government Association for recognition.

College Resources:

Students are reminded of the college's resources aimed at retention. The RVCC college website has links to many of these resources under the "Student Services" tab. These resources include:

Advising/Career/Transfer (ACT) Center
Library
Student Senate

Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society
Student Services

American Physical Therapy Association (APTA):

All PTA students enrolled in an accredited PTA program are eligible for student affiliate membership with the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Student membership is voluntary but highly encouraged. Students receive detailed information concerning the APTA, member benefits, and privileges during AHLC 104 Introduction to OT/PT and the Body Mechanics club meeting. Please consider joining your national professional organization!

CLINICAL EDUCATION EXPERIENCE POLICIES:

For successful completion of the PTA curriculum and for eligibility to sit for the National Licensure Exam, each student must complete two clinical education experiences comprising no less than 18 weeks total in facilities approved by the PTA program. Each of the clinical experiences are meant to provide the PTA student with real life experience treating patients under the supervision of licensed physical therapists and/or physical therapist assistants. The Clinical Education Policies found below are also included in the Clinical Education Handbook which has additional practicum-specific policies.

Clinical Education Practicum Courses

The first clinical experience is full-time (40 hours per week) for eight consecutive weeks for a total of 304 hours in the clinic and 16 hours on campus. For students on a traditional two-year plan, the first clinical experience occurs during the summer session between the first and second academic year. The second clinical experience is full-time (40 hours per week) for ten consecutive weeks for a total of 400 hours in the clinic. It occurs in the spring semester of the final year. These clinical experiences are formal courses for which the student registers and pays tuition and fees. Each Practicum course will have an additional Seminar course that is a co-requisite and required for graduation.

Students are expected to be in the clinic the same hours as their supervisor, which may vary from site to site. Weekly clinic hours typically occur eight hours a day, five days a week; but in some situations may occur for longer hours each day with fewer days worked each week or fewer hours each day with more days worked each week. Students must make appropriate plans and arrangements (financially and personally) to allow this commitment to the clinical site.

Immunizations for Clinical Practicum

The RVCC Immunization policy is found in the Student Handbook and is mentioned previously in this handbook. Students should be aware that each clinical site may have their own immunization policy that varies slightly from the RVCC list of recommended vaccines. No later than six months prior to the first clinical practicum students should review the immunization requirements with their physician and make plans for ensuring they are fully immunized.

Students will keep multiple copies of their current immunization records and will provide a copy to any clinical education site that might request it. Clinical education sites have the right to refuse admission to any student who does not provide a current copy of her/his immunization record in a timely manner, or who chooses not to comply with their required vaccinations. Failure to complete vaccinations in a timely fashion may preclude a student from attending a clinical education course at the regularly scheduled time.

Hepatitis B

All students will be educated about the Hepatitis B vaccine series, which can take multiple months to complete; and are required to begin the vaccination series, or sign a waiver stating their decision not to do so as part of current immunization records provided to the clinical site.

Flu

Many clinical sites will require students to have the current flu (Influenza) vaccine. Getting vaccinated during flu season (September – February) will make it easier to ensure that there is vaccine available for students attending a clinical practicum.

Covid-19

Individual clinical sites may require a COVID-19 vaccination in order to participate. As with all clinical program requirements, the site reserves the right to deny participation to any student who does not meet basic eligibility criteria.

Vaccine refusal or declination:

CCSNH students who do not meet eligibility criteria for clinical programming may be required to select an alternate course of study in the event that the student cannot obtain the required clinical experience for their chosen course of study. Individual programs of study are not required to secure clinical experience for students who do not meet eligibility criteria.

Professional Behavior

During the clinical experiences, students are expected to be ambassadors of River Valley Community College (RVCC), the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) program, and the profession of physical therapy at all times. You are expected to behave ethically and lawfully at all times and are expected to follow the academic policies of

RVCC as well as the policies and procedures of your clinical site. You should treat this experience as a job and therefore, should be on time, dress appropriately, behave in a professional manner, and respect those around you.

