



Money and Taxes

Share Story



# 10 Highest-Paying Physician Assistant Specialties for 2024

By [Moira K. McGhee](#) | Feb 15, 2024

The diminishing ranks of physicians have led to a significant surge in the demand for **physician assistants (PAs)**. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the **demand for PAs** is anticipated to grow 27% between 2022 and 2032, making it the 7th-fastest growing occupation nationwide, tied with epidemiologists.

In the rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, PAs are playing an increasingly pivotal role, with their scope of practice expanding across various medical specialties. The increased demand for these highly skilled healthcare professionals has sparked interest in discovering which of these specialties offer the highest financial rewards. Keep reading to delve into the top 10 highest-paying physician assistant specialties based on Vivian Health's analysis.

**Table of Contents**

- Elevate Your Salary with PA Specialties
- 10 Top Paying PA Specialties Projected in 2024
  - 1. Pulmonology PA
  - 2. Neurology PA
  - 3. Nephrology PA
  - 4. Critical Care/Intensive Care PA
  - 5. Cardiovascular/Cardiothoracic Surgery PA
  - 6. General Surgery PA
  - 7. Oncology PA
  - 8. Psychiatry PA
  - 9. Neurosurgery PA
  - 10. Urology PA
- Additional Physician Assistant Specialties

## Elevate Your Salary with PA Specialties

Becoming a PA is a long-term commitment that requires you to obtain a license to practice medicine. To earn licensure, you must graduate from an accredited PA program and pass the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (**PANCE**). Once passed, PAs earn National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) certification and can use the **PA-C designation**.

While **salaries for PAs** vary based on education, experience, facility and location, specialty can also significantly affect how much you take home each pay period. Specializing in specific patient populations or conditions can boost a PA's salary.

Specialty certifications offered by the NCCPA are called Certificates of Added Qualifications (CAQs). These voluntary credentials prove that a Board-Certified PA has advanced knowledge and expertise in their chosen field. While the NCCPA doesn't offer CAQs for every specialty, it currently offers the following certifications that align with popular specialties:

- **Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery CAQ**
- **Dermatology CAQ**
- **Emergency Medicine CAQ**
- **Hospital Medicine CAQ**
- **Nephrology CAQ**
- **Obstetrics and Gynecology CAQ (Coming in 2024)**
- **Occupational Medicine CAQ (Coming in 2025)**
- **Orthopaedic Surgery CAQ**
- **Pediatrics CAQ**
- **Palliative Medicine and Hospice Care CAQ**
- **Psychiatry CAQ**

