



**Minimum Eligibility Requirements and General Information
for all Physical Therapist Specialist Certification Examinations:
Cardiovascular & Pulmonary, Clinical Electrophysiologic, Geriatric,
Neurologic, Oncologic, Orthopaedic, Pediatric, Sports, and Women’s Health**

1. Licensure

Applicants must hold a current permanent/unrestricted license to practice physical therapy in the United States or any of its possessions or territories.

2. Fee Schedule/Application Deadline

Applicants are required to pay application review and examination fees. **The application review fee is non-refundable.** Upon submission of an application, applicants are granted online access to an electronic copy of the *Description of Specialty Practice (DSP)* as well as the corresponding *Self-Assessment Tool for Physical Therapists* within the online application system.

Fees for the specialist certification examinations are as follows:

| | APTA Member | Non-APTA Member | Payment and Application Submission Deadline |
|--|--------------------|------------------------|--|
| Application Review Fee | \$525 | \$870 | <i>July 1: Cardiovascular & Pulmonary, Clinical Electrophysiology, Oncology, and Women’s Health. July 31: Geriatric, Neurologic, Orthopaedic, Pediatric, and Sports applicants.</i> |
| Examination Fee | \$810 | \$1, 535 | <i>November 30: all specialties</i> |
| Total Fees | \$1, 335 | \$2, 405 | |
| <i>All applications must be submitted through the online system at www.abpts.org.</i> | | | |

3. Time Limit for Active Application/Reapplication Eligibility

Applicant files will remain active for only 2 consecutive exam administrations. However, eligibility for the second exam administration requires an online reapplication submission, reapplication fee, as well as the current examination fee. This policy applies to those who choose to delay sitting for the exam, those who are not approved to sit for the examination, and those who do not pass the exam. Eligible reapplicants will receive reapplication information by email directly from the Specialist Certification Program. Reapplicants must meet the current application eligibility requirements to be eligible to sit for the next year’s exam. After two consecutive exam administrations, you must submit an entirely new application and initial applicant review fee to apply for specialist certification.

| | APTA Member | Non-APTA Member | Payment and Application Submission Deadline |
|--|--------------------|------------------------|--|
| Reapplication Review Fee | \$170 | \$170 | <i>August 31: all specialties</i> |
| Examination Fee | \$810 | \$1, 535 | <i>November 30: all specialties</i> |
| Total Fees | \$980 | \$1,705 | |
| <i>All reapplications must be submitted through the online system at www.abpts.org.</i> | | | |

4. Additional Minimum Eligibility Requirements by Specialty Area

Cardiovascular and Pulmonary:

Advanced Cardiac Life Support Certification

Applicants must be currently certified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) by the American Heart Association.

Data Analysis Project

Applicants must submit evidence of participation in a clinical data analysis project directly related to the cardiovascular and pulmonary specialty area within the last ten (10) years. Acceptable data analysis projects include: treatment efficacy studies, such as a quality assurance or utilization review project, program analysis, structured surveys, formal systematic reviews as well as formal clinical research trials. Projects that will not fulfill this criterion include projects that do not start with a question or purpose, do not devise a methodology to answer the question, collect data, determine the results and reach a conclusion. Examples of projects that are not acceptable include a literature review, a case report or case series, or the development of patient education materials. Projects must be completed and dissemination concluded at an appropriate level and degree that is congruent with the scope of project at the time of application submission. Examples of appropriate and reasonable dissemination include a conference presentation or publication for a funded research project; or presentation or in-service to the primary stakeholders of the project's results in the case of a data analysis or quality assurance project.

Submission of the data analysis project should be in the form of (1) a brief statement that describes your specific involvement (study design, data collection, data analysis, etc.) and (2) project description that includes an abstract summarizing the project in which you participated (written in standard form, i.e. purpose, methods, results and conclusions): and a brief statement of the limitations of the study design/methodology, method of disseminating the results, and how the project has changed the candidate's practice of cardiovascular and pulmonary physical therapy.

Whether the applicant fulfills the data analysis project requirements will be evaluated according to the following questions:

1. Is the project related to cardiovascular and pulmonary physical therapy?

2. Has the applicant submitted evidence of participation that demonstrates scholarly activity and knowledge of the research process? Acceptable roles in the project include defining the study question or purpose, devising the study methodology, and data analysis. Participation in data collection only does not fulfill this requirement.
3. Has the project been completed and the results disseminated to advance the practice of cardiovascular and pulmonary physical therapy?

