

### **Essential Functions for the Physical Therapist Assistant Student**

Students enrolled in the Salt Lake Community College Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) program must perform certain essential functions in order to participate safely in and to complete program requirements. The following essential functions define the minimum cognitive, communication, motor, and behavioral/social abilities required for successful program completion as well as entry-level physical therapy practice.

#### **Cognitive Abilities**

Important cognitive skills for the successful physical therapy practitioner include the ability to recall and comprehend large amounts of information and to apply this information to a patient's complex problems.

The PTA student must have the ability to:

- a) Recognize and define problems, develop and implement solutions, and evaluate outcomes.
- b) Demonstrate critical thinking skills and appropriate clinical decision making with an ability to differentiate relevant from irrelevant information.
- c) Memorize, analyze, synthesize, and apply large volumes of technical information in classroom and laboratory environments.

#### **Communication Abilities**

Effective communication skills enable the physical therapy practitioner to obtain relevant information from patients and to effectively explain treatment procedures to patients, family members, and other health care professionals.

The PTA student must have the ability to:

- a) Effectively process and comprehend written and verbal communications, in the English language, in any form of media at a level consistent with full participation in academic and clinical course work.
- b) Utilize appropriate and effective verbal, written, and non-verbal communication. This includes the proper use of standard medical terminology as appropriate.
- c) Respond appropriately, both verbally and in writing, in the English language when communicating with classmates and patients.
- d) Participate in group and individual discussions, present oral and written assignments, and provide constructive feedback in the English language.

#### **Motor Abilities**

The practice of physical therapy requires that the practitioner possess the ability to perform basic data collection and therapy procedures that require specific physical skills and stamina. A PTA must also use visual, auditory, and sensory information in the observation and treatment of patients.

The PTA student must have the ability to:

- a) Attend classes 30 or more hours per week during each academic semester. Classes consist of a combination of lecture, discussion, skills laboratory, and clinical activities.
- b) Participate in occasional community-facing events representing and promoting the profession of physical therapy.
- c) Participate in clinical internships for 40 or more hours per week on a schedule that corresponds to the operating hours of the clinical setting in which you are placed.
- d) Lift a minimum weight of 10 pounds overhead and be able to move a 150 pound dependent person from one surface to another.
- e) Carry in your arms up to 25 pounds while walking up to a minimum of 50 feet.
- f) Exert 75 pounds of push/pull forces up to 50 feet and sometimes exert 150 pounds of push/pull forces from a standing or seated position.
- g) Lift from floor to waist 40 pounds.

- h) Able to stand frequently throughout the day up to 8-10 hours.
- i) Twist, bend, stoop, squat, kneel, crawl, and reach above shoulder level.
- j) Move from place-to-place and position-to-position at a speed that permits safe handling of classmates and patients.
- k) Stand and walk while providing support to a classmate simulating a disability or while supporting a person with a disability.
- l) Climb stairs and negotiate uneven terrain without stumbling or falling and without holding on to rails or other objects.
- m) Use hands to manipulate very small equipment (with knobs, dials, levers, and switches), palpate classmate's or patient's body structures, and safely guide a classmate's or patient's movement.
- n) Perform physical tasks while maintaining awareness of external factors including classmate/patient response, monitor displays, equipment function, and/or surroundings during all skills labs.

**Behavioral and Social Abilities**

The physical therapist assistant must demonstrate the ability to practice in a professional and ethical manner and possess the emotional stability to practice in a stressful work environment.

The PTA student must have the ability to:

- a) Appropriately handle the physical, emotional, and mental challenges of a rigorous curriculum and diverse clinical practice environments.
- b) Demonstrate flexibility and willingness to adapt to changing environments or schedules.
- c) Demonstrate empathy, compassion, integrity, honesty, and concern for others of all cultures.
- d) Demonstrate the ability to respond appropriately to unpredictable or stressful situations.
- e) Demonstrate behaviors and attitudes that protect the safety and well-being of others, especially patients and classmates.
- f) Demonstrate professional, ethical, and legal behavior in all academic and clinical environments.

I have read and understand the essential functions.

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Print name

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Signature

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Date