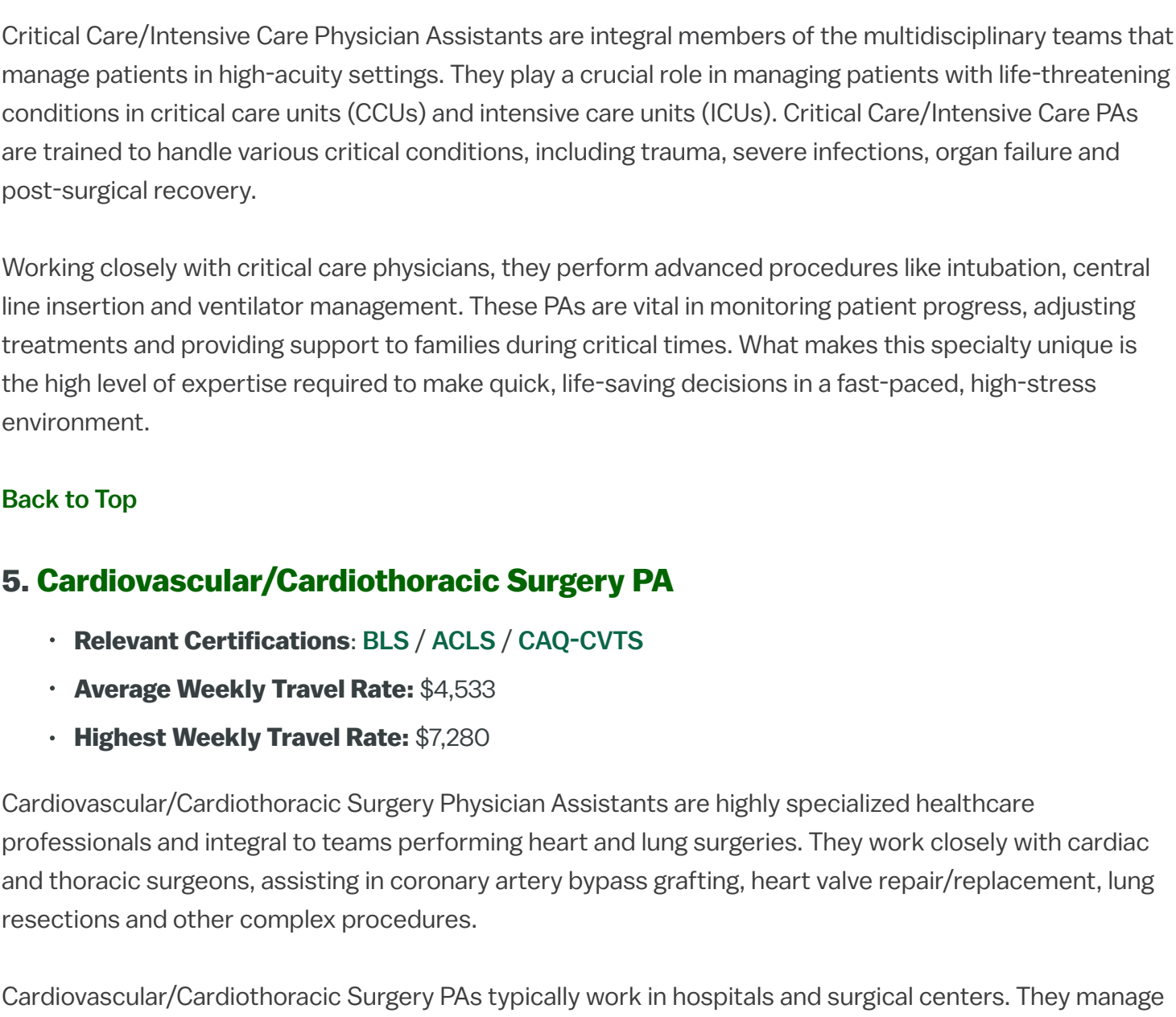
Another contributing factor to a physician assistant's earning potential is whether they work in **staff PA jobs** or pursue **travel roles**. Despite the recent cooling in travel healthcare salaries, travel pay for PAs still typically outweighs staff roles.

Thus, we created our top 10 list by comparing the average weekly pay rates of travel PA jobs in various specialties posted on Vivian Health over the past year. We ranked them based on the highest average weekly travel rate paid.

We also provided the highest hourly travel rate to demonstrate the ceiling in these top-paying roles during this period. However, the same specialty could pay more or less at your facility since we used national averages, not state or local data.

[Back to Top](#)

## 10 Top Paying PA Specialties Projected in 2024



Beginning a career as a physician assistant takes more time than many other allied health positions because it's an **advanced practice role**. The growing shortage of physicians in direct patient care influences the increased demand for PAs, making this field the **fastest-growing allied health profession** and among the top 5 **fastest growing healthcare careers in 2024**.

### 1. Pulmonology PA

- **Relevant Certifications:** BLS / ACLS / CAQ-HM
- **Average Weekly Travel Rate:** \$6,576
- **Highest Weekly Travel Rate:** \$6,594

Pulmonary Medicine Physician Assistants specialize in pulmonology, a branch of medicine focusing on the respiratory system. Their expertise is crucial in providing comprehensive care to patients with chronic and acute respiratory issues. They diagnose and manage asthma, COPD, pulmonary fibrosis and other conditions impacting the lungs and other parts of the respiratory tract.

Unique to this PA specialty, they perform procedures like thoracentesis and interpret pulmonary function tests, making them vital in the early detection and management of respiratory diseases. Pulmonology PAs also develop treatment plans and provide patient education to help individuals improve their respiratory health and quality of life. They may work in hospitals, clinics and specialized respiratory units and often collaborate with pulmonologists but also work with other healthcare providers.

### 2. Neurology PA

- **Relevant Certifications:** BLS / ACLS / CAQ-HM
- **Average Weekly Travel Rate:** \$6,013
- **Highest Weekly Travel Rate:** \$7,560

Neurology Physician Assistants play a pivotal role in diagnosing and treating epilepsy, stroke, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease and other neurological conditions. They work in various settings, including hospitals, neurology clinics and research facilities, providing patient care alongside neurologists.

