

2021

Physician Assistant Career Start Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Why are supports offered to employers through the Physician Assistant (PA) Career Start Program?

Time-limited financial support is available to facilitate the transition of Ontario PA graduates into the health care system to help address patient care needs. The program aims to encourage the sustainability of the PA profession by connecting new PA graduates with employers who are committed to the financial support and longer-term sustainability of the PA role in their organization.

2. How much support may be provided?

The following time-limited employment support funding may be provided for eligible employers who successfully recruit a 2021 Ontario PA graduate:

- One year funding of up to \$46,000.
- Two year funding of up to \$46,000 per year for PA positions that are in communities with a Rurality Index for Ontario (RIO) score of 40+, or a Northern Urban Referral Centre (NURC) (Timmins, North Bay, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie).
- An incentive grant of \$10,000 to a PA who is employed in a community with a RIO score of 40+, or a NURC, provided for PAs who complete one year of service with employers who qualify for two years of funding.

Employers are expected to match the grant funding to cover the costs of employing a full-time PA. The above grant structure is designed to encourage the employment of PA graduates in geographies that may experience greater recruitment and retention challenges.

3. How can employers use the available support?

Financial supports must be used to provide full-time employment to a 2021 Ontario PA graduate to provide direct patient care. Supports are to be used to help cover the costs associated with full-time employment including salary and benefits. Employers may refer to 1.3 PA Role and Responsibilities in the 2021 PA Career Start Program Guidelines for more details on the PA position.

4. How do employers access this support?

Prospective PA employers must apply and be approved for support. Although any employer interested in adding a PA to their clinical team is encouraged to recruit and employ a PA, only employers who meet specific criteria may be approved to receive financial supports through this initiative. Applicants who are successful in recruiting a 2021 Ontario PA graduate will enter into a funding agreement with the ministry, and will receive the designated supports to help employ that PA.

5. Will priority be given to particular types of employers?

Opportunities for 2021 Ontario PA graduates will be supported in priority settings including Emergency Medicine, Primary Care, and General Internal Medicine. Consideration will also be given to employers in other clinical settings.

- In all cases, support will be targeted to settings where the majority of the care provided is publicly funded and care is team based. Organizations that provide non-publicly funded services may not be approved.
- All prospective employers must provide a plan for integrating the PA into the organization and demonstrate how they will sustain the PA position after Career Start funding ends. Organizations that have not demonstrated this commitment in the past may not be approved for funding.
- Family Health Teams (FHTs) are **ineligible** to receive PA Career Start funding. FHTs interested in hiring a PA should go through their annual FHT budget submission and approval process as they do for other Interdisciplinary Health Providers.

6. What will be expected of PA employers?

It is expected that employers will commit to full-time employment for a newly graduated Ontario PA. The suggested salary level for a newly graduated PA is \$75,000. Benefits should be in line with the organization's existing employment practices. Financial supports are to be used to help cover the costs associated with full-time employment of the PA for the duration of the contract. Employers are expected to exercise appropriate employment practices with the PA, as they would with any employee, in accordance with employment standards in Ontario.

Employers must commit to funding an additional six-week, full-time position for the PA if the PA is not bridged into full-time employment at the end of the funding period.

Employers must ensure that each PA has adequate physician supervision at all times. Supervision should comply with the expectations of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario:

<https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Delegation-of-Controlled-Acts>

Also, as a condition of funding, PA employers will be expected to enter into a transfer payment agreement which will include funding schedules and reporting requirements including monthly confirmation of employment, progress on PA integration and role sustainability, quarterly expenditures, and final and post funding evaluation.

Details regarding reporting requirements will be specified in the funding agreement provided to each employer who successfully recruits a 2021 Ontario PA graduate.

7. What happens if a PA leaves or is terminated during the Career Start Program?

In some circumstances when the PA leaves before the contract end date, the employer may request the position be backfilled. The length of the backfill cannot exceed the balance remaining on the original contract and must be completed within the same time period as the original contract. Backfills must come from the same graduating group as in the original contract.

8. What timelines should we be aware of?

- **October 11** Deadline for employers to submit applications
- **October 26** Ministry notifies employers of approval decision
- **November 5** PAs start to apply for posted positions
- **December 11** Deadline for offer of employment to be accepted
- **December 31** PA Graduates must begin work by this date

Please note that this is an anticipated timeline and is subject to change.

9. How do employers recruit a 2021 Ontario PA graduate?

The ministry will coordinate the application and recruitment process for this initiative and will support prospective PA employers in their efforts to recruit a 2021 Ontario PA graduate.

Prospective employers selected for this initiative will be required to advertise for a 2021 Ontario PA graduate through the ministry. All approved PA jobs will be made available only to the 2021 Ontario PA graduates. Graduates will then submit resumes directly to approved employers to coordinate the screening, interview and job offer process.

10. How many new PA graduates participate in the PA Career Start Program?

In 2021 up to 54 students will graduate from Ontario's two PA Education Programs at McMaster University and The Consortium of PA Education (University of Toronto in collaboration with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) and The Michener Institute of Education at UHN). While the majority of PA graduates choose to participate in the PA Career Start Program, positions and funding are not guaranteed.

11. Will employers be assigned a 2021 Ontario PA graduate?

No, approved employers are responsible for conducting a recruitment process that is open to all new PA graduates in that year. It is up to the employer to ensure recruitment and hiring of a suitable PA for the identified clinical setting.

The PA Career Start Program is delivered on an annual cycle that supports employment opportunities for new PA graduates starting within the year of their graduation or shortly afterwards.

It is important to note that financial support will only be available to approved employers who are successful in recruiting a 2021 Ontario PA graduate within the period of availability.

12. Can employers receive financial support for more than one 2021 Ontario PA graduate?

Prospective PA employers will be selected based on the strength of their application and their commitment to the long-term integration and financial support of the PA role. Employers may submit applications for more than one 2021 Ontario PA graduate only if they are able to make a compelling case for more than one position and are committed to sustaining and supporting all positions when Career Start funding ends.

Employers wishing to hire more than one Ontario PA graduate must submit separate applications for each position.

13. How do employers apply?

The 2021 PA Career Start Guidelines, application form and FAQs are posted on the ministry's PA website at

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/hhrsd/physicians/physician_assistant_career_start.aspx

Applications must be submitted to the ministry by October 11, 2021.

14. What if the employer is not approved for financial support through the PA Career Start Program?

Employers who apply and are not selected for financial support are encouraged to proceed with employing a PA if they can afford to do so and can sustain these costs. Employers who are not approved for employment support through this initiative will still be able to access recruitment assistance through the ministry.

15. Where can I get more information?

Information about PA practice in Ontario is available at [Physician Assistant Resources](#). Questions about the 2021 PA Career Start Program may be directed to pacareerstart@ontario.ca

16. Can a PA accept more than one position at a time?

Employment decisions are at the sole discretion of the employer and the employee. However, the ministry strongly encourages PAs to accept only one offer so that employers are able to fill a vacant position with the next available candidate before the ministry's deadline.