Applicants to the physician assistant program must complete at least 750 hours of direct patient care experience as an employee or volunteer in a medical office, hospital, or extended-care facility. Shadowing a physician assistant is required. Experiences may be combined, but all acceptable clinical experiences must involve hands-on care of patients. Patient care experiences obtained through the military (combat medic, field medical tech, etc.) are especially competitive.

While individuals may apply to the program prior to completion of patient care hours, the most competitive applicants have at least 1,200 hours of care at the time of application. Below are examples of the most common types of experience acquired by successful applicants:

- Certified Nursing Assistant
- Phlebotomist in a hospital or clinic
- Medical Assistant
- Patient Care Tech
- Emergency Medical Technician
- Direct Support Professional

The above list does not include all possible ways to earn direct patient care experience. The key to hours counting toward the requirement is that the position allows for the direct, hands-on care of patients. This may include activities such as taking vitals, blood glucose checks, assisting with activities of daily living, wound care, and other activities that include medical responsibility for the patient. Work as a scribe will count toward the total hours, but it is counted as observational experience and must be combined with an experience that includes direct patient care.

Shadowing of physician assistants is required and is counted toward the total hour requirement. The most competitive applicants shadow a variety of PAs in a variety of settings.

Questions regarding patient care hours may be directed to dmuadmit@dmu.edu.