Their specialized training in neurology enables them to conduct neurological exams, manage chronic conditions and assist in neurosurgical procedures. Neurology PAs provide continuous, specialized care for patients with complex neurological needs, enhancing patient management and outcomes. This PA specialty stands out for its focus on the intricate nervous system, requiring a deep understanding of neuroanatomy and pathophysiology.

[Back to Top](#)

### 3. Nephrology PA

- **Relevant Certifications:** BLS / ACLS / CAQ-Neph
- **Average Weekly Travel Rate:** \$5,400
- **Highest Weekly Travel Rate:** \$5,400

Nephrology Physician Assistants specialize in caring for patients with kidney diseases, including chronic kidney disease, acute kidney injury, hypertension and electrolyte imbalances. Their expertise allows them to perform detailed assessments, manage dialysis treatments and adjust medications to maintain optimal kidney function. They're essential for their ability to provide holistic care, from early detection and treatment of kidney-related issues to patient education on lifestyle changes.

This PA specialty is unique because it demands a deep understanding of renal physiology and the ability to manage complex conditions that affect overall health. Nephrology PAs work in hospitals, outpatient clinics and dialysis centers, working alongside nephrologists and other healthcare professionals and playing a crucial role in managing kidney health.

### 4. Critical Care/Intensive Care PA

- **Relevant Certifications:** BLS / ACLS / CAQ-HM
- **Average Weekly Travel Rate:** \$5,239
- **Highest Weekly Travel Rate:** \$6,200

Critical Care/Intensive Care Physician Assistants are integral members of the multidisciplinary teams that manage patients in high-acuity settings. They play a crucial role in managing patients with life-threatening conditions in critical care units (CCUs) and intensive care units (ICUs). Critical Care/Intensive Care PAs are trained to handle various critical conditions, including trauma, severe infections, organ failure and post-surgical recovery.

Working closely with critical care physicians, they perform advanced procedures like intubation, central line insertion and ventilator management. These PAs are vital in monitoring patient progress, adjusting treatments and providing support to families during critical times. What makes this specialty unique is the high level of expertise required to make quick, life-saving decisions in a fast-paced, high-stress environment.

[Back to Top](#)

### 5. Cardiovascular/Cardiothoracic Surgery PA

- **Relevant Certifications:** BLS / ACLS / CAQ-CVTS
- **Average Weekly Travel Rate:** \$4,533
- **Highest Weekly Travel Rate:** \$7,280

Cardiovascular/Cardiothoracic Surgery Physician Assistants are highly specialized healthcare professionals and integral to teams performing heart and lung surgeries. They work closely with cardiac and thoracic surgeons, assisting in coronary artery bypass grafting, heart valve repair/replacement, lung resections and other complex procedures.

Cardiovascular/Cardiothoracic Surgery PAs typically work in hospitals and surgical centers. They manage pre-operative and post-operative care, ensuring patients receive comprehensive treatment. Their skills extend to operating specialized equipment and performing tasks like closing incisions, harvesting veins for bypass grafts and monitoring patients' cardiac status. This PA specialty stands out for its combination of advanced surgical techniques and critical patient care. It requires precision, technical skill and a deep understanding of cardiovascular physiology to improve patient outcomes in life-saving surgeries.

### 6. General Surgery PA

- **Relevant Certifications:** BLS / ACLS
- **Average Weekly Travel Rate:** \$4,472
- **Highest Weekly Travel Rate:** \$7,060

General Surgery Physician Assistants are versatile healthcare professionals who play a critical part in surgical teams across various procedures, from minor outpatient surgeries to major intra-abdominal operations.

They work in hospitals, surgical centers and clinics, assisting in surgeries, managing pre-operative and post-operative care, and conducting follow-up visits. Their responsibilities include suturing, wound care and assisting in laparoscopic and open surgeries, making them indispensable in the efficiency of surgical services. Unique to this specialty is their broad skill set, allowing them to adapt to different surgical environments and procedures, thus ensuring comprehensive patient care and support throughout the surgical process.

[Back to Top](#)

### 7. Oncology PA

- **Relevant Certifications:** BLS / ACLS / CAQ-HM
- **Average Weekly Travel Rate:** \$4,422
- **Highest Weekly Travel Rate:** \$5,200

Oncology Physician Assistants specialize in the care of patients with cancer and work closely with oncologists in hospitals, cancer centers and outpatient clinics. They play a pivotal role in managing cancer treatment plans, including chemotherapy administration, symptom management and follow-up care.

