

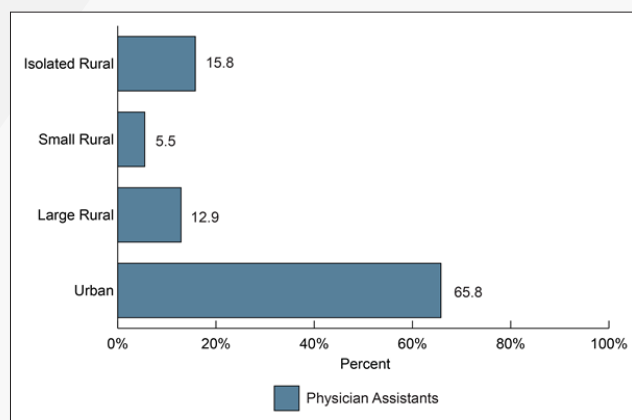
Physician Assistants in North Dakota

In medical practice, a physician assistant (PA) is a medical practitioner working along with doctors under their supervision. The PA field is a relatively new practice, which dates from the early 1960s, when clinician shortages started to become noticeable. Consequently, the need to train and equip experts who could work under the directives of a licensed physician arose, resulting in the creation of PAs.

Typical PA duties include physical examination of patients, keeping medical histories, performing laboratory tests, and completing follow-ups on patients during their course of treatment. All PA training is accredited by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. Each state in the United States has its own specific licensing and practicing restrictions for PAs.

As of 2019, there were a total of 357 PAs licensed in North Dakota, which is equal to 46.85 PAs per 100,000 residents. As shown in Figure 1, the majority worked in urban areas (65.8%), although there were a considerable amount working in isolated rural areas as well (15.8%). On average, physician assistants had been licensed for 10 years and 10 months.

Figure 1. Rural-Urban Designation for Physician Assitants in North Dakota



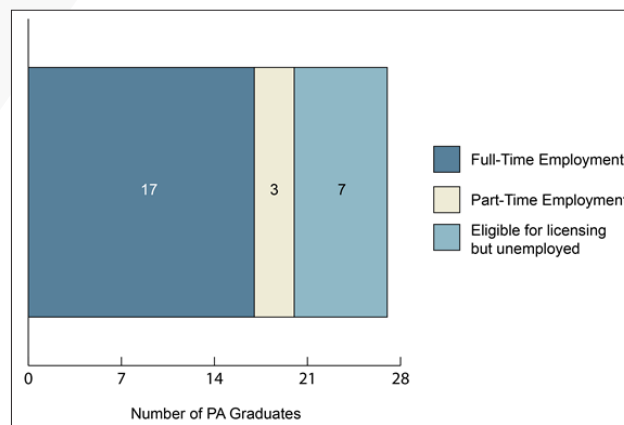
University of North Dakota Physician Assistant Program

In May 2020, the University of North Dakota graduated 28 students from the PA studies program, with most of them already in employment. The following results refer to a 2020 workforce survey completed among the graduates. Out of the 28 students, 27 students passed their certification examination, making them eligible for licensure and employment as PAs.

Background, Employment and Workplace

- Among the 27 graduates eligible for licensing and employment, respective home states of the alumni included North Dakota (n = 11, 41%), Minnesota (n = 8, 30%), South Dakota (n = 4, 15%) and one (3.7%) from each of the following states of Iowa, Idaho, Missouri, and Montana.
- Of the 27 graduates eligible for employment, 17 (63.0%) were employed full-time and 3 (11%) were employed part-time (Figure 2).
- The 20 graduates who reported being employed were working in the following states: North Dakota (n = 9, 45%), Minnesota (n = 6, 30%), South Dakota (n = 3, 15%), Missouri (n = 1, 5%), and Montana (n = 1, 5%).
- Approximately 50% of the employed physician assistant graduates were practicing in rural areas.

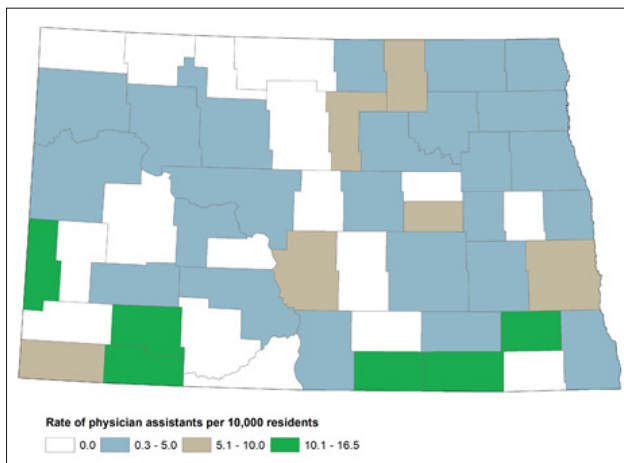
Figure 2. Employment Status of Physician Assistant Graduates



Practice Type

Many of the employed graduates reported working in a primary care setting (n = 10, 50%) – 3 of the 10 worked in family medicine, 2 worked in rural emergency room settings, and 1 in occupational medicine. The next most common employment setting is in surgical specialties including orthopedics (n = 3, 15%), followed by neurosurgery (n = 2, 10%), and general surgery (n = 2, 10%). Graduates also found employment in the following settings: nephology (n = 1), pulmonology (n = 1), and COVID telehealth (n = 1).

Figure 3. Rate of PAs per 10,000 ND residents by county, 2019



Conclusions

- Across the state, there were 357 PAs licensed, with 65.8% working in urban areas.
- In May 2020, there were 28 graduates from UND, 27 of whom passed the certification exam and were eligible for licensing and employment.
- Ten (50%) of the 20 employed graduates practice in rural areas.
- Of these 27, 17 (63%) worked full-time, and 3 (11%) worked part-time.
- Of the 27 graduates, 45% of graduates were employed in North Dakota.
- The average starting salary for graduates is \$113,330 per year.

Data

North Dakota Board of Medicine. (2020). Eligibility Requirements. ndbom.org/practitioners/pa/newapp/eligibility.asp

Physician Assistant Class of 2020 Graduate Workforce Mini-Survey Results. (2020). UND Department of Physician Assistant Studies Internal Program Data