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Federal Section VA Service Rep

VA PT Hiring Information FAQs

How can I get hired at the VA?

This is a commonly asked question among students, new graduates, as well as experienced PTs and PTAs who are working in the private sector. The VA provides a desirable clinical environment for physical therapy professionals who are passionate about working with our nation's Veterans. There are numerous personal and professional benefits of working within the VA also, and as a result, job postings tend to draw many competitive applicants with diverse backgrounds. There are some key steps a prospective candidate can take in boosting their odds of getting hired for a VA PT or PTA position. Getting your foot in the door is an important step in boosting your chances of getting hired at a VA. Here are some ways to stand out from the crowd.

Clinical internships

Completing a clinical rotation at a VA (and doing a good job!) is a great way to put yourself in position to get hired for a future VA position. The reason is simple – a clinical rotation gives you the opportunity to essentially “audition” for a potential future job opening within that VA. It provides you the opportunity to show your clinical and interpersonal skills while working with Veterans for several weeks. It also allows you to establish good relationships with your clinical instructor, fellow staff, support staff, and supervisors. This can be invaluable for new grads competing against more experienced applicants for a potential job posting. It can also be beneficial in applying for a position at a different VA as you will have had experience working with the Veteran population and working in the VA system. This will stand out on a resume. Having a strong reference within the VA system can certainly help boost your chances at another VA. Though it will not guarantee you are offered a position, it is difficult to overstate the benefit of having successfully completed a clinical rotation and having strong references within the VA system if you are seeking employment in a VA physical therapy position.

Successful completion of a clinical rotation within the DoD can also be beneficial in seeking employment at a VA. Clinical opportunities within the DoD typically have very strong reputations in providing excellent learning opportunities to PT and PTA students, while providing opportunities to work with both active duty and retired service members.

If your school does not have clinical opportunities at a VA, it may be worth asking your Director of Clinical Education about establishing a clinical rotation within the VA. Many VA's accept PT/PTA students at all stages of education. The VA provides a high quality and diverse learning experience which should be attractive for any school to have as a clinical affiliation.

Post-graduate programs

There are several PT residency opportunities among different ABPTS specialist certifications throughout the VA system. Currently, there are residencies available in orthopedic, neurologic, and geriatric specialties. Many residents who successfully complete residency transition to full-time roles upon successful completion of their residency program. Click [here](#) for a list of current VA PT residency programs.

Volunteer

Many VA PT departments will accept volunteers to assist in escorting Veterans and keeping the clinic tidy. Volunteering allows prospective PT and PTs to gain familiarity with the Veteran population in the PT setting, while getting to interact with PT staff on a regular basis. It shows you are willing take initiative to be a part of the VA mission of serving Veterans – this is important to hiring staff. It is a great way to put yourself on the radar of staff and supervisors within the PT department for future employment opportunities.

Communicate

Making a cold call to a PT supervisor is probably not the first thing that comes to mind when trying to land a job at the VA. This is actually a great way to put yourself out there and express your interest in working for the VA. It is important to have your “Why?” figured out before meeting. Think about what your reason is for wanting to work within the VA. Understanding the VA Mission and I CARE core values is important. Taking time to meet with a PT supervisor in person to introduce yourself and express interest in future job openings is a great way to put yourself on the radar of key hiring staff.

If your school does not have a VA clinical affiliation, and you are unable to volunteer, I highly recommend contacting the PT hiring manager directly and give them a resume. That direct contact alerts that manager that the person is interested in the VA and they can be hired without posting the position to USAJobs.

How can I find PT/PTA job postings in the VA?

Job postings for the VA can be found at www.usajobs.gov. However, not all job openings are posted online. PT and PTA positions are classified within the VA as “Hybrid 30” positions (HR lingo), which means PT departments can hire directly without posting. This is advantageous for clinics as it streamlines the hiring process and fills positions efficiently – very attractive to hiring staff! VA PT clinics often fill positions with well qualified staff through their own pool of candidates. VA PT clinics do this based on peer referral or past student recommendations, so many positions rarely make it to the USAJobs site. All candidates must meet the qualification standards basic requirements outlined by the VA.