



Physical Therapist Assistant

AAS

Application Instructions

Fall 2026

DUE MAY 15th, 2026

Email any questions to jheil@fvcc.edu



Dear Physical Therapist Assistant Program Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program at Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC). I am delighted that you are considering FVCC as you pursue your PTA degree.

As a physical therapist with more than 30 years of experience, I can confidently say that physical therapy is more than a career—it is a rewarding and challenging profession dedicated to improving quality of life through movement, function, and compassionate care.

Our curriculum integrates comprehensive academic preparation with diverse clinical experiences to support a smooth transition into professional practice. Faculty are committed to developing graduates who are competent, ethical, and prepared to meet the demands of contemporary physical therapy.

The FVCC PTA Program admits up to ten (10) students per cohort, allowing for individualized instruction and extensive hands-on learning. The program is academically rigorous and time intensive. Successful students demonstrate professionalism, effective communication, accountability, and a strong commitment to excellence. Coursework and clinical experiences require sustained dedication, active participation, and a professional attitude in all classrooms, laboratories, and clinical environments.

Graduation and licensure mark the beginning—not the end—of professional growth. As the physical therapy profession continues to evolve, graduates are expected to engage in lifelong learning, collaboration, and ethical practice. We encourage active involvement in professional organizations, such as the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), and ongoing participation in continuing education.

We appreciate your interest in the FVCC PTA Program and wish you every success as you prepare your application.



Janice Heil, PT, MAPT

FVCC PTA Program Director
Health Science Division Chair
(406)756-3373

Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program

Application Information Packet – Fall 2026 Entry

Application Deadline: May 15, 2026

Mission Statement

FVCC's mission is to graduate entry-level physical therapist assistants (PTAs) who function under the direction and supervision of a licensed physical therapist (PT). Graduates will ensure excellence in patient care by demonstrating competence, critical thinking, and compassion. Faculty and graduates will be committed to health and wellness, safe and ethical practice, social responsibility, professional growth, and lifelong learning.

CAPTE Accreditation Statement

The Physical Therapist Assistant Program at Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE):

Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE)
3030 Potomac Avenue, Suite 100
Alexandria, Virginia 22305-3085
Phone: (703) 706-3245 | Email: accreditation@apta.org
Website: www.capteonline.org

Graduates of the PTA program are eligible to take the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) for licensure as a Physical Therapist Assistant.

Application Submission Instructions

The following information is provided to ensure applicants understand all academic, clinical, and professional expectations of the PTA Program prior to applying, in accordance with CAPTE standards.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to read and review all required application components in this packet before beginning the online application form. The PTA Program application is detailed and time intensive. Starting the application without fully understanding the requirements may result in errors, incomplete submissions, or delays in processing.

Required Links and Forms

All required forms and application materials are accessed through the FVCC Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program website. Applicants are responsible for using the most current versions of all forms and instructions

Please use the links below when preparing your application:

- [FVCC PTA Program Website](#)
(Program information, application access, and updates)
- [FVCC PTA Online Application Form](#)
(Primary application submission portal)
- [Selective Prerequisite GPA Calculator \(Google Sheet\)](#)
(Download, complete, save as a PDF, and upload with your application)
- [PTA Observation Verification Form](#)
(Completed by supervising PT/PTA or facility representative and uploaded with application)
- [Professional Recommendation Submission Form](#)
(Completed and submitted directly by recommenders)

Important: Applicants should not rely on saved, shared, or previously downloaded forms from prior application cycles. Only forms accessed through the FVCC PTA Program website will be accepted.

Application Submission Method

All application materials must be submitted through the **FVCC PTA Online Application Form** by **May 15, 2026, at 11:59 pm (MT)**.

