

PREVIEW

YOUR CAREER IN HEALTH

Sample Guide to Getting Started,
Growing, and Thriving in the
Health Workforce



PROVIDED BY

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**HEALTH CAREERS
YOUTH >>>
PATHWAYS
COMMITTEE**



How to use this resource

Have you ever thought about a career where you help others, make a difference, and build a future for you and your family?

The health world needs people like you! People from all backgrounds, with big hearts and a willingness to learn have a place in the health workforce. For too long, many communities have been left out of jobs in public health and health care—jobs with a chance to make a difference, offer good pay, and give opportunities to grow. Now, it's your time.

This sample guide was made just for you.

Whether you want to work in a hospital or doctor's office, help people in your neighborhood, or support the health and safety of your community, there is a place for you.

This sample contains an example of what is included in the full version of the guide.

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The full guide includes:

Why Work in Health?—This section explains what affects people's health and how different jobs can help. We recommend reading this section first.

Health Career Directory—A list of more than 130 different jobs across the health workforce. This section is helpful if you're curious about different job options and want to learn more about their requirements, salaries, and outlooks.

Career Pathway Guide—Eighteen examples of how you can move between different jobs and grow your career.

Worker Profiles—Stories of how real Chicagoans built their careers in health.

Career Support Resources—Tools and resources from our partners to help you in your career journey.

Why work in health?

When you think of health, you might picture hospitals, doctors, or clinics. But health is more than that. It begins in our homes, schools, jobs, neighborhoods, and even in the air we breathe and the food we eat.

That's because our health is shaped by more than a visit to the doctor's office. Things like stable housing, clean water, safe jobs, good schools, reliable transportation, and access to fresh food—known as the social determinants of health—all have a powerful impact on how long and how well we live.

We know that not everyone has equal access to these building blocks of health. In cities like Chicago, life expectancy can differ by more than a decade between some Black neighborhoods and some White neighborhoods. These gaps aren't accidents—they're the result of long-standing systems and policies that help some communities while hurting others.

As a result, many communities don't have healthy food, safe housing, or good health care in their neighborhoods. That's why we need people like you to join the growing movement of health workers across the country who are making a difference in people's lives every day.

Social Determinants of Health



No matter your education or experience, there's a job in the health workforce for you!

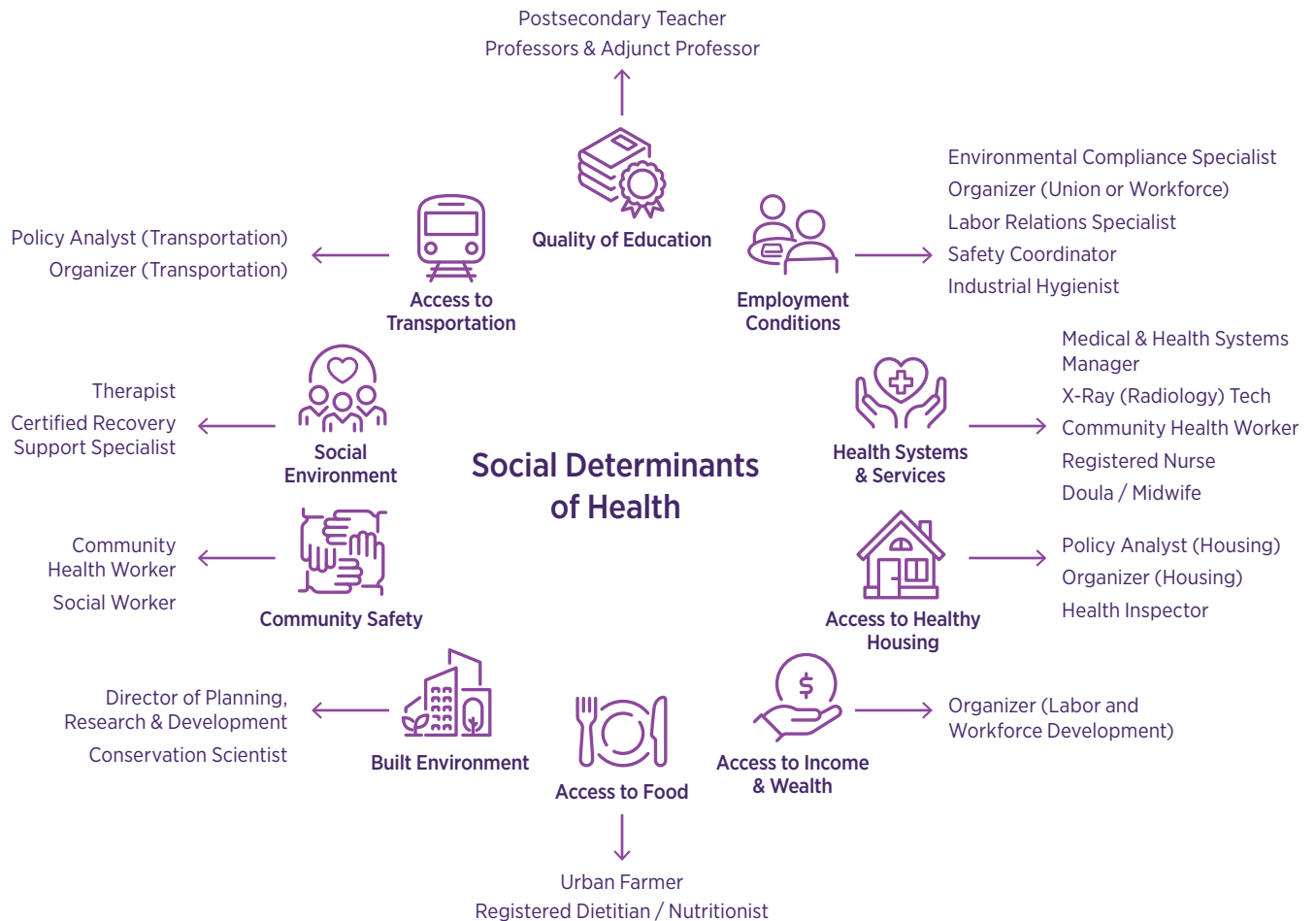
Enjoy the fast-paced environment of a hospital? Think about a career in nursing or respiratory therapy! Want to combat food deserts in your neighborhood and love the outdoors? Become an Urban Farmer! Passionate about helping people have safer births? Consider becoming a Doula! Ready to fight for affordable housing? Work as a Housing Organizer! Do you care about helping people get the care and resources they need? Become a Community Health

