



## HEALTH WORKFORCE STUDIES PROGRAM

## DATA BRIEF

See also full report<sup>1</sup> at <http://ahec.iupui.edu/hws>

## Indiana Physician Assistants 2012

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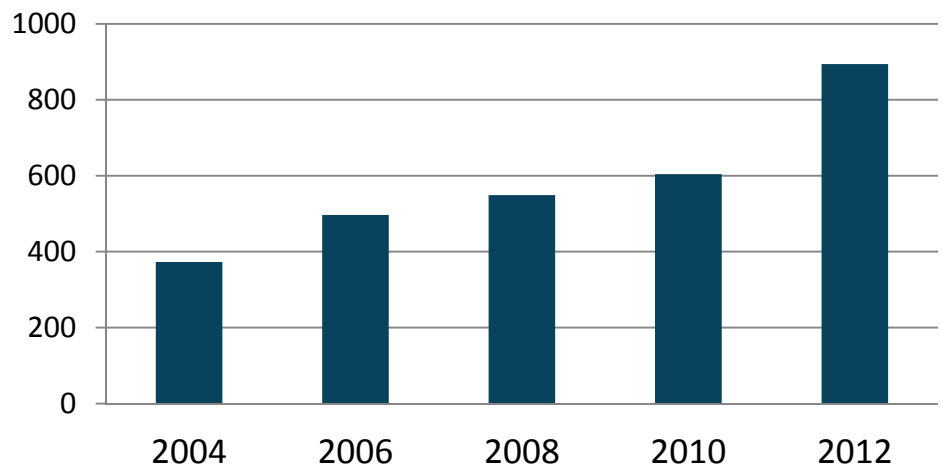
### INDIANA PAs 2012 AT A GLANCE

- 894 licensed, non-government-employed PAs active in Indiana
- 93% white
- 66% female
- 51% attended Indiana training institutions
- 58% have education debt at least \$50,000
- 59% with PA master's degree
- 34% with PA bachelor's degree
- 8% report practicing in a Medically Underserved Area

### Who are Indiana's physician assistants?

The physician assistant (PA) workforce in Indiana is growing quickly. Since 2004, the estimated number of non-government-employed PAs actively working in Indiana has more than doubled, from less than 400 in 2004 to nearly 900 in 2012:

**Figure 1. Physician Assistants Actively Working in Indiana**



Source: Indiana Center for Health Workforce Studies.

### How does Indiana's supply of PAs compare to the US and nearby states?

The Indiana PA workforce is slightly younger than the PA workforce nationally. In 2012, approximately 80% of all US physician assistants (90% in Indiana) were under the age of 55, and the median age of PAs in clinical practice was 41 years (35 years in Indiana).

Among both US and Indiana physician assistants, 65% were female. Gender distribution reversed with age: younger Indiana PAs were predominantly female (79% of respondents under 35), while older PAs were predominantly male.<sup>1,2</sup>



Though smaller than other states, Indiana's PA workforce has grown more than 40% in two years.

### HOW INDIANA PAs PRACTICE<sup>3</sup>

Since the early 1970s, PAs have been part of the healthcare team, and every state licenses and authorizes PA practice. Physician assistants practice medicine in often autonomous but dependent practice with a supervising physician. Together, physicians and PAs develop a supervisory agreement that governs how the physician and PA manage autonomy, supervision, and delegation of the duties and responsibilities of medical practice.

### SUPERVISION & DELEGATION<sup>4-6</sup>

A supervising physician delegates duties and responsibilities to PAs in keeping with the physician's own scope of practice. A physician:

- may establish supervisory agreements with more than two PAs, but must actively supervise no more than two PAs at a given moment;
- must be present within a reasonable travel distance while a PA is caring for patients; and
- reviews a PA's patient records according to the PA's work experience.

### PRESCRIPTIVE AUTHORITY<sup>4-7</sup>

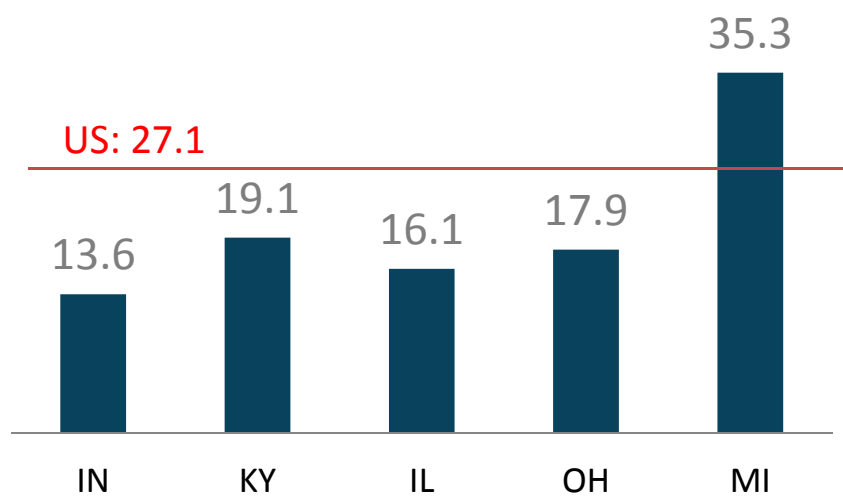
The education of PAs equips them to prescribe medications, and many do. In Indiana, PAs are also authorized to prescribe Schedule II-V controlled substances. Like all prescribing clinicians, PAs comply with state and federal statutes, regulations, and registration requirements.

