

Essential Requirements for candidates to the Naugatuck Valley Community College Physical Therapist Assistant Program

Decisions made by the candidate to this educational program for physical therapist assistants should be made with consideration of the following essential requirements. The physical therapist assistant (PTA) provides physical therapy services, such as measurements of function and physical therapy interventions, after a physical therapist has 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 what 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:

Motor: Candidate must have sufficient motor capabilities to execute the movements and skills required to provide safe and effective physical therapy interventions. These include, but are not limited to-

1. Coordination, speed and agility to assist and safely guard (protect) patients who are walking, exercising or performing other rehabilitation activities.
2. Ability to adjust and position equipment and patients, which involves bending or stooping freely to floor level and reaching above the head.
3. Ability to move or position patients and equipment, which involves lifting, carrying, pulling, and guiding weights up to and including 100 pounds.
4. Ability to guide, resist, and assist patients, or to provide emergency care, which involves the activities of standing, kneeling, sitting, walking or crawling, for 90 minutes without rest.
5. Ability to perform, with safe and proper body mechanics, the transfer and gait training techniques used during physical therapy interventions with patients.
6. Ability and dexterity to manipulate the devices used in physical therapy, which involves adjusting gauges, dials, small nuts/bolts, equipment settings, etc.
7. Ability to administer CPR without assistance.

Sensory: Candidate must possess the ability to observe and participate in demonstrations and in physical measures applied to patients. This includes the ability to obtain information in classroom, laboratory or clinical settings through observation, auscultation, palpation and other measures, including but not limited to-

1. Visual ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and interpret facial expressions and body language, identify normal and abnormal patterns of movement, to read or set parameters on physical therapy equipment, to discriminate color changes, and to interpret and assess the environment.
2. Auditory ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and respond to soft voices, auditory timers, equipment alarms, call bells, and to effectively use devices for measurement of blood pressure and breath sounds.
3. Tactile ability to palpate a pulse and to detect changes or abnormalities of surface texture, skin temperature, body segment contour, muscle tone, and joint movement.

4. Sufficient position, movement and balance sensations to assist and safely guard (protect) patients who are walking, exercising or performing other rehabilitation activities.

Communication: Candidate must be able to utilize effective and efficient communications with peers, faculty, patients and their families, and other health care providers. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Ability to read at a competency level that allows one to safely carry out the essential functions of an assignment (examples: handwritten chart data, printed equipment operations manuals).
2. Ability to effectively communicate (interpret and express) information regarding the status, safety, and rehabilitation of patients.
3. Ability to effectively communicate (verbally and document) with patients/families, health care professionals, within the community, and with reimbursement payers.
4. Ability to communicate and document effectively via computer.
5. Ability to recognize, interpret, and respond to nonverbal behavior of self and others.

Behavior: Candidate must be capable of exercising good judgment, developing empathetic and therapeutic relationships with patients and others, and tolerating close and direct physical contact with a broad and very diverse population of laboratory colleagues and patients. This will include people of all ages, races, socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, as well as individuals with weight disorders, physical disfigurement and medical or mental health problems. This also includes, but is not limited to-

1. Ability to work with multiple patients/families and colleagues at the same time.
2. Ability to work with lab partners, patients, families and others under stressful conditions, including but not limited to medically or emotionally unstable individuals, situations requiring rapid adaptations, the provision of CPR, or other emergency interventions.
3. Ability to prioritize multiple tasks, integrate information and make decisions.
4. Ability to foster cooperative and collegial relationships with classmates, instructors, other health care providers, patients and their families.

Critical Thinking: Candidate must possess sufficient abilities in the areas of calculation, critical problem solving, reasoning, and judgment to be able to comprehend and process information within the time frame of a session of physical therapy interventions. Candidate must be able to prioritize, organize and attend to tasks and responsibilities efficiently. This includes, but is not limited to-

1. Ability to collect, interpret and analyze written, verbal and observed data about patients.
2. Ability to prioritize multiple tasks, integrate information and make decisions.
3. Ability to apply knowledge of the principles, indications, and contraindications for physical therapy interventions, including those for therapeutic interventions related to human pathology and disability, therapeutic modalities, therapeutic massage, pulmonary hygiene, physical and functional measures, and for therapeutic exercise.
4. Ability to act safely and ethically in the physical therapy lab and clinic.

The capstone experience of this educational program occurs during the final semester, with the candidate providing physical therapy interventions in clinic settings under the supervision of physical therapists. The candidate must have the capacity to complete eight hour days, and 40 hour weeks, of participation in clinical education experiences which run for a full semester. The clinical education experience provides for a truly integrative measure of the candidate's capabilities and requires that the candidate consistently demonstrate entry-level performance of the abilities of the physical therapist assistant.

Candidates to the Physical Therapist Assistant Program who have questions or concerns about these requirements are encouraged to contact the Physical Therapist Assistant Program at: (203) 596-2157.