- Required documents must be uploaded as **PDF files** unless otherwise specified.
- Recommendation forms must be submitted **directly by the recommender** using the designated link.
- Application materials submitted via **email** will not be accepted unless explicitly requested by the Program Director. (All documents should be uploaded or documented in the online application form)

Applicants are responsible for verifying that all required components have been submitted by the deadline. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Summary of Application Procedure

Do These First:

- ✓ Review the FVCC PTA Information Packet and Program Website in advance.
- ✓ [Apply to FVCC](#): Ensure you have a Student ID number.
- ✓ GPA Calculator: [Download the Selective GPA Calculator](#). You must complete this and save it as a PDF.
- ✓ Observation Hours: Verify you have 20 hours total, with at least 8 hours in an inpatient setting. Have your [Observation Forms](#) ready to upload.
- ✓ Recommendations: Contact two professional references. Provide them with this link to submit their recommendation directly to us: [Professional Recommendation Link](#).
- ✓ The Essay: Write your 3-page autobiographical essay.
- ✓ Submit Completed [Online Application Form](#) by May 15th, 2026, by 11:59 pm.
- ✓ Contact jheil@fvcc.edu or Kscholer@fvcc.edu with any questions.

After Submission

- ✓ Complete any course requirements if applicable.
- ✓ Attend interview if selected.
- ✓ Monitor email regularly for communications.

FVCC PTA Program Overview

Degree Awarded: Associate of Applied Science (AAS) – Physical Therapist Assistant

Program Length: The FVCC PTA Program follows a **1 + 1 curriculum model**. Students complete a pre-technical year **before** applying to the selective technical portion of the program. Admission to the technical program is competitive and not guaranteed by completion of prerequisites. Once accepted, the PTA Program lasts approximately one year after admission into the technical aspect of the program.

Admission Cohort Size: Up to ten students selected annually (with up to two alternates)

The FVCC PTA curriculum integrates classroom instruction, hands-on laboratory learning, and progressive clinical experiences designed to prepare graduates for safe, effective, and ethical practice as a Physical Therapist Assistant.

PTA Program Timeline

YEAR 1 — PRE-TECHNICAL PHASE

(Completed prior to applying to the PTA Program)

- General education coursework
- Required prerequisite courses (including Anatomy & Physiology)
- Completion of required observation hours
- Preparation for selective PTA program application



APPLICATION TO PTA PROGRAM

(Spring application cycle)

- Submission of PTA Program application
- Students can apply while finishing Year one courses.
- Selective GPA calculation
- Autobiographical essay
- Professional recommendations
- Interview (by invitation)



YEAR 2 — TECHNICAL PTA PROGRAM

(Three consecutive semesters; full-time commitment)

- Classroom instruction
- Hands-on laboratory skill development
- Full-time clinical education experiences
- Progression through the curriculum as a cohort



GRADUATION & LICENSURE PREPARATION

- Award of Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree
- Preparation for the National Physical Therapy Examination for Physical Therapist Assistants (NPTE-PTA)

PTA Program Schedule

Class Schedule

- Full-time, daytime program only
- Monday–Friday, approximately 8:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
- On-campus academic coursework in Fall and Spring semesters (13 weeks each)
- Final 1–2 week summer seminar following the final clinical experience.

Clinical Education

Students complete three full-time (40 hours/week) clinical experiences:

1. 4-week clinical (late Fall ~mid-Nov – mid Dec)
2. 6-week clinical (Spring ~mid-April to late May/early June)
3. 7-week terminal clinical (Summer ~mid-June to late July)

Clinical sites include inpatient, outpatient, rehabilitation, and specialty settings. Students follow their clinical instructor's schedule, which may include early mornings, evenings, or weekends.

Distant Clinical Placement Notice:

Due to limited local availability, students should plan for up to two clinical experiences more than ninety miles from FVCC, which may require out-of-area travel. Students are responsible for all travel, lodging, and related expenses during clinical education.

