



PA Title Change: Clarity for Today's Workforce

To ensure patients understand the role of PAs in healthcare delivery and the high-quality care PAs provide, AAPA, PA state and specialty organizations, PA programs, state legislatures, and federal agencies are working to update the profession's title from "physician assistant" to "physician associate."

WHY ARE PAs SEEKING TITLE CHANGE?

Independent research commissioned by AAPA confirmed the title "physician assistant" leads to patient confusion about the qualifications, capabilities, and duties of a PA, while the title "physician associate" adds clarity.

- When asked to select the definition of a physician assistant, **75% of patients selected an incorrect definition.**¹
- However, when given the correct definition of a PA, **71% of patients and 65% of physicians agreed that "physician associate" fits the job description of a PA.**²

HOW WILL PA TITLE CHANGE STRENGTHEN HEALTHCARE?

PAs know that establishing trust and building a strong relationship with our patients begins with the patient's understanding of their provider's clinical expertise and role on the medical team.

Updating the title addresses a common misperception that PAs only "assist" physicians when, in fact, PAs are highly educated medical professionals who deliver high-quality, team-based healthcare.

- In 2024, a bipartisan New Hampshire legislative study endorsed title change. The study found that the title "physician associate" clarifies how PAs function in modern healthcare teams and reduces confusion surrounding PA education, training, and qualifications.³

Title change **does not change the professional activities PAs are qualified and authorized to perform.** Instead, it fosters understanding of PAs' role in the healthcare team, giving employers necessary clarity to allow for better utilization of PAs.

- 71% of employers agree that "physician associate" fits the job description of a PA.⁴

¹ WPP. "WPP Physician Assistant Title Change Investigation: Final Report to the AAPA House of Delegates". Nov. 2020.

² Kantar Research

³ Final Report of the Committee to Research Physician Assistant Scope of Practice, HB 1222, Chapter 264, Laws of 2024

⁴ Kantar Research