Eligibility for Clinical Education Experience

To be eligible for the first clinical education experience, the student must meet all of the following criteria:

- 1) Passed the following courses with a minimum of C:
 - a. BIOL201R Anatomy & Physiology I
 - b. BIOL202R Anatomy & Physiology II
- 2) Passed the following courses with a minimum of B-
 - a. AHLT104R Intro to OT/PT
 - b. AHLT112R Clinical Conditions
 - c. AHLT123R Functional Kinesiology
 - d. AHLT135R Activities of Daily Living
 - e. PTAC112R PT Procedures I
 - f. PTAC115R Therapeutic Exercises
 - g. PTAC122R PT Procedures II
- 3) Passed the first year comprehensive final with a minimum of 80%
- 4) Met all minimum professional development/behavior standards for each AHLT and PTAC courses during the previous semester, including the college's Work-Based Learning policy: <https://catalog.rivervalley.edu/work-based-learning-wbl>

To be eligible for the final (PTAC292R) clinical education experience and final seminar course (PTAC 250R), the student must meet all of the following criteria:

- 1) Passed the following courses with a minimum of a B-
 - a. PTAC190R Clinical Education Experience I
 - b. PTAC192R Clinical Education Experience I Seminar
 - c. PTAC211R PT Procedures III
 - d. AHLT210R PT/OT Management
 - e. AHLT220R Clinical Neurology
 - f. PTAC221R Clinical Neurology Lab for the PTA
- 2) Passed the second year comprehensive final with a minimum of 80%
- 3) Met all minimum professional development/behavior standards for each AHLT and PTAC courses during the previous semester. Again, the college's Student Handbook section on Work Based Learning is in effect.

Assignment to Clinical Sites

Students are placed at assigned clinical sites based on several factors, including availability of facilities, the student's academic and interpersonal abilities and lastly, a

student's personal needs. Clinical sites are selected based on adequate qualified personnel, willingness to engage in student mentorship, adequate caseload, type of setting, geographic location, past history with PTA students, contract status, and other variables. Every attempt is made to place students in a variety of settings, in locations that are convenient for the student, and with supervisors that match the student's learning style. Students are able to discuss preferences for clinical site work and whenever possible these preferences will be considered but it *is not guaranteed that a student will get their top choice for clinical experiences*. It may be necessary for students to travel 90 minutes one way.

To meet requirements of the program, students must be able to provide own transportation to and from clinical sites, and/or relocate if necessary (at their own expense), have current immunizations and American Heart Association CPR certification, and hold personal health insurance. Many sites may have additional requirements including, but not limited to, criminal background checks, drug testing, and worksite training. The PTA program's Director of Clinical Education (DCE) will work with each student individually to ensure they are aware of site-specific requirements, but it is the responsibility of the student to comply with all requirements. Failure on the part of the student to have all requirements completed prior to beginning their clinical experience may result in dismissal from the site. It cannot be guaranteed that another site can be found in a timely manner.

Site Availability

The PTA program does its best to ensure a wide variety of sites and settings are available in order to provide students with a well- rounded clinical education experience but there is no guarantee that a particular site will be available at a specific time. There may be circumstances where clinical education assignments change on short notice and in these circumstances every effort is made to place the student in an appropriate setting a timely fashion. All students will have one placement in an inpatient setting and one placement in an outpatient setting. The college requires each clinical education site to maintain a contract with the program. It is the responsibility of the DCE and College Administration to take care of the contracts. Students should not contact sites directly.

Conflict of Interest

To effectively engage in a supervisory relationship and to be able to openly receive and give feedback it is important that your relationship with your supervisor not be impacted by a conflict of interest. Past and present relationships with the site or the supervisor may influence the supervisory relationship. We discourage students from a clinical education site where they have friends or relatives or where they have been previously

employed in a different capacity. Some examples of situations that may present a conflict of interest include sites where:

- A family member is a client or employee in a department that has close professional contact with your supervisor and/or a position of power over your supervisor
- You presently work or have worked within the past two years
- You have a friendship, romantic, or other relationship with the person who may be your supervisor or with someone in the department
- You have had a supervisory role over people who may supervise you
- You have been a patient in the PT department or another department that you will have close contact (e.g., the occupational therapy department) within the past one year

When a conflict of interest potentially exists it is expected that the student notify the DCE of the potential conflict of interest. The DCE will explore with both the student and the site their perception of the previous relationship and any power imbalances that may hinder the honest exchange of feedback and evaluation of the student's performance. The PTA faculty will make the final determination regarding the appropriateness of placing the student at the fieldwork site.

