

Physician Assistant (PA) Clinical Training Site Shortage

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Fast Facts

- **95%** of PA educational program directors are **moderately or very concerned** about the availability of adequate clinical training sites.¹
- **52.3%** of PA education programs currently **pay for clinical training sites**, an increase from approximately **27.9%** five years ago.²
- Paying for clinical training sites is estimated to raise annual total expenses by an average of over **\$200,000 among paying programs.**²

What's the Issue?

In PA education programs, practical experience in a clinical environment constitutes a significant portion of the student's training. During clinical rotations, students gain valuable insight into both the common and uncommon conditions encountered in the clinical setting, contributing significantly to the quality of care delivered to patients once the student enters practice. While the value of clinical experience during a student's education is apparent, PA education programs are experiencing increasing difficulty in securing access to clinical training sites for students. Due to recent trends which have increased demands upon practicing providers and facilitated health system consolidation, students have had to travel farther to sites to undertake clinical rotations while programs are increasingly compelled to pay for clinical training sites. These costs are ultimately borne by students through increased tuition rates.

What's the Solution?

Policymakers can take immediate action to assist in mitigating the critical clinical training site shortage. The Physician Assistant Education Public Health Initiatives Act would authorize a 5-year demonstration program to determine the efficacy of federal financing of PA clinical training in directing students to practice in rural and underserved areas. This demonstration project would allow PA programs to pay for clinical rotations at federally qualified health centers, rural health clinics, and critical access hospitals on the basis of an extensive body of evidence demonstrating the impact of training experiences on subsequent practice choices for students.

For additional information, please contact tsmith@PAEAonline.org.

REFERENCES

¹ *Recruiting and Maintaining U.S. Clinical Training Sites: Joint Report of the Multi-Discipline Clerkship/Clinical Training Site Survey*. Washington, DC: AAMC, 2013. <https://members.aamc.org/eweb/upload/13-225%20WC%20Report%202%20update.pdf/>.

² Physician Assistant Education Association, *By the Numbers: Program Report 35: Data from the 2019 Program Survey*. Washington, DC: PAEA, 2020. doi: 10.17538/PR35.2020.