Program Costs (Estimated)

Expense Category	Estimated Cost
Tuition & Fees (technical courses)	\$7,970.00
Books	\$730.00
Immunizations	\$250.00
Background Check/Drug Screen	\$100.00
Program Fee (labs, software, etc.)	\$1,200.00
Montana PTA License Fee	\$100.00
National Exam Fee (FSBPT)	\$485.00
Prometric Testing Fee	\$100.00
Estimated Total Program Cost	\$10,935.00

Additional expenses may include clinical travel, housing, food, uniforms, and optional education resources.

Financial Aid and Scholarships

Students may qualify for federal financial aid, grants, and scholarships through FVCC. Visit the [Financial Aid Office](#) or call (406) 756-3849 for assistance.

Health and Vaccination Requirements

Clinical education is an essential component of the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program. To participate in clinical experiences, students must meet health, safety, and immunization requirements established by clinical education sites.

Health and immunization requirements are **subject to change** and may vary based on:

- Clinical site policies
- State and federal laws and regulations
- Public health guidelines

While Montana law does not permit the PTA Program to require certain vaccinations as a condition of enrollment, clinical education sites—particularly those located **outside the state of Montana**—may have different health or immunization requirements.

Students who are unable or unwilling to meet clinical site requirements may have limited clinical placement options and may be unable to progress in or complete the program.

Students are responsible for understanding and complying with all health and safety requirements associated with their assigned clinical education sites.

Required Health Documentation

The following health documentation is required in accordance with FVCC policy and clinical site requirements:

- Proof of **two doses of measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR)** vaccination or laboratory titer demonstrating immunity for each
- **Tuberculosis (TB) screening**, completed within 12 months prior to the start of the clinical experience, which may include:
 - Two-step TB skin test, or
 - QuantiFERON, T-Spot, or
 - Chest X-ray

Note: Students may wait until after beginning the PTA Program to complete TB screening to ensure coverage through all clinical experiences, including those extending through July.

These requirements are subject to change based on state and federal laws and regulations.

Recommended (Not Required by FVCC or Local Clinical Sites)

The following immunizations are **recommended but not required** by FVCC or most local clinical education sites. Students pursuing clinical placements outside of Montana must comply with the specific health and immunization requirements of the host state or clinical facility.

- COVID-19 vaccine
- Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine or positive antibody titer
- Hepatitis B vaccine series (three doses) with positive antibody titer
- Tdap (adult formulation)
- Seasonal influenza vaccine (when available during the fall semester)

Post-Acceptance Requirements

Health Insurance:

Once preliminarily admitted to the PTA Program, students must provide proof of current personal health insurance prior to the start of the clinical education portion of the program (November through August).

Criminal Background Check and Drug Screening:

FVCC does **not** require a background check or drug screening for admission into the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program. However, **many clinical education sites do require** a background check and/or drug screening before allowing students to participate in clinical experiences.

Because clinical education is a required and integral part of the PTA Program, students who receive preliminary acceptance will be required to complete a criminal background check and drug screening through Castle Branch by the deadline stated in their acceptance letter.

Failure to complete these requirements by the deadline, a failed drug screen, or the presence of a reportable discrepancy may limit or prevent placement at a clinical education site and could impact a student's ability to progress in the program.

Students who have concerns or anticipate potential discrepancies are responsible for **scheduling an appointment with the Program Director** to discuss their situation and any available options.

CPR Certification:

CPR for Healthcare Providers (American Heart Association) certification is required for participation in clinical education experiences (November through July). CPR certification is **not required** for program acceptance but must be completed prior to the start of clinical education. CPR training will be offered after formal acceptance into the PTA Program.

Transcript Verification:

Any courses not verified by transcripts (e.g., courses taken during the summer after application submission) must be verified by submitting official transcripts with final grades to the FVCC Registrar.

Academic Standards Post Acceptance

Once a student is officially accepted or admitted into the PTA program, each PTA course must be passed with a grade of at least a “C+” or 78% for the student to continue in the program or Satisfactory in a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory Clinical courses.