Determination of Clinical Site Placements with OTA/PTA Dual Student

For dual degree students, the above policies regarding determination of site will remain the same; however, where students are dual OTA / PTA, the OTA Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (AFWC) will meet with PTA DCE and the student prior to placement to discuss which degree the student plans to complete first. Student will be scheduled for the full time under that degree including seminar completion, prior to starting other half of dual degree. Students will be made aware when signing off on plan of study with advisor, that this is extended time and off the normal time table of scheduled courses and that they will need to sign up for an additional semester(s) to complete the dual degree.

Utilization of a New Clinical Education Site

PTA students may request to have a clinical education experience at a site that has not been used before by this program. Students should make that request to the DCE. The PTA faculty will explore the site and their employees' ability to provide an adequate experience to the student, and assure all contracts are completed. For consideration of PTAC190, this information must be received no later than February 15th prior to the summer session. For consideration of PTAC292, this information must be received no later than August 15th prior to the spring session.

Utilization of a Clinical Education Site out of Area

Occasionally, PTA students may wish to travel out of the region (out of New England) for a clinical experience. This is only allowed during PTAC292 and only if the student has successfully completed their first clinical rotation at a local site. If a PTA student wishes to explore an out-of-region site, the following plan needs to be initiated by the student. The DCE will assist the student as needed and if the site is within a reasonable commuting distance, may visit the site prior to approval.

Students must meet the following criteria to be considered for out of region placement:

- 1) Senior PTA students must have completed their first clinical education experience with a minimum grade of B- (80%)
- 2) The senior PTA student must be academically strong and meet the following standards:
 - a) Grade average of A- or above
 - b) Demonstrates initiative and professionalism at all times
 - c) Completes all assignments in a timely fashion

If all criteria are met, the PTA student can submit an “Out-Of-Region Clinical Experience Request Form” to the DCE. The PTA Academic Faculty will discuss the student’s request and the decision will be made collectively. Once it is decided that the student meets the above criteria, the student will provide the DCE with a list of possible facilities including addresses and phone numbers. The DCE will contact each site to ascertain its appropriateness as a clinical site. The DCE will collaborate with the college administration to get the appropriate contracts signed. The student should not contact sites themselves unless instructed to do so by the DCE. Upon completion of appropriate contracts, the DCE will then be able to assign the student to the out-of-region clinical site.

Pregnancies and /or Medical Conditions During Clinical Experiences

The PTA program at RVCC is supportive of students who go into clinical education knowingly pregnant or find out that they are pregnant while at the site. However, the PTA Program at RVCC also feels that the pregnancy should be treated no differently than any other medical condition that limits a student’s attendance or ability to perform assigned duties at the field site. Therefore, it is imperative that students notify the DCE immediately when it is suspected that time will be missed or performance limited secondary to any medical condition including pregnancy. Upon notification, a plan of action with the site will be developed that may include extension of field work or removal from the site and reassignment at a time that is more appropriate for the student. The key concern during completion of the plan of action will be on attendance and ability to perform duties; therefore, these two concerns will be weighed heavily prior to making a decision.

Clinical Education and Disability Services

Students whose disabilities may require some type of accommodation for their clinical education experiences are strongly advised to self-identify and complete a “Request for Accommodations” agreement with the Office of Disability Service and Disability Services Coordinator. Current documentation is required and retroactive accommodations cannot be provided to avoid a failing grade. The DCE will work with students to determine if/how an identified disability may impact their ability to carry out the responsibilities of the clinical assignment. The DCE will not disclose any health/disability related information about the student to a clinical site without the student’s written authorization.

Students in programs that require successful completion of a clinical placement should be aware that clinical sites are not necessarily required to recognize accommodations contained within an Individual Reasonable Accommodation Plan (IRAP) issued by River Valley Community College (“RVCC”) designed for use in classroom setting pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please be aware that clinical sites may need to adapt any accommodation request you make in a manner that does not create an undue hardship for them and does not require them to alter the essential functions of the internship expectations. You are encouraged to discuss the accommodation process with both your site supervision and your RVCC faculty.

REQUIRED PAPERWORK

Please review the following pages, you will be required to sign these at the PTA program orientation.