Successful applicants will be able to answer yes to all of the above questions. Please see the document posted on the ABPTS website for additional guidance to project submission.

Direct Patient Care

Applicants must meet requirements for Option A or Option B.

Option A:

Applicants must submit evidence of 2,000 hours of direct patient care as a licensed United States physical therapist (temporary license excluded) in the specialty area within the last ten (10) years, 25% (500) of which must have occurred within the last three (3) years. Direct patient care must include activities in each of the elements of patient/client management applicable to the specialty area and included in the *Description of Specialty Practice: Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Physical Therapy* (DSP). These elements, as defined in the *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*, are examination, evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis, and intervention.

Practice Settings: The Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Specialty Council recommends that direct patient care include patient/client management of individuals with a primary injury, disease, or other condition involving the cardiovascular and pulmonary systems in both acute and rehabilitation settings.

Option B:

Applicants must submit evidence of successful completion of an APTA-accredited postprofessional cardiovascular and pulmonary clinical residency completed within the last 10 years. Applicants who are currently enrolled in an ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residencies, or are enrolled in a residency program that has been granted candidacy status, may apply for the specialist certification examination in the appropriate specialty area prior to completion of the clinical residency. These applicants will be conditionally approved to sit for the examination, as long as they meet all other eligibility requirements, pending submission of evidence of successful completion of the ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residency to APTA's Specialist Certification Program, no later than 1 month before the examination window opens. To verify your residency program's credentialing status, please visit www.abptrfe.org.

Clinical Electrophysiologic:

Clinical Education Experience Documentation

Applicants must submit a list of any individual learning experiences (at least 1, no more than 3) related to the practice of clinical Electrophysiologic physical therapy completed within the past 10 years. The experience(s) must be with a physical therapist who is board-certified in clinical electrophysiology or a physician (MD or DO) who is board-certified in electrodiagnostic testing (i.e., a neurologist or physiatrist).

Applicants must submit a letter from the colleague who provided oversight of the educational experience. The letter must describe the interaction between the colleagues, and state that in the opinion of the more experienced colleague the applicant is prepared to practice clinical electrophysiology (electrodiagnostic testing) independently. The Clinical Electrophysiologic Specialty Council will determine whether an experience meets the requirements for this standard. A sample letter may be found [here](#).

Patient Reports and Testing Logs

Applicants are required to submit actual patient reports that have been completed within the last three (3) years. Submitted cases must be representative of abnormal findings and include one of each of the following: (1) one report must be for a patient with a proximal level compromise representing a radiculopathic process. (2) one report must be for a patient demonstrating a peripheral nerve entrapment, and (3) one report must be for a patient demonstrating a polyneuropathic process.

Applicants must submit 500 of their most recent complete electroneuromyography examinations that were conducted within the last 10 years. These examinations should be documented in a testing log and include the following information: study number, date of study (month, year) and outcome of testing (e.g., normal study, polyneuropathy, radiculopathy, carpal tunnel).

Direct Patient Care/ Electrophysiologic Testing

Applicants must meet requirements for Option A or Option B.

Option A:

Applicants must submit evidence of 2,000 hours of direct patient care as a licensed United States physical therapist (temporary license excluded) in the specialty area within the last ten (10) years, 25% (500) of which must have occurred within the last three (3) years. Please note that eligible direct patient care hours only include the time spent practicing within your specific specialty area, and as a licensed physical therapist in the United States or any of its possessions or territories. The applicant must include evidence of performing a minimum of 500 complete electroneuromyography examinations during those hours. The remainder of the patient hours may include observation of examinations and supervised examinations.

Direct patient care must include activities in each of the elements of patient/client management applicable to the specialty area and included in the *Description of Specialty Practice: Clinical Electrophysiologic Physical Therapy* (DSP). These elements, as defined in the *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*, are examination, evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis, and intervention.

Option B:

Applicants must submit evidence of successful completion of an APTA-accredited post professional clinical electrophysiologic clinical residency completed within the last 10 years. Applicants who are currently enrolled in an ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residencies, or are enrolled in a residency program that has been granted candidacy status, may apply for the specialist certification examination in the appropriate specialty area prior to completion of the clinical residency. These applicants will be conditionally approved to sit for the examination, as long as they meet all other eligibility requirements, pending submission of evidence of successful completion of the ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residency to APTA's Specialist Certification Program, no later than 1 month before the examination window opens. To verify your residency program's credentialing status, please visit www.abptrfe.org.