Worker! Each of these jobs tackles a different piece of the puzzle—and together, they build healthier, more just communities.

Our communities deserve a health workforce that shares their identities, understands their needs, and builds on their strengths. There are thousands of open jobs waiting for people ready to help their communities be healthier—and one of them is perfect for you.

Ready to make a difference? Let's explore your options in the health workforce!

Examples of Careers that Impact People's Health



Occupational Therapists

Median Salary: \$96,028

Outlook: 11% increase in available jobs from 2023 to 2033

Occupational Therapists evaluate and treat individuals with injuries, illnesses, or disabilities. Occupational Therapists help patients develop, recover, or improve skills needed for daily living and work. They create personalized treatment plans to support clients in achieving their goals and maintaining independence.

Education & Training Requirements: To become an Occupational Therapist you must complete a 4-year bachelor's degree and a 2 to 3-year Doctor of Occupational Therapy program. Without financial aid and with in-state tuition, the estimated cost to complete a bachelor's degree at a public institution is \$57,624. The estimated cost of a Doctor of Occupational Therapy program is \$82,722, not including books and fees.

Skills:

- Orthotics
- Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant
- Occupational therapy
- Treatment planning
- Rehabilitation
- Adaptive equipment
- National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) certification
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification
- Pediatrics
- Patient treatment
- Discharge planning
- Home health care
- Driver's license
- Basic Life Support (BLS) certification

Salary Boosting Skills:

- Discharge summaries

Interests: Interest in Activities of Daily Living (ADLs), Rehabilitation, Mental Health, Pediatrics, Geriatrics, Education, working with people, health management, and problem solving

Physical Therapists

Median Salary: \$99,053

Outlook: 14% increase in available jobs from 2023 to 2033

Physical Therapists work with patients to improve mobility, reduce pain, and enhance overall physical function. They play a key role in rehabilitation, helping individuals recover from injuries, illnesses, or surgeries, as well as in preventive care for patients with chronic conditions.

Education & Training Requirements: To become a Physical Therapist you must complete a 4-year bachelor's degree and then complete a 2 to 3-year Doctor of Physical Therapy program. Without financial aid and in-state tuition, the estimated cost to complete a bachelor's degree at a public institution is \$57,624. The estimated cost of a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree costs \$66,710, not including books and fees.

Skills:

- Orthotics
- Sports medicine
- Exercise therapy
- Discharge summaries
- Physical therapy evaluation
- Physical therapy
- Treatment planning
- Rehabilitation
- Orthopedics
- Patient evaluation

Salary Boosting Skills:

- Manual therapy
- Human musculoskeletal system

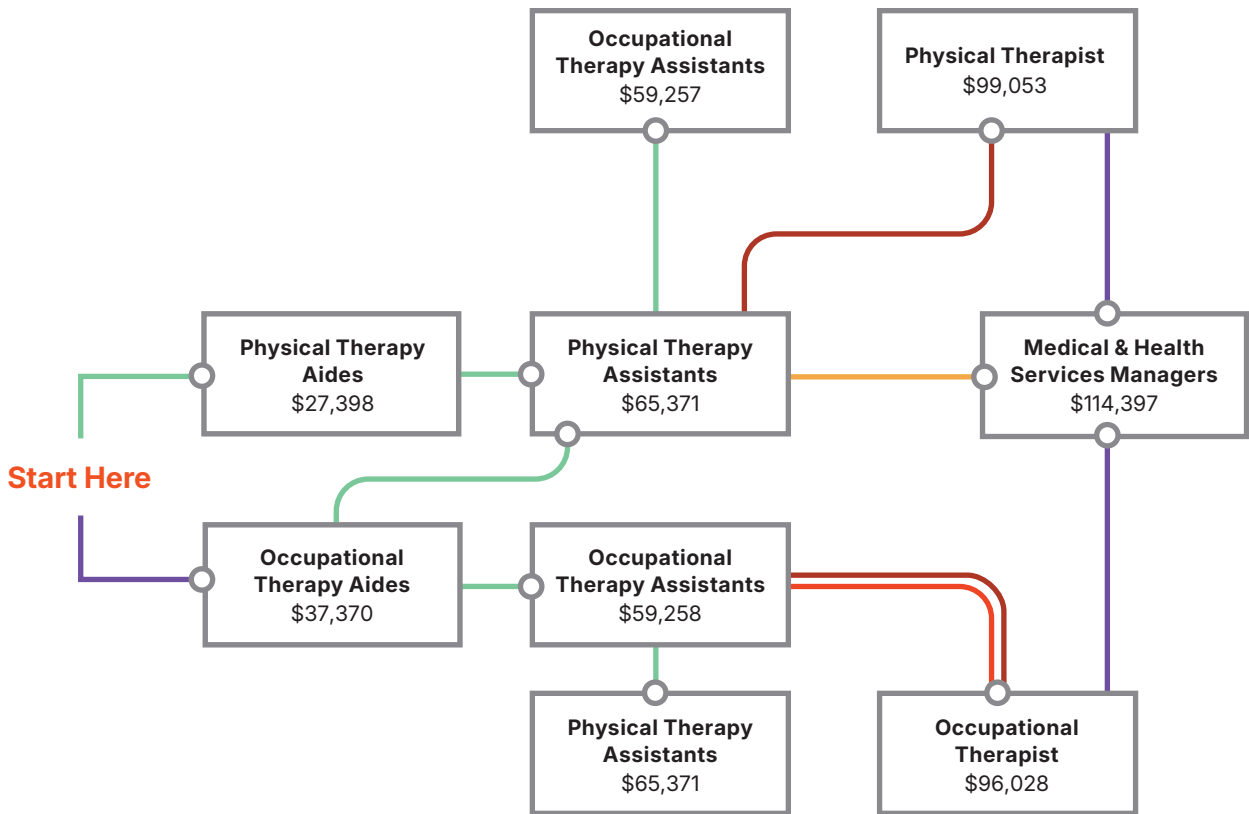
Interests: Interest in physical rehabilitation, patient care, hands-on work, exercises, manual techniques, using assistance devices, teaching, observation and assessment, and problem solving

Sample Pathway: Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy



Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Pathway

These are examples of different ways to move between or into new careers within this field. We know there's no one-size-fits-all path, so think of these as helpful examples—not the only ways to do it. Depending on your education and experience, you may not start in an entry-level job—you might begin further along the path!



Key

The colors in the chart show the different years of education or training needed to move from one role to the next. There are often several ways to advance, and some paths have more than one line color to represent multiple education and training options.

- Education Requirement of less than 6 months
- Education Requirement of 6 months to 1 year
- Education Requirement of 1–2 years
- Education Requirement of 2–4 years
- Education Requirement of 4–6 years
- Education Requirement of 6 years or more
- On-the-job experience
- Bridge Programs

MY CAREER JOURNEY

physical therapy



jessica

"I see people at their most vulnerable, typically after they've experienced something traumatic or an abrupt change. Often they're scared, but it's so rewarding when you're able to help acknowledge what they've been through and help them get back to doing something for themselves."

Jessica's career path

I thought I wanted to be a veterinarian for the longest time, but my junior year of college I realized I didn't want that. I was stressed trying to figure out what to do, so I went to a career fair and started working in food manufacturing as a **Quality Control Technician**.

I had several friends who were physical therapists and they suggested I look into it. They thought I would be a good fit. So I started shadowing some physical therapists and then decided to go back to school to get my **Doctorate in Physical Therapy (DPT)**.



