

# NPI as a Unique Identifier

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## Fast Facts

- There is **currently no standard method** used among all PA programs to track students post-graduation.
- **Students are permitted to apply for a National Provider Identifier (NPI)** number while in PA school.
- NPI numbers assigned to students while in training **will be maintained** once they enter practice.

## What's the Issue?

Currently, the process for tracking the practice choices and location of students following graduation is largely fragmented. While PA programs have, on an individual basis, implemented systems to determine specialty and where students choose to practice, there is currently no standard for doing so that has been adopted by all PA programs/external stakeholders. This is a significant impediment both to programs that would benefit from such a standard as well as stakeholders such as the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) seeking to demonstrate the value of federal investments in PA education. Further, HRSA and PA programs are interested in knowing if PA graduates are practicing in medically underserved areas, which is effectively stymied under the current fragmented tracking system.

## What's the Solution?

In order to overcome the challenges associated with the current fragmented system of PA graduate tracking, PAEA is advocating for member programs to require that students apply for an NPI number. Beyond the clear benefits to programs associated with greater information regarding alumni practice choice and location, this information will bolster the capacity of PAEA to advocate for increased investments in PA education (such as through Title VII health workforce programs) by illustrating the relationship between these investments and PA graduate practice in rural and/or medically underserved areas. Additionally, for programs that identify preparing students for practice in primary care or in underserved areas as part of their mission, possessing this data may be helpful in meeting the ARC-PA Standard B1.01, which is related to the activities necessary to meet a program's mission.

For more information on using the NPI as a unique identifier, please contact John Lopes, DHSc, PA-C, at [jlopes@PAEAonline.org](mailto:jlopes@PAEAonline.org).