PTA PROGRAM INFORMED CONSENT: Patient Simulator Rights and Responsibilities

As a Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) student, you will be participating in lab as a mock patient. Your classmates and instructors will, from time to time, perform physical therapy interventions and data collection methods, with you as the patient, to further the education of the class as a whole. Please see the PTA Student Handbook's section entitled "Safety" for policies and procedures related to this topic. To ensure your comfort and safety, please read and understand the following rights and responsibilities which apply to student patient simulations:

- Regardless of setting, mock patients and students must never jeopardize the safety of themselves or others.
- Students role playing as the mock patient during classroom experiences are to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. If a student encounters a situation where the utmost respect, safety or dignity was not provided, the student shall report such activity to the faculty without penalty or retaliation.
- Students are responsible for alerting the instructor to any precautions, contraindications, injuries or medical conditions that could be made worse by participating in the laboratory or student activity. Students may opt out of being a mock patient for particular lab activity if that activity may aggravate an injury or medical condition. However, this does not excuse the student from the responsibility of the learning outcomes of that activity.
- The health information of student's role-playing the mock patient is private and must not be shared with anyone outside the laboratory for non-educational purposes
- PTA students shall never perform any intervention or treatment on a mock patient without first having proper instruction by the faculty and without proper supervision.
- At times in healthcare education, it is necessary to videotape, audiotape, photograph and/or otherwise image individuals for instructional purposes. Any product of these practices is to be used only for the purposes of education. They may not be sold, copies, or otherwise distributed for non-education purposes.

As a student in the Physical Therapist Assistant Program at River Valley Community College, by my signature below, I consent to participate in all laboratory and classroom activities. In doing so, I acknowledge the fact that such activities in the PTA program include skills and techniques which involve physical activity, the use of massage, heat, cold, electricity, traction and all forms of therapeutic exercise. In agreeing to participate, I also release the College, including academic and clinical faculty and fellow students, from any injuries that I may incur from my participation in all activities involved with the program.

I acknowledge receiving this information. I have asked any questions I may have regarding this informed consent. By signing I have agreed to the above conditions.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name (print): _____

PTA Student Statement of Background Disclosure:

I, _____ (please print full name)
understand that certain background information about me may result in the inability to pass a Criminal Offender Record check, Sexual Offender Record check and/or a drug test. This may result in the inability to attend any Clinical Education Experience course. This will prevent graduation, licensure and ability to work as a PTA.

It is in my best interest to disclose this information to the PTA Program Director early in the application/ orientation process so I don't waste my time and money.

I have / have not been (circle one):

- Convicted of a felony or misdemeanor at any time in the past
- Treated for drug or alcohol addiction/abuse
- Currently abusing prescription/nonprescription, illegal drugs or alcohol
- Hospitalized for any mental illness at any time in the past

If you answered "yes" to any of the above bullets, please meet with your Program Director to discuss the details as soon as possible. The purpose of licensing the PTA is to assure public safety. It is possible for the licensing agency to withhold a license if the severity of the felony, drug/alcohol addiction or mental illness puts the public at risk. It's better to be forewarned of this detail rather than spend your time and money first, and find out this information after the fact. Let's talk!

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name (print): _____

RVCC PTA Program Student Acknowledgement Form

I agree to the following: (check all that apply)

- ☐ I have received and understand the PTA Student Handbook.
- ☐ I have received proper explanation and fully understand the PTA policies on attendance, dress code, cell phone usage, professional behavior, alcohol and substance abuse, grading, failed grades, practical exams, health forms, safety, complaints/grievances, American Physical Therapy Association membership, cheating/plagiarism, criminal/sexual offender background information, mailboxes and employment as an Aide in a PT clinic.
- ☐ I have received proper explanation and fully understand the PTA Program Clinical Education Policies on professional behavior, eligibility for clinical education, assignment to clinical sites, site availability, conflict of interest, determination of clinical site placement with OTA/PTA dual student, utilization of a new clinical education site, utilization of a clinical education site out of area, pregnancies and/or medical conditions during clinical experiences and clinical education and disability services.
- ☐ I have been informed of and understand the RVCC PTA program Essential Skills/Technical Standards.
- ☐ I acknowledge the ability to perform/demonstrate each in a safe, efficient and correct manner.
- ☐ I understand my responsibilities as a student.
- ☐ I have been notified of the identification of my faculty advisor.
- ☐ I have been informed of and understand the current accreditation status of the PTA program.
- ☐ I have been informed of and understand RVCC's support services for Students with Disabilities.
- ☐ I have been informed of potential hazards of the profession.
- ☐ I agree to participate in any videotapes, photos, or any other media productions to be used for educational purposes.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name (print): _____