Their expertise extends to educating patients and families on diagnosis, treatment options and side effects, providing a supportive link throughout a patient's journey. Unique to oncology, these PAs receive training in the complexities of cancer care, including the psychological and social aspects, making them vital in delivering holistic and compassionate care to individuals facing challenging diagnoses.

### 8. Psychiatry PA

- **Relevant Certifications:** BLS / ACLS / CAQ-Psy
- **Average Weekly Travel Rate:** \$4,300
- **Highest Weekly Travel Rate:** \$4,800

Psychiatry Physician Assistants specialize in mental health and are essential in filling the growing need for mental health services. They assess and treat patients with various mental health and emotional disorders, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. A Psychiatry PA's responsibilities encompass medication management, therapy and collaboration with psychiatrists and other healthcare providers to develop comprehensive treatment plans.

Unique to this specialty is the PA's focus on both the psychological and pharmacological aspects of care, providing a balanced approach to mental health treatment. Their ability to build rapport and trust with patients is crucial, making them key players in delivering empathetic and effective psychiatric care. They work in psychiatric units, outpatient clinics and community health centers, helping patients achieve improved mental well-being.

[Back to Top](#)

### 9. Neurosurgery PA

- **Relevant Certifications:** BLS / ACLS
- **Average Weekly Travel Rate:** \$4,288
- **Highest Weekly Travel Rate:** \$5,200

Neurosurgery Physician Assistants are highly specialized healthcare professionals who work alongside neurosurgeons to manage disorders affecting the brain, spinal cord and peripheral nerves. They're employed in hospitals and specialized neurosurgical units, assisting in complex surgeries such as tumor resections, spinal surgeries and trauma interventions.

A Neurosurgery PA's responsibilities extend beyond the operating room to include pre-operative evaluations, post-operative care and patient education on recovery and rehabilitation. Unique to this specialty is the PA's expertise in neuroanatomical structures and surgical techniques, equipping them to handle the complexities of neurosurgical procedures and patient care. Their precision and attention to detail are paramount in successfully treating neurological conditions.

### 10. Urology PA

- **Relevant Certifications:** BLS / ACLS / CAQ-HM
- **Average Weekly Travel Rate:** \$4,179
- **Highest Weekly Travel Rate:** \$4,600

Urology Physician Assistants specialize in treating conditions affecting the urinary tract and male reproductive organs. They work in hospitals, urology clinics and surgical centers, assisting urologists in cystoscopies, vasectomies and the management of benign prostatic hyperplasia, among other procedures. Urology PAs also care for patients with urinary incontinence, kidney stones and urinary tract infections.

Primary duties within this PA role include performing assessments, administering treatments and educating patients on disease management and prevention. Unique to this specialty is the Urology PA's expertise in a mix of surgical and clinical skills tailored to urologic health.

[Back to Top](#)

## Additional Physician Assistant Specialties



While these PA specialties didn't land in the top 10 highest-paying positions on this year's list, they still present attractive career opportunities. These specialized fields, ranging from pain management to pediatrics, provide unique opportunities to develop specific skills and expertise. By pursuing a career in one of these niche areas, PAs gain valuable experience and contribute to delivering high-quality patient care.


Specialty	Average Weekly Travel Pay	Max Weekly Travel Pay
Radiology	\$4,153	\$4,400
Orthopedic Surgery	\$4,100	\$6,232
Neonatology	\$4,067	\$4,600
Emergency Medicine	\$3,939	\$4,600
Cardiology	\$3,778	\$4,800
Urgent Care	\$3,775	\$4,690
Obstetrics / Gynecology	\$3,719	\$4,600
Gastroenterology	\$3,714	\$5,200
Hospitalist	\$3,685	\$6,400
Internal Medicine	\$3,610	\$4,800
Family Practice	\$3,333	\$5,560
Pediatrics	\$3,262	\$3,800
Endocrinology	\$3,200	\$3,200
Pain Management	\$3,173	\$3,173
Occupational Medicine	\$3,060	\$3,010

Demand for PAs within a specific field can vary by state, city and facility based on local needs, potentially driving up salaries in some locations but not others.

