

Planning a Break From Clinical Practice

Thinking about taking a break from clinical practice? It's important to make a clear reentry plan so that you can resume practicing as quickly and seamlessly as possible and avoid the hurdles that PAs sometimes face when attempting to return to practice after time away.

One important step you can take before your break is to request letters of recommendation from colleagues to keep on file. It is helpful to ask colleagues for letters of recommendation while your work together is still fresh.

If you are planning to work during your break, review your current employment contract. Is there a non-compete clause? If so, how will it affect your part-time employment or professional options during your break?

Here are some more considerations for PAs who are planning to take a break from full-time clinical practice or are preparing to return.

KNOW THE DETAILS

Understanding your state medical board's reentry requirements is the most important aspect of planning a break. Two years is in many states – but not all – the maximum length of time a PA can be away from practice without being required to complete a formal reentry process. There is no single, nationwide reentry process but rather a patchwork of state requirements. Some states only require maintenance of NCCPA certification while others mandate completion of a reentry program specifically aimed at PAs. Keeping your certification current and CME up to date is advisable for all PAs not in full-time practice.

BE AWARE OF THE COSTS

Reentering the workforce costs time and money. You may need to travel or relocate to another state for clinical assessment or evaluation if you are out of practice for more than 23 months. Be sure your financial and familial resources can support these costs, or carefully plan your reentry so that you will not trigger an evaluation by your state medical board.

If you are considering relocating for work, use our [Cost of Living Calculator](#) to understand how much you need to earn to maintain your lifestyle.

CONSIDER PART-TIME PRACTICE

Part-time practice is an excellent way to keep your skills, license, and PA identity active and make your future transition back to full-time practice much easier, both from a legal and professional standpoint.

STAY INFORMED

Keep up to date about the most current happenings in the PA profession at the federal, state, and local levels. Maintain your AAPA membership and any membership you have in state or specialty organizations and attend meetings when you can.

UPDATE YOUR PROFESSIONAL FILE

Make sure your NCCPA certification is current and that you have copies of all documentation.

REVIEW THE LAW

Be sure to read about the [laws and regulations](#) that govern PAs in your state. Changes in law can happen quickly.

REFRESH YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Take courses to keep your knowledge current, earn CME, read journals, and find a wide array of educational options and CME in AAPA's [Learning Central](#).

UPDATE YOUR EXPERIENCE

If you haven't been practicing during your break, consider updating your clinical experience before returning to full-time practice by shadowing a clinical colleague or taking on a medical assistant role at a local health fair or clinic. Just be sure you don't cross the line into practicing medicine without a license. You can also refresh your experience by taking part in a PA residency program.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

Be conservative when reentering practice after time off. Assess how long you have been out of practice, the state of your skills, and your current competency level. Then, choose a role that reasonably fits with what you can offer.

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