APPENDIX

APA reference style

Students will use the APA format when identifying references used in homework assignments, projects, etc. within the PTA program. Students are encouraged to go to the library or the Learning Center for assistance. Students can also find assistance online: www.apastyle.org.

Direction and Supervision of the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA)



Last Updated: 08/30/18

Contact:
nationalgovernance@apta.org

DIRECTION AND SUPERVISION OF THE PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT HOD P06-18-28-35

[Amended: HOD P06-05-18-26; HOD 06-00-16-27; HOD 06-99-07-11; HOD 06-96-30-42; HOD 06-95-11-06; HOD 06-93-08-09; HOD 06-85-20-41;

Initial: HOD 06-84-16-72/HOD 06-78-22-61/HOD 06-77-19-37] [Position]

Physical therapist practice and the practice of physical therapy are synonymous. Both phrases are inclusive of patient and client management, and direction and supervision. Direction and supervision apply to the physical therapist assistant, who is the only individual who assists a physical therapist in practice. The utilization of other support personnel, whether in the performance of tasks or clerical activities, relates to the efficient operation of the physical therapy service.

Physical therapists are responsible for providing safe, accessible, cost-effective, and evidence-based services. Services are rendered directly by the physical therapist and with responsible utilization of physical therapist assistants. The physical therapist's practice responsibility for patient and client management includes examination, evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis, intervention, and outcomes. Physical therapist assistants may be appropriately utilized in components of intervention and in collection of selected examination and outcomes data.

Direction and supervision are essential in the provision of quality physical therapist services. The degree of direction and supervision necessary for ensuring quality physical therapist services is dependent upon many factors, including the education, experiences, and responsibilities of the parties involved, as well as the organizational structure where physical therapist services are provided.

Regardless of the setting in which the physical therapist service is provided, the following

responsibilities must be borne solely by the physical therapist:

1. Interpretation of referrals when available
2. Evaluation, diagnosis, and prognosis
3. Development or modification of a plan of care, which is based on the initial examination or reexamination and includes the physical therapy goals and outcomes
4. Determination of when the expertise and decision-making capability of the physical therapist requires the physical therapist to personally render services and when it may be appropriate to utilize the physical therapist assistant
5. Revision of the plan of care when indicated
6. Conclusion of an episode of care
7. Responsibility for any "hand off" communication
8. Oversight of all documentation for services rendered to each patient or client

Only the physical therapist performs the initial examination and reexamination of the patient and may utilize the physical therapist assistant in collection of selected examination and outcomes data.

The physical therapist is responsible for services provided when the physical therapist's plan of care involves the physical therapist assistant. Regardless of the setting in which the service is provided, the determination to utilize physical therapist assistants requires the education, expertise, and professional judgment of a physical therapist as described by the *Standards of Practice for Physical Therapy*, the *Code of Ethics for the Physical Therapist*, and the *APTA Guide for Professional Conduct*.

In determining the appropriate extent of assistance from the physical therapist assistant, the physical therapist considers:

- The physical therapist assistant's education, training, experience, and skill level
- Patient or client criticality, acuity, stability, and complexity
- The predictability of the consequences
- The setting in which the care is being delivered
- Federal and state statutes
- Liability and risk management concerns
- The mission of physical therapist services for the setting
- The needed frequency of reevaluation

Physical Therapist Assistant Definition

The physical therapist assistant assists the physical therapist in the provision of physical therapy. The physical therapist assistant is a graduate of a physical therapist assistant program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education.

Utilization

The physical therapist is directly responsible for the actions of the physical therapist assistant in all practice settings. The physical therapist assistant may provide services under the direction and at least general supervision of the physical therapist. In general supervision, the physical therapist is not required to be on site for direction and supervision but must be available at least by telecommunication. The ability of the physical therapist assistant to provide services shall be assessed on an ongoing basis by the supervising physical therapist.