Once I finished my DPT, I could start working. Physical Therapy doesn't require a residency or additional licensing. I specifically work in **acute care** in a hospital.

advice

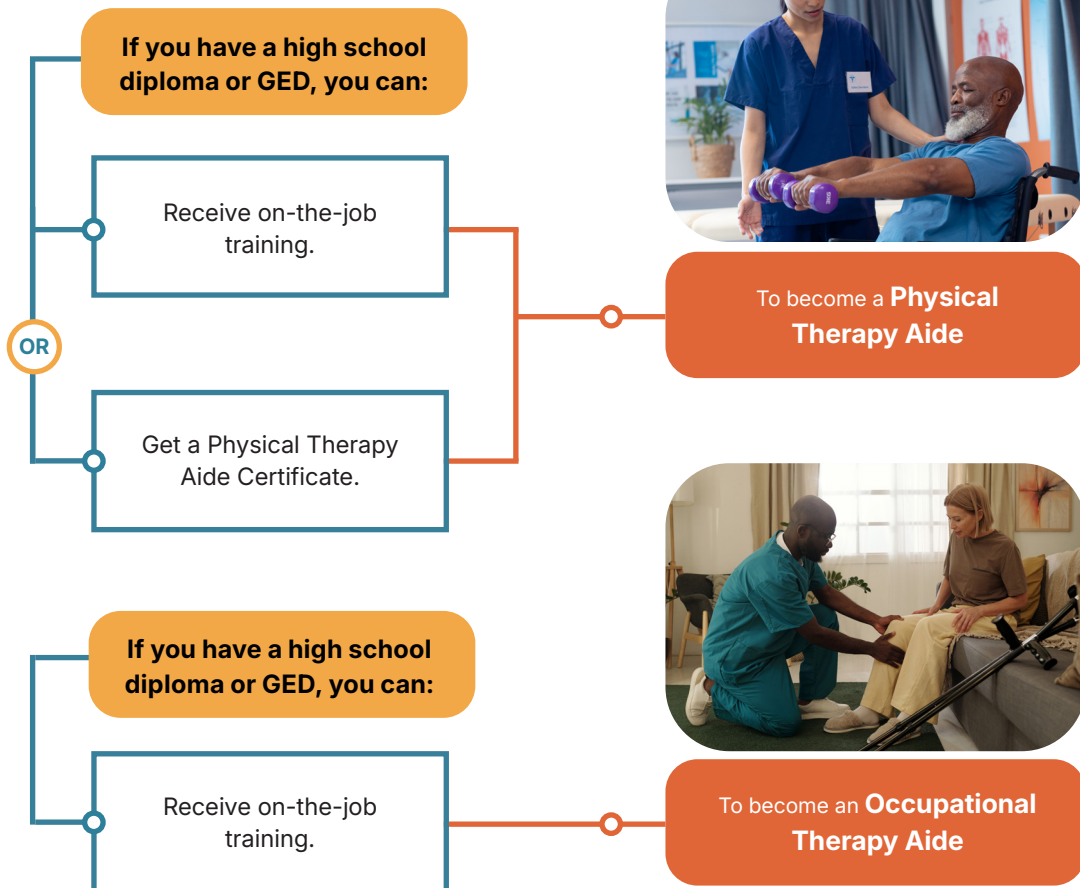
"I think having a mentor, whether or not they're in your field, is extremely powerful. Having someone who knows you and is looking out for you sets you up for success. Every major decision I've made throughout my life was either supported by or encouraged by a mentor."

Take Steps Towards Becoming a Physical Therapist or Occupational Therapist!

Did you know that **Physical Therapists (PT)** help people move better, feel less pain, and get stronger? They help patients recover from injuries, surgeries, or illnesses and teach ways to stay active and healthy. Similarly, **Occupational Therapists (OT)** also help people recover and build skills for daily life

and work. They create plans to help patients become more independent after an injury, illness, or disability.

Let's explore the **PT & OT Pathway** and see if you should add them to your career plan!






Learn more about the PT & OT pathway. →

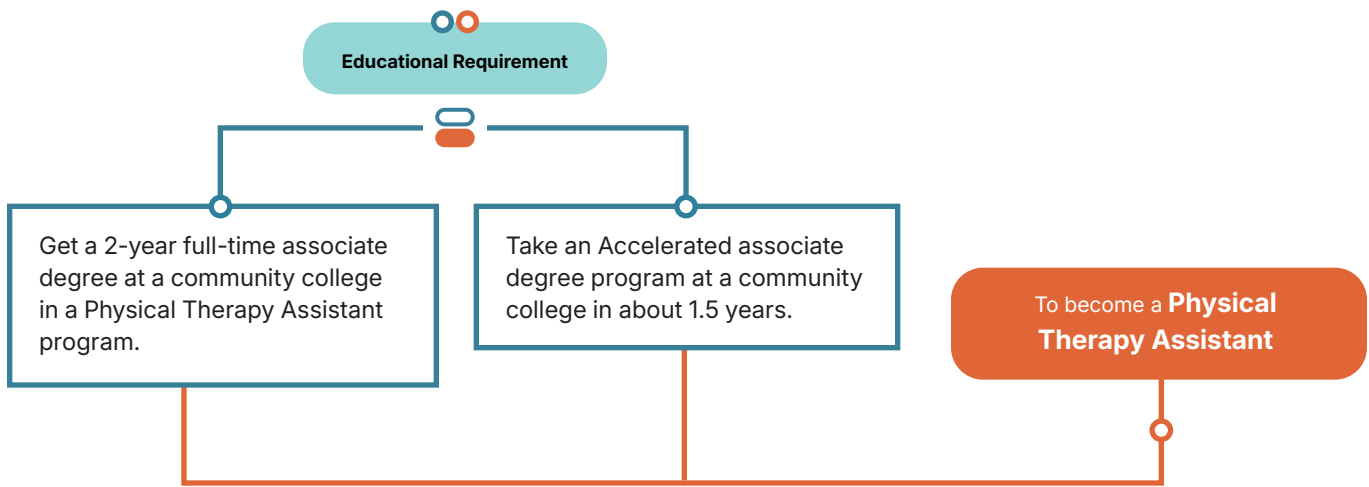
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Pathway

