

Know Your Worth—And How to Ask for It



CONTRACT NEGOTIATION FOR
PA STUDENTS



JEREMY NELSON, DMSc,
MPAS, PA-C, DFAAPA

Disclosures

All materials
derived from
AAPA Job Source

I have no conflicts
of interest to
disclose.

Why It Matters



Contract negotiation impacts job satisfaction, financial stability, and career growth for PA students.



Poorly negotiated contracts may cause burnout, limited mobility, and legal or financial issues.



Employment contracts are legally binding and detail responsibilities, compensation, and rights.



Understanding contract importance helps PA students advocate effectively for their professional goals and values.

Set Your Priorities Before You Apply

Identify

Identify Personal Priorities

- Rank important factors before starting your job search : Location, specialty, hours, benefits

Align

Align Jobs with Goals

- Use your ranked priorities to find roles that fit your needs and avoid unsuitable job offers

Empower

Empower Negotiations

- Set priorities to confidently negotiate terms that support your career satisfaction

Reflect and Refine

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- Availability of jobs
- Steppingstone
- Iteratively refine priorities

Anatomy of a PA Employment Contract

Compensation: Salary, hourly, bonus, productivity

Benefits: CME, insurance, PTO, retirement

Terms: Start/end dates, renewal, termination clauses

Performance Evaluation: Frequency, onboarding

Services to be Provided: Duties, hours, locations, call

Credentials & Privileges: Licensure, hospital fees

Employment Type: Employee vs. contractor

Moonlighting/Volunteering: Approval process

Restrictive Covenants

- **Non-Compete:** Limits where and for whom you can work post-employment
 - *Red Flags:* Broad geography, long duration (>2 years), vague language
- **Non-Solicitation:** Prevents you from recruiting former colleagues or patients
 - *Red Flags:* Applies to all employees or patients, even those you didn't work with
- **Confidentiality:** Prohibits sharing proprietary info
 - *Red Flags:* Overly broad language that restricts future employment or whistleblowing



Reasonable Restrictions

Typical limits include 6 to 12 months duration and geographic radius of 5 to 300 miles for enforceable covenants.



Negotiation and Career Protection

Negotiate voidance clauses if terminated without cause to protect career mobility and maintain flexibility.

Red Flags in First Job Offers

- **Contract Red Flags**
 - Look for absence of sick leave, health insurance, and high employee turnover as warning signs in job contracts.
- **Questionable Job Expectations**
 - Beware roles expecting independent patient care without orientation or training periods for new graduates.
- **Compensation and Employer Awareness**
 - Below-market pay with large sign-on bonuses and employers unfamiliar with the PA role may signal issues.
- **Importance of Mentorship**
 - Consulting mentors and current employees helps evaluate workplace culture and avoid poor job offers.

Malpractice Insurance Essentials

Occurrence vs. Claims-Made:

- **Occurrence:**
Covers events during policy period
- **Claims-Made:**
Covers only if policy is active when claim is made

Tail Coverage

- Claims-Made
- Who pays when you leave?

Named Insured

- Ensures direct protection for your license and assets

Coverage of Legal Costs

- Should cover legal and liability for services rendered

Tips for Preparation & Approach



Before Negotiation

- Review contract thoroughly
- Know what's in writing
- Rank priorities
- Specialty, schedule, location
- Research compensation
- AAPA, NCCPA, bls.gov
- Document your value
- Expanded duties, preceptor feedback
- Talk to your mentors



During Negotiation

- Be professional and collaborative
- Don't assume
- Ask clarifying questions
- Use data to support requests
- Are you prepared to walk away?
- If terms don't align
- Don't rush to sign.

Common Scenarios

Offered below-market pay with large sign-on bonus



Employer has never hired a PA before



Claims-made policy with no tail coverage



3-year non-compete across the state

Your Negotiation Checklist

- ✓ Review AAPA Salary Report
- ✓ Rank your priorities
- ✓ Understand compensation models
- ✓ Confirm malpractice coverage & tail
- ✓ Scrutinize restrictive covenants
- ✓ Ask about CME, PTO, retirement
- ✓ Get everything in writing
- ✓ **Read the contract—twice**



Final Thoughts



You are your best advocate.



Contracts are negotiable—even for new grads.



Use data, be professional, and don't be afraid to ask.



Your first job is a launchpad—not a life sentence.