Services provided by the physical therapist assistant must be consistent with safe and legal physical therapist practice and shall be predicated on the following factors: complexity and acuity of the patient's or client's needs; proximity and accessibility to the physical therapist; supervision available in the event of emergencies or critical events; and type of setting in which the service is provided. The physical therapist assistant makes modifications to elements of the intervention either to progress the patient or client as directed by the physical therapist or to ensure patient or client safety and comfort.

When supervising the physical therapist assistant in any offsite setting, the following requirements must be observed:

1. A physical therapist must be accessible by telecommunication to the physical therapist assistant at all times while the physical therapist assistant is providing services to patients and clients.
2. There must be regularly scheduled and documented conferences with the physical therapist assistant regarding patients and clients, the frequency of which is determined by the needs of the patient or client and the needs of the physical therapist assistant.
3. In situations in which a physical therapist assistant is involved in the care of a patient or client, a supervisory visit by the physical therapist:
 - a. Shall be made upon the physical therapist assistant's request for a reexamination, when a change in the plan of care is needed, prior to any planned conclusion of the episode of care, and in response to a change in the patient's or client's medical status
 - b. Shall be made at least once a month, or at a higher frequency when established by the physical therapist, in accordance with the needs of the patient or client
 - c. Shall include:
 - i. An onsite reexamination of the patient or client
 - ii. Onsite review of the plan of care with appropriate revision or termination
 - iii. Evaluation of need and recommendation for utilization of outside resources

Explanation of Reference Numbers:

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P: Position | S: Standard | G: Guideline | Y: Policy | R: Procedure

Standards of Ethical Conduct for the Physical Therapist Assistant



HOD S06-20-31-26 [Amended HOD S06-19-47-68; HOD S06-09-20-18; HOD S06-00-13-24; HOD 06-91-06-07; Initial HOD 06-82-04-08] [Standard]

Preamble

The Standards of Ethical Conduct for the Physical Therapist Assistant (Standards of Ethical Conduct) delineate the ethical obligations of all physical therapist assistants as determined by the House of Delegates of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). The Standards of Ethical Conduct provide a foundation for conduct to which all physical therapist assistants shall adhere. Physical therapist assistants are guided by a set of core values (accountability, altruism, collaboration, compassion and caring, duty, excellence, integrity, and social responsibility). Throughout the document the primary core values that support specific principles are indicated in parentheses. Fundamental to the Standards of Ethical Conduct is the special obligation of physical therapist assistants to enable patients and clients to achieve greater independence, health and wellness, and enhanced quality of life.

No document that delineates ethical standards can address every situation. Physical therapist assistants are encouraged to seek additional advice or consultation in instances where the guidance of the Standards of Ethical Conduct may not be definitive. The APTA Guide for Conduct of the Physical Therapist Assistant and Core Values for the Physical Therapist and Physical Therapist Assistant provide additional guidance.

Standards

Standard #1: Physical therapist assistants shall respect the inherent dignity, and rights, of all individuals.

(Core Values: Compassion and Caring, Integrity)

- 1A. Physical therapist assistants shall act in a respectful manner toward each person regardless of age, gender, race, nationality, religion, ethnicity, social or economic status, sexual orientation, health condition, or disability.
- 1B. Physical therapist assistants shall recognize their personal biases and shall not discriminate against others in the provision of physical therapist services.

Standard #2: Physical therapist assistants shall be trustworthy and compassionate in addressing the rights and needs of patients and clients.

(Core Values: Altruism, Collaboration, Compassion and Caring, Duty)

- 2A. Physical therapist assistants shall act in the best interests of patients and clients over the interests of the physical therapist assistant.
- 2B. Physical therapist assistants shall provide physical therapist interventions with compassionate and caring behaviors that incorporate the individual and cultural differences of patients and clients.
- 2C. Physical therapist assistants shall provide patients and clients with information regarding the interventions they provide.
- 2D. Physical therapist assistants shall protect confidential patient and client information and, in collaboration with the physical therapist, may disclose confidential information to appropriate authorities only when allowed or as required by law.

Standard #3: Physical therapist assistants shall make sound decisions in collaboration with the physical therapist and within the boundaries established by laws and regulations.