Entry-Level Professions

Physical Therapy Aides

Physical Therapist Aides (PTAs) help patients recover from injuries and manage pain. They set up therapy areas, help patients move, and support the therapy team with tasks.




-  **Median Salary:** \$27,398 per year
-  **Minimum Age Requirements:** 18 years old
-  **Transferable Skills:**
 - Rehabilitation
 - Patient treatment
 - Basic Life Support (BLS) certification
 - Physical therapy

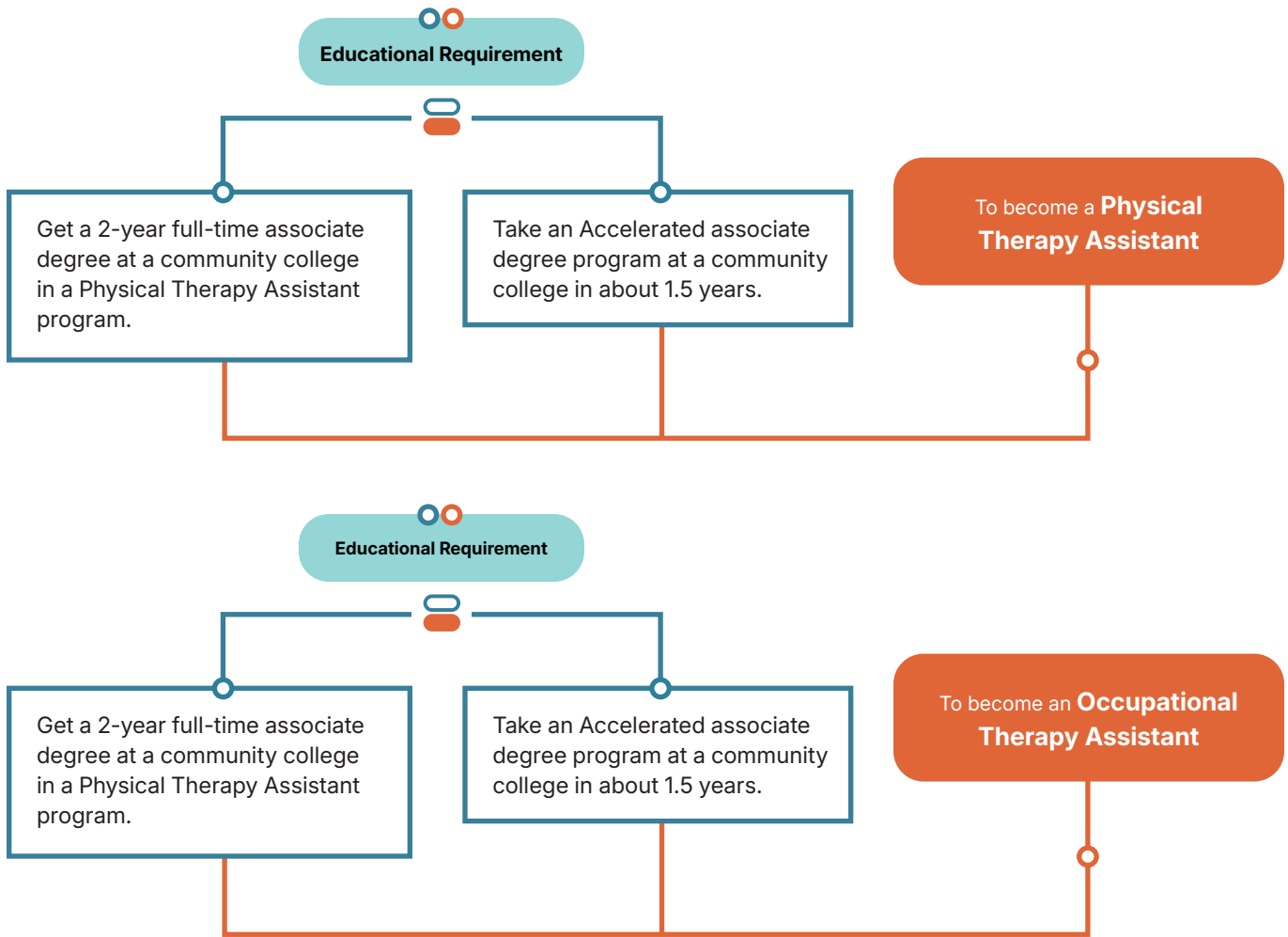


Occupational Therapy Aides

Occupational Therapy Aides (OT) help patients during therapy. They set up equipment, take vital signs, and assist Therapists by guiding patients to their sessions.

