**Nurse Practitioners Compared to Physician Assistants**

|  | **Nurse Practitioners** | **Physician Assistants** |
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| **Education** | Must have bachelor’s degree in nursing.  | Must complete two years of college courses in basic and behavioral sciences as prerequisites. Most have BS degree.  |
| **Degree Provided** | Masters or Doctoral Degree  | Most programs provide a masters degree |
| **Total post high school education** | 6-8 years | 4-6 years |
| **Experience** | Experience as RN before or during the program | Some type of health care exposure usually required |
| **Curriculum** | * Advanced Pathophysiology across the lifespan based on previous extensive anatomy and physiology courses
* Pharmacology
* Advanced Clinical Assessment and Reasoning across the lifespan
* Advanced Care Management (Didactic/clinical courses) I , II, III in role and population foci, acute or primary care (18 credit hours)
* Scientific underpinnings for practice
* Evidence Based Practice, Quality and Safety
* Graduate Project: Doctoral defense, presentation and publication
* Informatics
* Advanced Health Policy and Advocacy
* Epidemiology and Biostatistics
* Organizational theory and Health Care systems
* Applied Health Care Economics and Finance
* Role Practicum (Internship)
* Residency I, II, III
* Frameworks for Leadership and interprofessional practice
 | * Anatomy and Physiology courses
* Pathophysiology courses
* Pharmacology courses
* Physical Dx and clinical Application
* Bioethics and Behavioral science
* Didactic and clinical courses, fundamentals of medicine I, II, III
* Clinical problem solving I, II, III
* Community and primary care courses, geriatric, surgical, emergency medicine, pediatric
* Research methods
* Graduate Project
* Transforming Health care
* Clinical Clerkships
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| **Clinical Hours**  | 1,000 to 1,200 supervised clinical hours after 700-900 hours in BSN program. Total clinical hours are 1700-2100.  | 2,000 supervised clinical hours, no residency or internship |
| **Specialty** | Specialty is based on the education training (family, pediatric, adult/gero, psych mental health, neonatal, midwifery, anesthesia). Also acute or primary care training. | Specialty is based on the specialty of the physician. Education is across many areas. There are some specialty programs as well. |
| **Board Certification**  | National Certification Required |
| **Re-certification** | Required: Continuing education, retesting or re-assessing |
| **Licensure** | **License is independent.** Licensed by the state. | **Practice under the license of the physician**. Authorized by states (licensed, registered or certified) before they begin practice.  |
| **Hospital Privileges Medical Credentialing** | YES |
| **Responsibility** | May practice independently in both medicine and nursing according to role and population foci. Supervisory states require protocols. Can work independently. | Physician is directly responsible for the care the PA provides. Duties are under the supervision of a physician. Can work alone as long as physician available. |
| **Types of job responsibilities** | * A Nurse Practitioner’s job profile may allow one to work independently or in collaboration with a physician. They exercise autonomy and initiative in clinical decision-making The duties include but may not be limited to: conducting physical examination, obtaining medical histories, physical therapy, performing diagnostic tests and procedures, prescribing drugs, providing prenatal care, counseling and educating patients, diagnosing, treating, and managing disease, performing procedures and minor surgeries (biopsies/LP’s)

Providing coordination of care, making referrals, patient education and counseling. Contribute to care coordination/population management initiatives for the entire practice.The institutions that can employ NPs include community clinics and [health](http://www.diffen.com/difference/Category%3AHealth) centers, nursing homes, private and public schools, hospitals, physicians, and more such at academics. They can fill hospitalist positions, round, and take call.  | PAs are medical professionals and their scope of practice is according to their agreement with the physician. They mainly perform tasks such as collecting medical information from patients, performing examinations and test and interpret, diagnosing illnesses, [prescribing medications](http://www.diffen.com/difference/Category%3AMedication), referring patients to specialists, counseling and assisting in surgery. Although PAs collaborate with a physician, they do not have to always be under direct supervision. PAs can practice in urban or rural areas, in satellite clinics, [prisons](http://www.diffen.com/difference/Jail_vs_Prison), nursing homes, schools, or in academic institutions. |
| **Prescriptive Authority** | Authorized to prescribe drugs in all 50 states and 44 states allow controlled drugs as well with DEA. | Delegated prescriptive authority in all 50 states including controlled drugs in many states. (Must have DEA) |
| **Supervisory Relationship** | Independent license to practice. Regulation varies state to state but 16 states now allow full independence in practice. The others are supervisory or collaborative. | Physicians delegate the work they do but the work must be in their skill set and the skill set of the supervising physician.  |
| **Reimbursement** | Medicaid, Medicare and most private payers |
| **Billing “incident to” Medicare** | May provide services “incident” to the physician on return visits and f/u care; a physician must be on site |
| **Billing “incident to” Private Payers** | May provide services “incident to the physician without restrictions |
| **Average Salary (more in specialty areas)**  | $90,500/yr | $94,500/yr |