

# **Frequently Asked Questions for Physician Assistants Applying for Licensure in Arkansas**

## **From the Arkansas Academy of Physician Assistants**

Applications for a physician assistant license in Arkansas require substantial paperwork, verification from a variety of institutions, a criminal background check, a jurisprudence exam, and an interview with the PA Advisory Committee to the State Medical Board. The application process can be complex and lengthy. The Arkansas Academy of Physician Assistants has worked to put together answers to some common questions about completing the licensing process.

### **How should I write the protocol?**

The Board is going to look for a generally accepted practice pattern—PAs practicing with appropriate supervision and performing tasks that are within their training and experience. The Board provides a sample protocol on its website at <http://www.armedicalboard.org/support/sub-downloads.asp>, so you can get an idea of how to organize and describe your delegated duties. One thing to avoid is using general statements like “other duties as assigned.” The board will want to know what these other duties are, so you should list them on the protocol.

### **What do I need to know for the jurisprudence exam?**

Knowing the Arkansas laws and regulations on PA practice is the best preparation for not only the jurisprudence exam, but also for writing the protocol and completing the required interview. The good news is you don’t have to commit the whole thing to memory—the exam is open book. But it’s still a good idea to familiarize yourself with the laws and rules ahead of time. You can find a summary of the laws and regulations at <http://www.aapa.org/gandp/statelaws/arkansas.pdf>.

### **How should I prepare for my interview?**

Once again, know the laws and rules. Know what you’ve put in your protocol and be sure that your plan for practice is consistent with the rules with regard to supervision, scope of practice, and prescriptive authority. As you know, the supervising physician must always be able to be present within 1 hour when you are practicing. Do you have a plan for when your supervising physician is away at a conference or on vacation? Do you know how often you must submit copies of controlled substance prescriptions to the Board?

### **What should I say about my supervising physician?**

Remember that Arkansas law defines a PA as a “dependent medical practitioner who provides health care services under the supervision of a physician with a physician-drafted protocol.” Clearly, the Board sees PAs as physician extenders and expects PAs to have a close working relationship with their supervising physicians—and the physician must be the leader of the physician-PA team. The Board is wary of PAs who propose practice plans that have a minimal role for the physician, and has been known to deny full licensure for this reason. Be ready to describe clearly how your supervising physician will supervise your activities, from evaluating your performance to being available to see patients when needed. Make clear how you and the supervising physician will maintain adequate supervision while dividing hospital rounds and call. Remember, because you are extending the capacity of your supervising physician, the physician is just as responsible for the patients you see as the ones he or she sees. Make sure the Board understands how your supervising physician will be involved in the care you provide—if they don’t, you may not get a permanent license.

### **Where else can I find help with the application process?**

A great way to prepare for your interview is to talk with some PAs who have already completed theirs. If you don’t have regular contact with other PAs in your workplace, contact ARAPA to connect with other Arkansas PAs.

AAPA also has a couple of useful publications available on its website. First, there is a summary of Arkansas PA laws and regulations at <http://www.aapa.org/gandp/statelaws/arkansas.pdf>. There is also an Issue Brief on Physician-PA Team Practice that may give you some helpful ideas for describing how you and your supervising physician will work together. It can be found at <http://www.aapa.org/gandp/issuebrief/pateamb.pdf>.

### **You didn’t ask, but we want to add. . .**

Be sure your application paperwork is complete and free of typos, inconsistencies, and other mistakes—they will only cause delays as you straighten them out with the Board. Put your best professional foot forward in your application. It is your first contact with the Board and its staff.

It’s always a good idea to make a copy of each document you submit to the Board or send to an institution for verification, and note when you send it.