Continued on next page.

-  **Median Salary:** \$37,370 per year
-  **Minimum Age Requirements:** 18 years old
-  **Transferable Skills**
 - Rehabilitation
 - Treatment planning
 - Patient treatment
 - Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification
 - Home health care
 - Basic Life Support (BLS) certification
 - Physical therapy



Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Pathway Intermediate Professions

Physical Therapy Assistants

Physical Therapy Assistants help patients move better and feel less pain. They work with Physical Therapists to guide patients through exercises and treatments to help them recover.

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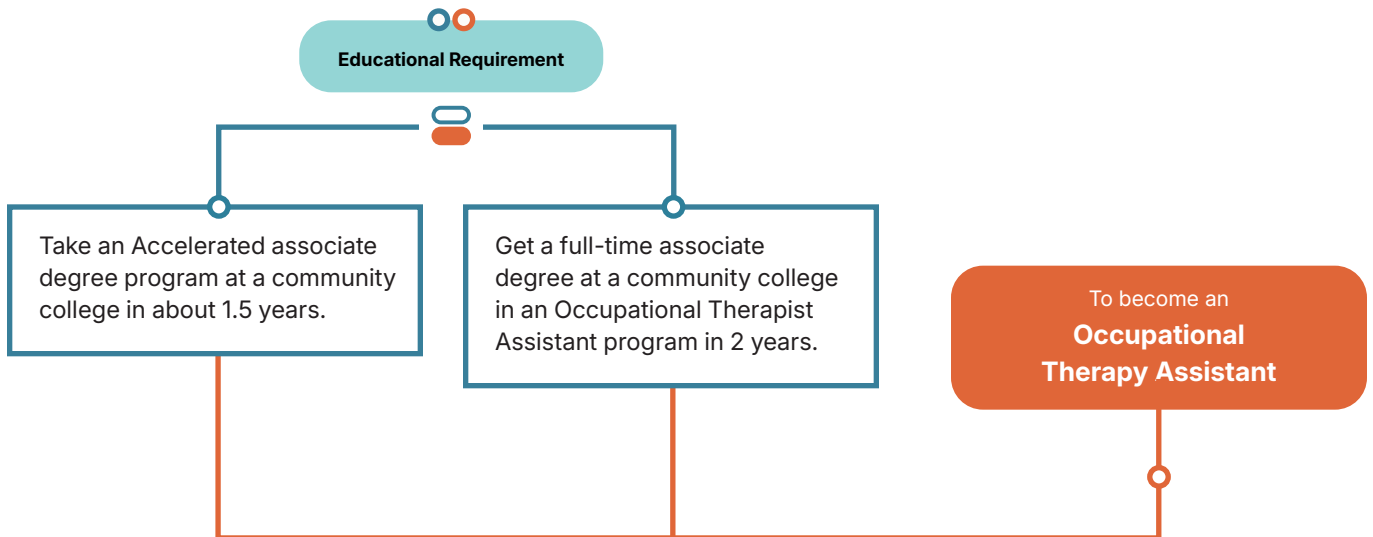
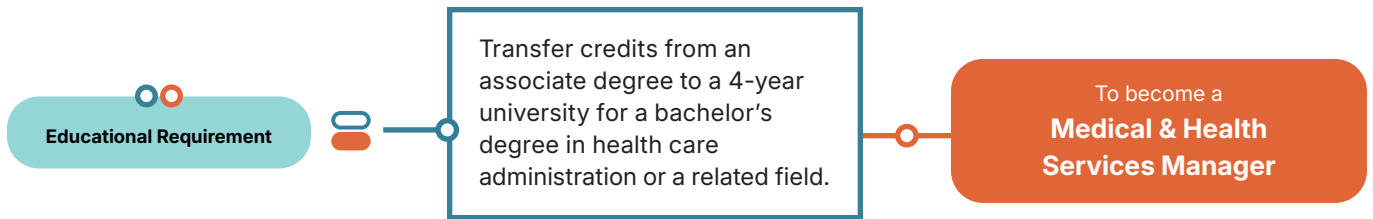
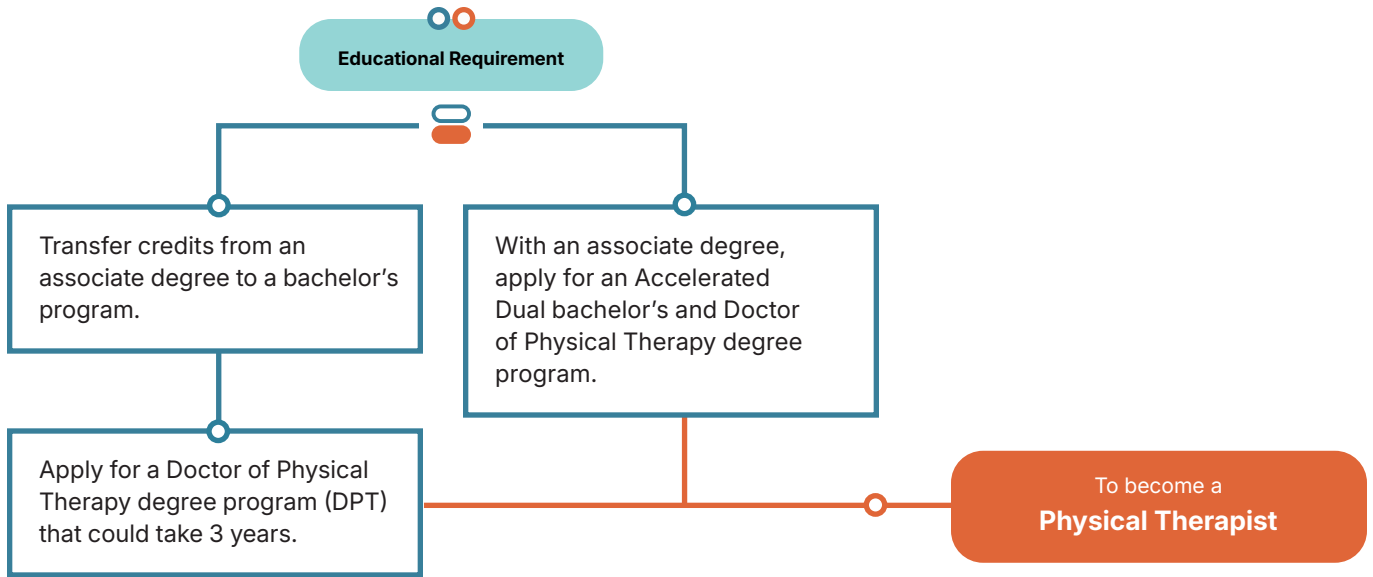
Median Salary: \$65,371 per year