Whether you're a current PA looking to specialize or a student contemplating a career path, our analysis, which will be updated annually, provides valuable insight into where the greatest earning potential lies within this essential healthcare profession.


**Download the Vivian App** and take your healthcare career to the next level by applying for staff or travel positions within one of these high-paying PA specialties.

[Back to Top](#)



**Moira K. McGhee**  
 Moira K. McGhee is Vivian's Senior Editor & All-Around Wordsmith. As part of the Vivian Health team, she strives to help support the empowerment of nurses and other healthcare professionals in their pursuits to find top-notch travel, staff, local contract and per diem positions faster and easier than ever.


Comments (2)



By [Sylvia Miller](#) February 24, 2024 at 5:06 pm

I want to get started as medical assistant in Tennessee, Cleveland, Chattanooga, or Dayton.

[Reply](#)



By [Moira K. McGhee](#) February 24, 2024 at 10:22 pm

Hello Sylvia and thanks for reaching out! If you're looking for information on how to start a medical assistant career, start with our [Medical Assistant Career Guide](#), found here: <https://www.vivian.com/explore/allied-health/medical-assistant/>. If you've already taken the steps to become a medical assistant and you're seeking a job in the field, browse the medical assistant jobs currently posted on our jobs marketplace, found here: <https://www.vivian.com/allied-health/medical-assistant/>. We wish you the best of luck reaching your career goal and hope Vivian can help!

[Reply](#)

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked \*

Comment \*

Name \*

Email \*

[Post Comment](#) >


## Most Popular on Community Hub

### Vivian Newsletter

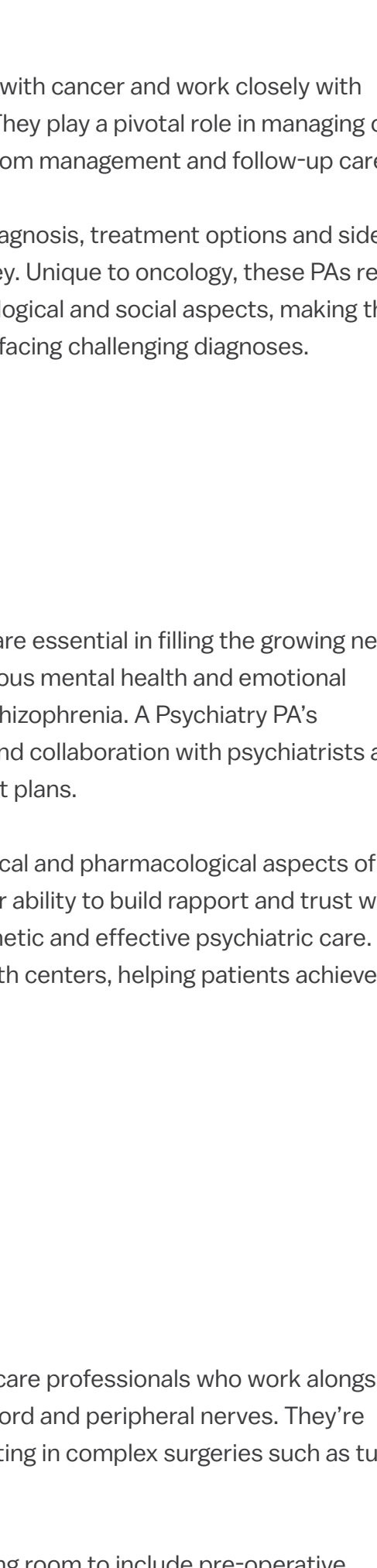
Sign up to receive updates with healthcare industry trends, travel HCP tips and much more.

Email \*

[Sign up](#) >



**Tips for Nailing Nursing Interviews**



Hi there,

Want to not yourself apart from everyone else interviewing? Prepare a professional portfolio on your "strong points" to provide evidence of everything you've learned during your interview. These guidelines require employees to keep portfolios as part of the clinical already have one. Not time to use it.

Big and professional resumes. Sample of my resume that you can use as a part of the clinical a very helpful one. Portfolio is a valuable in your professional career.

Visit our website

Candidates	Employers	Company
Locations	For employers	About
Salaries	Healthcare facilities	FAQ
Vivian blog	Staffing agencies	Careers
Sitemap	Employer blog	Contact us
Community Sitemap		Media Inquiries