Geriatrics, Neurologic, Orthopaedic and Pediatric:

Direct Patient Care

Applicants must meet requirements for Option A or Option B.

Option A:

Applicants must submit evidence of 2,000 hours of direct patient care as a licensed United States physical therapist (temporary license excluded) in the specialty area within the last ten (10) years, 25% (500) of which must have occurred within the last three (3) years.

Please note that eligible direct patient care hours only include the time spent practicing within your specific specialty area, and as a licensed physical therapist in the United States or any of its possessions or territories. Direct patient care must include activities in each of the elements of patient/client management applicable to the specialty area and included in the appropriate *Description of Specialty Practice* (DSP). These elements, as defined in the *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*, are examination, evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis, and intervention.

Option B:

Applicants must submit evidence of successful completion of an APTA-accredited post professional clinical residency in their respective specialty completed within the last 10 years. Applicants who are currently enrolled in an ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residencies, or are enrolled in a residency program that has been granted candidacy status, may apply for the specialist certification examination in the appropriate specialty area prior to completion of the clinical residency. These applicants will be conditionally approved to sit for the examination, as long as they meet all other eligibility requirements, pending submission of evidence of successful completion of the ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residency to APTA's Specialist Certification Program, no later than 1 month before the examination window opens. To verify your residency program's credentialing status, please visit www.abptrfe.org.

Oncology:

Direct Patient Care

Applicants must meet requirements for Option A or Option B.

Option A:

Applicants must submit evidence of 2,000 hours of direct patient care as a licensed United States physical therapist (temporary license excluded) in the specialty area within the last ten (10) years, 25% (500) of which must have occurred within the last three (3) years. Please note that eligible direct patient care hours only include the time spent practicing within your specific specialty area, and as a licensed physical therapist in the United States or any of its possessions or territories. Applicants must also submit (1) one case reflection demonstrating specialty practice in oncologic physical therapy. This case study must be based on a patient/client seen within the last three (3) years.

Option B:

Applicants must submit evidence of successful completion of an APTA-accredited post professional oncology clinical residency completed within the last 10 years. Applicants who are currently enrolled in an ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residencies, or are enrolled in a residency program that has been granted candidacy status, may apply for the specialist certification examination in the appropriate specialty area prior to completion of the clinical residency. These applicants will be conditionally approved to sit for the examination, as long as they meet all other eligibility requirements, pending submission of evidence of successful completion of the ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residency to APTA's Specialist Certification Program, no later than 1 month before the examination window opens. To verify your residency program's credentialing status, please visit www.abptrfe.org.

Sports:

CPR Certification

The applicant must be currently certified in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) by completing the American Heart Association's BLS Healthcare Provider Course or American Red Cross' CPR for the Professional Rescuer course.

Acute Management of Injury & Illness

The applicant must submit evidence of current knowledge in national First Responder standards and Emergency Cardiovascular Care (ECC) guidelines with your application. Acceptable evidence includes **current** evidence of one of the following:

- Certification as an Emergency Medical Responder by the American Red Cross
- Certification or licensure as an Emergency Medical Technician
- Certification or licensure as a Paramedic
- Certification as a Certified Athletic Trainer by the National Athletic Trainers Association Board of Credentialing (NATABOC).

Acceptable training to attain the Acute Management of Injury and Illness certification includes the American Red Cross Emergency Medical Response Courses. If you are planning to take the American Red Cross Emergency Medical Response course to meet the emergency care minimum eligibility requirements, but have not completed the course at the time of the application deadline (July 31), please indicate when and where you anticipate taking the course.

Applicants who wish to have the specialty council evaluate whether an equivalent level emergency care training course meets the minimum eligibility requirements must submit information about the course (syllabus, description, textbook, etc.) to the Sport Specialty Council for review **prior to the July 31 application deadline**.

The request and materials to be reviewed are to be e-mailed to Spec-Cert@apta.org.

Direct Patient Care

In addition to meeting the CPR and Emergency Care Requirements, applicants must meet requirements for Option A or Option B. Direct patient care experience must include evaluation and treatment of patients with primary processes as the result of sports activity.