(Core Values: Collaboration, Duty, Excellence, Integrity)

- 3A. Physical therapist assistants shall make objective decisions in the patient's or client's best interest in all practice settings.
- 3B. Physical therapist assistants shall be guided by information about best practice regarding physical therapist interventions.
- 3C. Physical therapist assistants shall make decisions based upon their level of competence and consistent with patient and client values.
- 3D. Physical therapist assistants shall not engage in conflicts of interest that interfere with making sound decisions.
- 3E. Physical therapist assistants shall provide physical therapist services under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist and shall communicate with the physical therapist when patient or client status requires modifications to the established plan of care.

Standard #4: Physical therapist assistants shall demonstrate integrity in their relationships with patients and clients, families, colleagues, students, research participants other health care providers, employers, payers, and the public.

(Core Value: Integrity)

- 4A. Physical therapist assistants shall provide truthful, accurate, and relevant information and shall not make misleading representations.
- 4B. Physical therapist assistants shall not exploit persons over whom they have supervisory, evaluative or other authority (eg, patients and clients, students, supervisees, research participants, or employees).
- 4C. Physical therapist assistants shall not engage in any sexual relationship with any of their patients and clients, supervisees, or students.
- 4D. Physical therapist assistants shall not harass anyone verbally, physically, emotionally, or sexually.
- 4E. Physical therapist assistants shall discourage misconduct by physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and other health care professionals and, when appropriate, report illegal or unethical acts, including verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual harassment, to an appropriate authority with jurisdiction over the conduct.
- 4F. Physical therapist assistants shall report suspected cases of abuse involving children

or vulnerable adults to the appropriate authority, subject to law.

Standard #5: Physical therapist assistants shall fulfill their legal and ethical obligations.

(Core Values: Accountability, Duty, Social Responsibility)

- 5A. Physical therapist assistants shall comply with applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations.
- 5B. Physical therapist assistants shall support the supervisory role of the physical therapist to ensure quality care and promote patient and client safety.
- 5C. Physical therapist assistants involved in research shall abide by accepted standards governing protection of research participants.
- 5D. Physical therapist assistants shall encourage colleagues with physical, psychological, or substance-related impairments that may adversely impact their professional responsibilities to seek assistance or counsel.
- 5E. Physical therapist assistants who have knowledge that a colleague is unable to perform their professional responsibilities with reasonable skill and safety shall report this information to the appropriate authority.

Standard #6: Physical therapist assistants shall enhance their competence through the lifelong acquisition and refinement of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

(Core Value: Excellence)

- 6A. Physical therapist assistants shall achieve and maintain clinical competence.
- 6B. Physical therapist assistants shall engage in lifelong learning consistent with changes in their roles and responsibilities and advances in the practice of physical therapy.
- 6C. Physical therapist assistants shall support practice environments that support career development and lifelong learning.

Standard #7: Physical therapist assistants shall support organizational behaviors and business practices that benefit patients and clients and society.

(Core Values: Integrity, Accountability)

- 7A. Physical therapist assistants shall promote work environments that support ethical and accountable decision-making.
- 7B. Physical therapist assistants shall not accept gifts or other considerations that influence or give an appearance of influencing their decisions.
- 7C. Physical therapist assistants shall fully disclose any financial interest they have in products or services that they recommend to patients and clients.
- 7D. Physical therapist assistants shall ensure that documentation for their interventions accurately reflects the nature and extent of the services provided.
- 7E. Physical therapist assistants shall refrain from employment arrangements, or other arrangements, that prevent physical therapist assistants from fulfilling ethical obligations to patients and clients.

Standard #8: Physical therapist assistants shall participate in efforts to meet the health needs of people locally, nationally, or globally.

(Core Value: Social Responsibility)

- 8A. Physical therapist assistants shall support organizations that meet the health needs of

people who are economically disadvantaged, uninsured, and underinsured.

- 8B. Physical therapist assistants shall advocate for people with impairments, activity limitations, participation restrictions, and disabilities in order to promote their participation in community and society.
- 8C. Physical therapist assistants shall be responsible stewards of health care resources by collaborating with physical therapists in order to avoid overutilization or underutilization of physical therapist services.
- 8D. Physical therapist assistants shall educate members of the public about the benefits of physical therapy.

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