

# Physical Therapist Assistants

*Inland Empire/Desert Region (Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario Metropolitan Statistical Area)*

## Summary

- Employment for physical therapist assistants is expecting to **increase by 27% between 2017 and 2022** in the Inland Empire/Desert Region. A total of **392 job openings** will be available over the five-year timeframe.
- The entry-level wage for physical therapist assistants is **above the MIT Living Wage estimate of \$12.39 per hour** for a single adult living in the Inland Empire/Desert Region.
- **There appears to be an opportunity for program growth** based on the average annual number of program completions for the selected program in the region (**44 annual average credentials**) and the annual openings for physical therapist assistants in the local region (**78 annual job openings**).

## Introduction

The California Community College physical therapist assistant program (TOP 1222.00) prepares students for relevant jobs through the instruction of principles and procedures used to assist a physical therapist in implementing a prescribed plan of therapy for a patient, including patient instruction and administration of treatments (*Taxonomy of Programs, 2012*). The occupational description for physical therapist assistants is listed below:

### **Physical Therapist Assistants (31-2021)**

Assist physical therapists in providing physical therapy treatments and procedures. May, in accordance with State laws, assist in the development of treatment plans, carry out routine functions, document the progress of treatment, and modify specific treatments in accordance with patient status and within the scope of treatment plans established by a physical therapist.

Generally requires formal training.

**Sample job titles:** *Certified Physical Therapist Assistant (CPTA), Home Health Physical Therapist Assistant, Licensed Physical Therapist Assistant (LPTA), Outpatient Physical Therapist Assistant, Per Diem Physical Therapist Assistant (Per Diem PTA), Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA), Physical Therapist Assistant and Nurse Aide, Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA), Physical Therapy Technician (Physical Therapy Tech), Staff Physical Therapy Assistant*

Entry-Level Educational Requirement: Associate degree

Training Requirement: None

Percentage of incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary

Coursework: 64%

## Job Opportunities

In 2017, there were an estimated 425 physical therapist assistants jobs in the Inland Empire/Desert Region (see Exhibit 1). Across the region, employment related to physical therapy assistants is expected to increase by 27% through 2022. Employers in the region will need to hire an estimated 392 workers during the five-year timeframe to fill new jobs and to backfill jobs that workers are permanently leaving (includes retirements).

Exhibit 1: Five-year projections for physical therapist assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region

Region	2017 Jobs	5-Yr % Change (New Jobs)	5-Yr Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	% of workers age 55+
Inland Empire/Desert	425	27%	392	78	10%

Source: EMSI 2018.4

## Earnings

The entry-level wage for physical therapist assistants is above the MIT Living Wage estimate of \$12.39 per hour for a single adult living in the Inland Empire/Desert Region (Glasmeier, 2019). This wage is also sufficient for two adults and one child (\$14.75 per hour, per adult or \$30,680 annually for each adult). Exhibit 2 displays wage information for this occupation in the Inland Empire/Desert Region.

Exhibit 2: Earnings for physical therapist assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region

Occupation	Entry to Experienced Hourly Earnings Range*	Median Wage*	Average Annual Earnings
Physical Therapist Assistants	\$29.42 to \$37.16	\$33.30	\$69,300

Source: EMSI 2018.4

\*Entry Hourly is 25th percentile wage, the median is 50th percentile wage, experienced is 75th percentile wage.

## Job Postings, Employers, Certifications, Skills and Education

Exhibit 3 shows the number of job ads posted during the last 12 months and the average time to fill for physical therapist assistants in the region and nationally. On average, open positions for the physical therapist assistants take 43 days to fill in the Inland Empire/Desert Region. This is Physical Therapist Assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region, March 2019

four days longer than the national average, indicating that open positions are slightly more challenging to fill locally.

*Exhibit 3: Job ads for physical therapist assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region during the last 12 months, Mar 2018 – Feb 2019*

Occupation	Job Ads	Regional Average Time To Fill (Days)	National Average Time to Fill (Days)
Physical Therapist Assistants	217	43	39

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Exhibit 4 displays the employers posting the most job ads during the last 12 months for physical therapist assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region.