Option A:

Applicants must submit evidence of 2,000 hours of direct patient care as a licensed United States physical therapist (temporary license excluded) in the specialty area within the last ten (10) years, 25% (500) of which must have occurred within the last three (3) years. Please note that eligible direct patient care hours only include the time spent practicing within your specific specialty area, and as a licensed physical therapist in the United States or any of its possessions or territories. Direct patient care must include activities in each of the elements of patient/client management applicable to the specialty area and included in the *Description of Specialty Practice: Sports Physical Therapy (DSP)*. These elements, as defined in the *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*, are examination, evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis, and intervention.

A modification to the above direct patient care hour requirement include, 100 hours of the required 2000 direct patient care hour requirement must be documented as athletic venue coverage. Athletic venue coverage may include activities supporting or observing medical care provided in preparation for, during, or following practices, training, or competitions. A minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the hours must be performed in association with a contact sport (e.g. basketball, boxing, diving, field hockey, flag or tackle football, ice hockey, lacrosse, martial arts, motocross, rodeo, rugby, ski jumping, soccer, team handball, water polo, and wrestling). The remaining hours may be performed in association with coverage of limited contact (e.g. baseball, gymnastics, etc.) or non-contact sports (e.g. ballet, dance, etc.). Visit www.abpts.org/Certification/Sports for additional details.

Option B:

Applicants must submit evidence of successful completion of an APTA-accredited post professional sports clinical residency completed within the last 10 years. Applicants who are currently enrolled in an ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residencies, or are enrolled in a residency program that has been granted candidacy status, may apply for the specialist certification examination in the appropriate

Women's Health:**Direct Patient Care**

Applicants must meet requirements for Option A or Option B.

Option A:

Applicants must submit evidence of 2,000 hours of direct patient care as a licensed United States physical therapist (temporary license excluded) in the specialty area within the last ten (10) years, 25% (500) of which must have occurred within the last three (3) years. Please note that eligible direct patient care hours only include the time spent practicing within your specific specialty area, and as a licensed physical therapist in the United States or any of its possessions or territories. Applicants must also submit (1) one case reflection demonstrating specialty practice in women's health. This case study must be based on a patient/client seen within the last three (3) years.

Option B:

Applicants must submit evidence of successful completion of an APTA-accredited post professional women's health clinical residency completed within the last 10 years. Applicants who are currently enrolled in an ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residencies, or are enrolled in a residency program that has been granted candidacy status, may apply for the specialist certification examination in the appropriate specialty area prior to completion of the clinical residency. These applicants will be conditionally approved to sit for the examination, as long as they meet all other eligibility requirements, pending submission of evidence of successful completion of the ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residency to APTA's Specialist Certification Program, no later than 1 month before the examination window opens. To verify your residency program's credentialing status, please visit www.abptrfe.org.

Applicants applying under Option B must also submit one case study demonstrating specialty practice in women's health. This case study must be based on a patient/client seen within the last three (3) years.

5. Application

Online application submissions are now only accepted. The online application system is accessible through www.abpts.org. All applicants must describe their physical therapy practice experience for each position and facility within the online application or on the appropriate hard copy application forms. Applicants must also chart their experience by year to ensure that they meet recency requirements. Applicants must document the number of direct patient care hours in the specialty.

6. Applying for a Second Area of Certification

Applicants must submit a complete set of application materials and fees for each specialist certification exam. ABPTS policy does not permit an applicant who applies for certification in a second specialty area to submit the same direct patient hours for more than one specialty area. Specialty councils will review previously submitted applications for duplication of hours. The ABPTS and specialty councils do not recommend that applicants apply in more than one specialty area during the same year.

7. Examination

The applicant must also sit for and pass a written examination which tests the application of advanced knowledge and clinical skills identified in the *Physical Therapy: Description of Specialty Practice* (DSP). The DSP includes content related to the knowledge base for the specialty. Refer to the exam content outline included in the application and the DSP book for detailed information on the exam. Examinations will be administered at Prometric Testing Centers throughout the U.S. and abroad (**2019 examination dates are March 2 - 16**). Contact the Specialist Certification Program at 1-800/999-2782, ext. 8520 for additional information about sitting for the specialist certification examination in an international location.

8. Examination Candidate Guide

The examination candidate guide may be downloaded at no cost from APTA's Specialist Certification Program Website (www.abpts.org). Select the specialty area(s) you may be interested in from the drop down specialist certification menu options.

For any additional questions or requests, you may contact the Specialist Certification Program at 800/999-2782 ext. 8520 or by email at spec-cert@apta.org.