Minimum Age Requirements: 18 years old

Transferable Skills

- Rehabilitation
- Treatment Planning
- Manual Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Exercise Therapy

○ Learning Path Option ○ Steps to Your Next Career Move



○ ○ Learning Path Option
 ▭ ▭ Steps to Your Next Career Move

Occupational Therapy Assistants

Occupational Therapy Assistants help people regain and learn everyday skills, like dressing or eating. They work with Therapists to support patients in becoming more independent.



Median Salary: \$59,258 per year

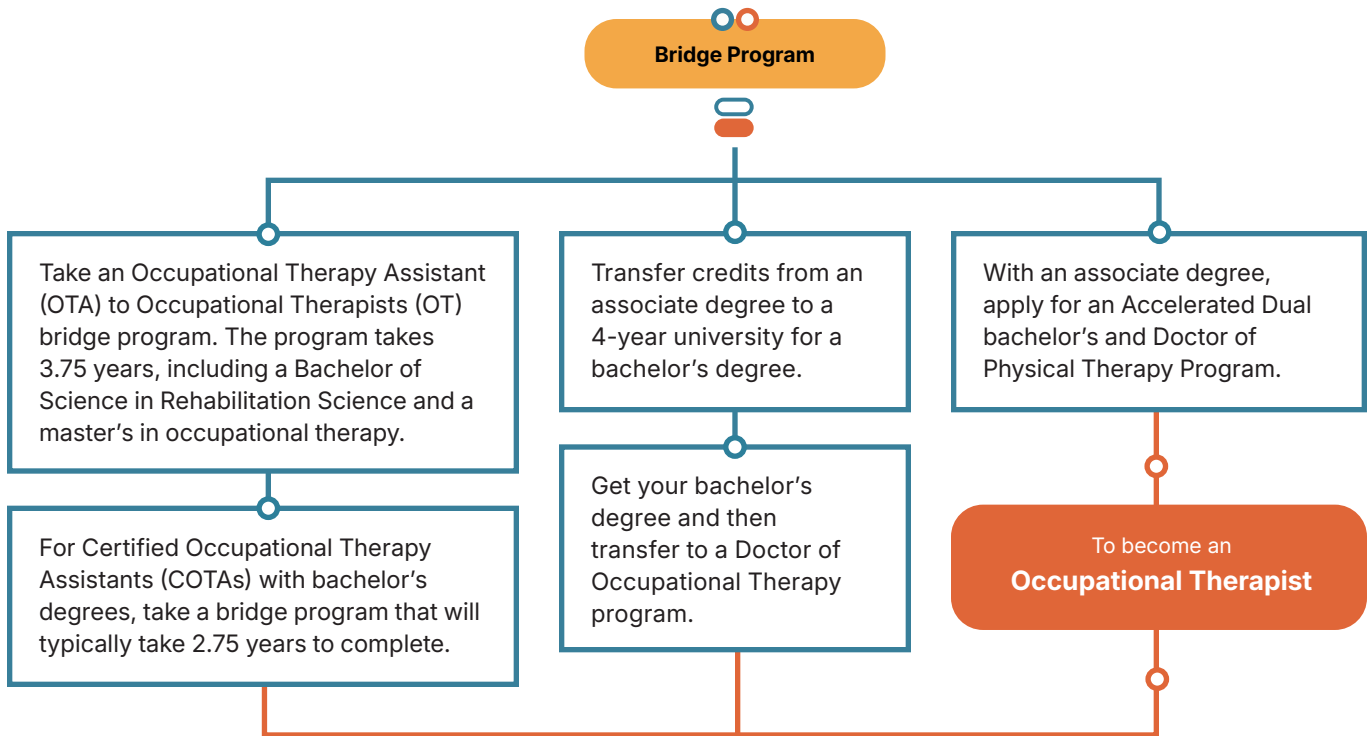
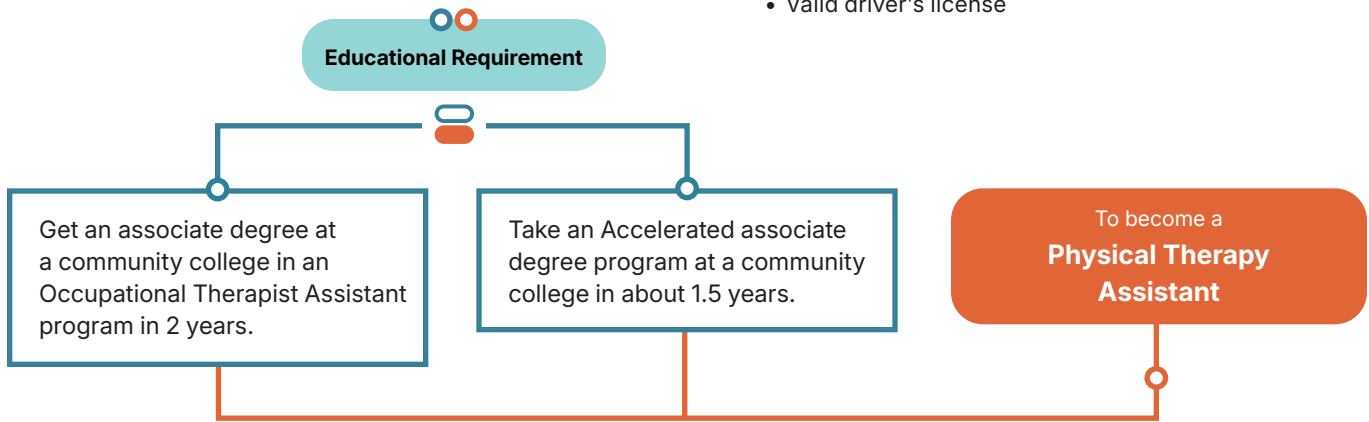


Minimum Age Requirements: 18 years old



Transferable Skills

- Rehabilitation
- Treatment planning
- Patient treatment
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification
- Basic Life Support (BLS) certification
- Home health care
- Valid driver's license



Learning Path Option Steps to Your Next Career Move

Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Pathway

Specialist Professions

Physical Therapist

Physical Therapists help people move better, feel less pain, and get stronger. They work with patients to recover from injuries, illnesses, or surgeries and stay active and healthy.

 **Median Salary:** \$99,054 per year

 **Minimum Age Requirements:** 18 years old

Occupational Therapist

Occupational Therapists help people with injuries, illnesses, or disabilities regain skills for daily life and work. They create personalized plans to help patients become more independent and reach their goals.

 **Median Salary:** \$96,028 per year

 **Minimum Age Requirements:** 18 years old

 **Transferable Skills**

- Billing
- Driver's license



 Learning Path Option  Steps to Your Next Career Move

Want to learn more?

Check out the full version of *Your Career in Health: A Guide to Getting Started, Growing, and Thriving in the Health Workforce* at www.hmprg.org/your-career-in-health.

The full version features over **130 jobs**, **18 different career pathways**, more **stories from real Chicagoans**, and additional resources to help you get started and advance in your career. *Get started today!*