Essential Functions and Physical Requirements

Applicants are expected to review and understand the above program requirements prior to submitting an application. Students must be able to meet the Essential Performance Functions with or without reasonable accommodation, including but not limited to:

- Physical ability to lift \geq 50 pounds, kneel, squat, and assist patient transfers.
- Visual, auditory, and tactile ability to assess patients and environments.
- Effective verbal and written communication skills
- Emotional stability, professionalism, and ethical conduct in all settings

If accommodations are required, contact Disability Support Services:
Email: disabilitysupport@fvcc.edu | Phone: (406) 756-3380

Time Commitment and Student Responsibilities

The PTA Program is intensive and requires full participation. Success depends on time management, consistent preparation, and professional responsibility.

Expectations include:

- At least 2 hours of study per credit hour per week (more strongly recommended)
- Limited ability to maintain full-time employment during academic terms.
- Attendance at all classes, labs, and clinical experiences
- Readiness for demanding coursework, practical skill tests, and real-patient interactions
- Demonstrated professionalism, punctuality, and teamwork.

Application Process and Requirements

Applications are available on the FVCC PTA Program Website.

Completed applications must be submitted no later than May 15, 2026, by 11:59 pm.

Required Application Components

1. Completed Online PTA Application Form
2. Selective GPA Calculator (PDF)
3. Observation Verification Forms (minimum 20 hours, three settings)
 - o At least 8 hours must be in an inpatient setting.
4. Healthcare/Medical/Customer Service Work Experience Form
5. Autobiographical Essay (max three pages, double-spaced)
6. Two (2) Professional Recommendations
 - o Submitted directly by licensed PTs, PTAs, faculty, or supervisors.
7. Essential Functions Verification Form
8. Acknowledgement of Program Commitment Form
9. Unofficial Transcripts (official transcripts on file with FVCC Admissions required before enrollment)

Application Form

Applicants will access the FVCC PTA Application form through the [FVCC PTA Website](#). Click on the link for the [FVCC PTA Application Form](#), complete and submit by May 15th 11:59 pm.

Applicant Eligibility and Prerequisites

All prerequisite courses must be completed with a minimum grade of C and a Selective GPA of at least 2.75.

- Anatomy & Physiology I & II must have been completed within the last 5 years before the application date.
- All other prerequisites must have been completed within 15 years of application.
- Students may complete up to three prerequisite credits during the summer before entry, with the Program Director's approval.
- Course substitutions or exceptions may be considered with the Program Director's approval.

Selective GPA Calculator

Instructions for Completing the Selective Prerequisite GPA Form

Download → Make your own copy → Complete → Save as PDF → Upload to online application.

1. Online Form Only

- Students must complete the Selective Prerequisite GPA form online.
- Download the Google Sheet, fill it out, then save your completed copy.

2. Selective GPA Requirements

- You must have a minimum GPA of 2.75.
- No course grade below C- will be counted.

3. Incomplete Courses

- If a course is not yet completed, leave it blank on the form.
- Do not count incomplete courses in your GPA calculation.

4. Repeated Courses

- If a course has been taken more than once, use the highest grade for your GPA calculation; however, all attempts will appear on your official transcripts.

5. Higher-Level Courses

- If you have taken a higher-level course than a required prerequisite, you may use the grade from the higher-level course if it is higher than the prerequisite grade.
- Approval from the Program Director is required for this substitution.

6. Spring Semester Courses

- If you are completing courses in the spring and have not received a final grade, leave the grade blank.
- Divide by the appropriate number of completed credits when calculating your GPA.

7. Questions

- If you have questions, contact the Program Director at jheil@fvcc.edu

Transcripts

Official transcripts must be on file in the FVCC Registrar's office as part of the FVCC Institution Application.

Please upload unofficial transcripts from all current and prior institutions to the online FVCC PTA Application Form. If all transcripts are on file and have been verified by the FVCC registrar, no need to upload unofficial transcripts.