*Exhibit 4: Employers posting the most job ads for physical therapist assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region, Mar 2018 – Feb 2019*

Occupation	Employers
Physical Therapist Assistants (n=158)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loma Linda University Health</li> <li>• FeldCare Connects</li> <li>• Advanced Travel Therapy</li> <li>• Vibra Healthcare</li> </ul>

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Exhibit 5 displays the certifications required by employers posting job ads for physical therapist assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region.

*Exhibit 5: Certifications required by employers' job ads in the Inland Empire/Desert Region, Mar 2018 – Feb 2019*

Occupation	Certifications
Physical Therapist Assistants (n=96)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Life Support (BLS)</li> <li>• American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) Certification</li> <li>• First Aid/CPR AED</li> </ul>

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Exhibit 6 lists a sample of in-demand specialized and employability skills that employers are seeking when looking for workers to fill physical therapist assistant positions. Specialized skills are occupation-specific skills employers are requesting for industry or job competency. Employability skills are foundational skills that transcend industries and occupations; this category is commonly referred to as “soft skills.” The skills reported in job postings may be utilized as a helpful guide for curriculum development.

*Exhibit 6: In-demand skills for physical therapist assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region, Mar 2018 – Feb 2019*

Occupation	Specialized skills	Employability skills
Physical Therapist Assistants (n=168)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rehabilitation</li> <li>• Treatment Planning</li> <li>• Acute Care</li> <li>• Life Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication Skills</li> <li>• Teamwork/Collaboration</li> <li>• Writing</li> <li>• Detail-Oriented</li> </ul>

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Exhibit 7 displays the entry-level education typically required to enter these occupations according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). This chart also displays educational attainment for incumbent workers with “some college, no degree” and an “associate degree” according to the U.S. Census (2016-17) and the minimum advertised education requirement requested by employers in online job ads.

*Exhibit 7: Educational attainment and online job ads with minimum advertised education requirements for physical therapist assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region, Mar 2018 – Feb 2019*

Occupation	Typical Entry-Level Education Requirement	Two-year Postsecondary Level of Educational Attainment*	Minimum Advertised Education Requirement from Job Ads			
			Number of Job Postings (n=)	High school diploma or vocational training	Associate degree	Bachelor’s degree or higher
Physical Therapist Assistants	Associate degree	64%	66	-	100%	-

Source: EMSI 2018.4, Burning Glass – Labor Insights

\* Percentage of incumbent workers with a Community College Degree/Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework

## Student Completions

There were no reported regional community college credentials (associate degrees and certificates) conferred during the three academic years between 2014 and 2017 for the physical therapist assistant program (TOP 1222.00). Loma Linda University is the only educational institution providing training for this occupation. Exhibit 8 shows credentials granted from other educational institutions from 2013 to 2016, along with the relevant CIP code. Please note, a credential is not always equivalent to a single person in search of a job opening since a student may earn more than one credential, such as an associate degree in addition to a certificate.

*Exhibit 8: Annual average other educational institution student completions for physical therapy technician/assistant programs in the Inland Empire/Desert Region*

<b>51.0806 – Physical Therapy Technician/Assistant</b>	<b>Other Educational Institutions Annual Average Certificates or Other Credit Credentials (2013-16)</b>
<b>Loma Linda University</b>	
Associate Degree	44
<b>Total annual average other credentials</b>	<b>44</b>

Source: IPEDS

Exhibit 9 displays all of the Community Colleges in California with physical therapist assistant programs that reported completions between 2014 and 2017. The COE recommends contacting these colleges for further information on program development and job outcomes for their Physical Therapist Assistant programs.

*Exhibit 9: Annual average community college student completions for physical therapist assistant programs in California*

<b>1222.00 – Physical Therapist Assistant</b>	<b>Community College Annual Average Credentials (2014-17)</b>
<b>Cerritos</b>	22
<b>North Orange Adult</b>	21
<b>Ohlone</b>	16
<b>Sacramento City</b>	23
<b>San Diego Mesa</b>	20
<b>Sequoias</b>	23
<b>Total annual average community college credentials</b>	<b>125</b>

Source: IPEDS

## References

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