Racial and ethnic diversity in the Indiana PA workforce was largely unchanged over time and remains low (93% were white). Since 2004, the master's degree has been the most common credential among PAs in Indiana, reflecting the evolution of the profession and its educational requirements.

The majority of PAs worked at least 40 hours per week (70%) and practiced in hospital-based settings (50%). Emergency medicine was most common specialty among Indiana PAs (22%), with another 25% practicing in various primary care specialties.

Indiana had 13.6 physician assistants per 100,000 residents in 2010, or half the national average of 27.1 per 100,000 residents (see Figure 2). Indiana's rate was also lowest among the four contiguous states, although three of Indiana's four neighbors significantly lag the national rate as well.

**Figure 2. Number of PAs per 100,000 Residents: Indiana and Contiguous States**

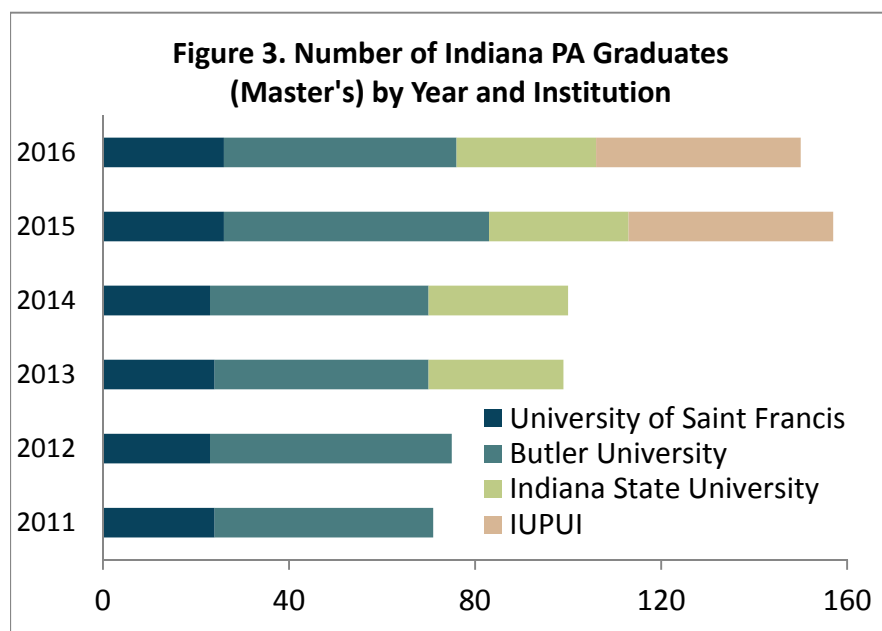


Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor. Occupational Employment Statistics - Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2012. Available at <http://www.bls.gov/oes>. Accessed March 2014. US Census Bureau. 2010 Census of Population and Housing. American FactFinder. Available at <http://factfinder2.census.gov>. Accessed June 2014. Analysis by Indiana Center for Health Workforce Studies.

Indiana's 2012 PA graduating class of 70 is projected to more than double by 2015.

### How big is Indiana's PA training pipeline?

Currently, there are 187 accredited PA training programs in the United States, a number that has grown rapidly over the past decade.<sup>8</sup> An additional 71 developing programs may seek accreditation by 2017. Among these, Indiana currently has four accredited, entry-level PA programs: Butler University and University of Saint Francis (established in the 1990s), and Indiana State University and Indiana University (established since 2010).



Hovering at just over 70 PA graduates annually in 2012, Indiana's PA graduating class is projected to be nearly double that by 2015 (see Figure 3). Other Indiana universities plan to launch PA training programs as well.

### HOW PAs TRAIN<sup>9-10</sup>

Physician assistant training programs in the United States were launched in the 1960s partly as a workforce capacity response to primary care physician shortages. The medical community, institutions, and the federal government supported the PA profession and encouraged development of accreditation standards, national certification, standardized examination, and continuing education.

By 2020, all PA educational programs must confer at least a master's degree, and most programs already do. Typical PA training lasts 24 to 28 months beyond the baccalaureate degree. Physician assistant training follows the medical model of physician training and includes a year of classroom and laboratory instruction and a year of clinical rotations.

To enter practice, PAs must pass a national certifying exam following graduation. Practicing PAs must also complete continuing medical education regularly, and pass a recertification exam every six to ten years.

# DATA BRIEF

## References

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## About this data brief

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