Observation Verification

Observation Forms

- PTA Observation Verification Forms are available on the [FVCC PTA website](#).
[FVCC PTA Observation Form](#)
- Students are responsible for organizing their own and tracking their own observation hours using these online forms.
- Think of observation experiences as a chance to see the profession in action in a variety of settings and demonstrate professionalism.
- Hours must be verified by supervising PT/PTA or Admin of clinic/facility per form instructions.
- Contact information will be provided on the form.
- Completed forms will be uploaded as part of your online FVCC PTA Program application.

Hour Requirements

- Total hours: At least 20 hours of volunteer/observation experience.
- Settings: Must include at least three different clinical sites.
- Inpatient requirement: Minimum of 8 hours in an inpatient setting (acute care, rehabilitation, long-term care, or sub-acute).

Submitting Forms

Forms will be completed online, saved and uploaded on online FVCC PTA Program Application.

Trouble Finding Hours? No problem, if you have questions or are having difficulty obtaining inpatient observation opportunities, contact the Program Director at jheil@fvcc.edu.

Note to Students: *Since we are transitioning to the online FVCC PTA Application form, those students who have been tracking hours on the original FVCC Observation Form may upload them in their online application. These forms will be also accepted [Observation Verification Form](#), for this application cycle.*

Autobiographical Essay

Academic Integrity Statement:

All application materials, including the autobiographical essay, must be the applicant's original work. AI tools may be used for brainstorming or editing support, but the final submission must reflect the applicant's original thinking, voice, and structure. Essays may be reviewed for originality. Violations may result in reduced points or disqualification from the application process.

Applicants must submit a typed autobiographical essay that is no more than three pages in length, double-spaced (~750 words), and written in a 12-point font.

The essay will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to clearly address the following areas:

1. Interest and Career Goals

- Motivation for pursuing a career as a Physical Therapist Assistant

2. Relevant Personal or Professional Experience

- Experiences in healthcare or life experiences that have contributed to the applicant's understanding of physical therapy and interest in the profession.

3. Understanding of the PTA Role

- Knowledge of the variety of practice settings in which a PTA may work
(Applicants are encouraged to reference professional resources such as www.apta.org)

4. Personal Strengths

- Attributes and skills that support effective performance as a Physical Therapist Assistant

5. Writing Structure and Mechanics

- Organization, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and overall clarity

6. Composition and Expression

- Coherence of ideas, logical flow, depth of reflection, and effectiveness of written communication

Professional Recommendation

Applicants will provide the details for **two** professional references (e.g., Physical Therapists, Clinical Supervisors, Employers/ Managers or Professors).

How to Submit:

1. **Identify:** Choose two professionals who can speak to your character and potential.
2. **Contact:** You must contact your recommenders *before* submitting this application.
3. **Send Link:** Provide them with the [Professional Recommendation Form](#) to complete.
4. **Follow Up:** It is your responsibility to ensure they submit the form by the application deadline.

Note: Recommendation letters must be submitted **directly** by the recommender. Applicants are **not** permitted to upload these documents.

Interview

Once applicants have completed the online FVCC PTA Program Application form, met all the program qualifications, qualified students will be interviewed by PTA faculty. This interview will be conducted face-to-face or via Zoom with a two-to-four-person interview panel.

Admission Review and Selection Process

Evaluation Criteria for PTA Program Admission

- Admission notifications are sent by mid-June via the email address provided in the application.
- Applications are evaluated using standardized admissions rubric designed to promote consistency, fairness, and transparency in the selection process.
- The admissions rubric includes the following components:
 - Completed application form.
 - Selective GPA
 - Autobiographical essay
 - Observation hours
 - Interview performance
 - Professional recommendation forms
 - Prior education
 - Work experience (healthcare or customer service)
- Each application component is assigned points based on clearly defined performance criteria within the rubric. Faculty evaluators use these criteria to assess each component.
- The rubric displays the **maximum points available** in each category. Applicants may use the rubric as a guide to understand how applications are evaluated; however, final point assignments reflect faculty evaluation of submitted materials using the established rubric criteria.
- Final admission decisions are based on **overall rubric scores** and a review of applicant readiness for the academic and clinical demands of the PTA Program, as supported by rubric-based evaluation.

Note: Any discrepancies related to eligibility or application requirements must be reviewed and approved by the Program Director prior to final consideration.

Cohort Size and Selection

- The PTA Program accepts up to ten students per cohort.
- Two students may be placed on a waiting list.
- Cohort size may be fewer than ten if clinical site availability or community needs are limited based on Advisory Committee and Clinical input.
- If the number of qualified applicants **exceeds available spaces**, not all qualified applicants will be accepted.

Tiebreaker

- In the event of a tie, the following criteria will be used:
 1. Combined rubric score of **Selective GPA and Interview performance.**
 2. Combined **Anatomy & Physiology I and II GPA**

Important Note:

Incomplete applications, including those missing required recommendation forms, **will not be considered** for the 2026 cohort if not received by **May 15**.

If the number of qualified applicants does not meet the typical cohort size, the program **may consider exceptions** at the discretion of the Program Director. Any exceptions are documented and applied consistently to ensure fairness and compliance with accreditation standards.

Such exceptions are **not guaranteed** and are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Pro Tip

Common Application Errors to Avoid:

- **Inpatient Hours:** Ensure at least eight of your 20 hours are in a hospital, SNF, or rehab center—outpatient clinics do not count toward this specific requirement.
- **PDF Format:** All emailed attachments must be in PDF format. Photo snapshots (jpg) of documents will not be accepted.
- **Recommendation Tracking:** Your application is considered "Incomplete" until both recommenders submit their forms. Follow up with them early!
- **Selective GPA Form:** Download → Make your own copy → Complete → Save as PDF → Upload to online application.
- Do not email application materials unless specifically instructed, all application materials are submitted through the online FVCC PTA Application Form.

Contact Information

Flathead Valley Community College
Physical Therapist Assistant Program
777 Grandview Drive
Kalispell, MT 59901

Program Director: Janice Heil, PT, MPT
Email: jheil@fvcc.edu
Phone: (406) 756-3373

General Information: www.fvcc.edu/program/physical-therapist-assistant-aas

FVCC PTA Program Application Rubric – Student Guide

FVCC PTA Program Application Rubric		
Category	What You Need to Maximize Points	*Max Points
Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points provided for range of complete , timely, no errors or clarification of info. 	Complete all sections fully, submit on time	5
Autobiographical Essay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points provided for range of Excellent to Poor Essay performance. 	Professional, thorough, all areas addressed, free of errors, screened for AI, good originality.	25
Interview (Face-to-Face or Zoom) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points provided for interview performance of Outstanding to Below Average 	Exceptional communication, professionalism, confidence, well-prepared, shows knowledge and readiness	50
Observation Hours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points provided for range of hours from fully met, partially met to 0 	≥20 hours total, 3 clinical sites, 8+ hours inpatient	20
Professional Recommendations (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points provided for range from Excellent to Below Average 	Two excellent recommendations submitted by your recommenders	20
Selective Prerequisite GPA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points provided for range of grades from 4.0 - 2.75 GPA 	3.5–4.0	50
Human Anatomy & Physiology I & II GPA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points provided for range of grades from 4.0 – 2.0. no C- 	3.5–4.0	50
Previous Degrees / Certifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points provided for range of degrees and certificates from Masters, Bachelor's, AAS/AA/AS, High school, CNA, EMT, CMA 	BA/BS, MA/MS, or health-related certifications with paid experience	30
Work Experience (HC or Customer Service) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points provided for range of work experience from healthcare to customer service 	Paid healthcare experience >12 months in last 2 years	30
	TOTAL	MAX 280 Points

*This rubric displays the maximum points available in each category. Final scoring is determined by faculty review using comprehensive rubric. Meeting minimum requirements does not guarantee maximum points or admission.