



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
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MEMORANDUM FOR HQ AFMC/SGP ANG/SGP HQ AFRC/SGP
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SUBJECT: Physician Assistant Role in Flight Medicine Departments

Physician Assistants (PAs) can be allocated to base flight medicine departments when deemed feasible and necessary to meet patient care needs. However, PAs will not be staffed against existing unfilled flight surgeon positions.

Physician Assistant scope of care and maintenance of credentials are clearly defined in AFI 44-119, Medical Service Clinical Quality Management. Clinical practice in the flight medicine department is limited to these guidelines. Similar to non-flight surgeon physicians, the PAs can "ground" a flyer as necessary due to ailment or medical treatment, but do not have authority to return the flyer to flying duties. PAs cannot perform initial or periodic flying physicals. Aeromedical summaries must be composed and signed by certified flight surgeons only. Other non-clinical duties, such as shop and food facility visits/inspections, flying squadron visits, and aircrew training, remain the responsibility of the flight surgeon.

There is no Specialty Physician Assistant category in flight medicine. No Air Force aeronautical rating is authorized for PAs assigned to flight medical departments as primary care providers. Regardless of Army or Air Force aeromedical training, PAs are not authorized flight status and cannot be assigned against a rated position indicator (RPI-5/API-5) position (AFI 11-401, Flight Management). However, they may be afforded the same opportunity for orientation flights as extended to other non-flight surgeon medical personnel. Flying activity must be on a non-interference basis only at the discretion of the AMDS commander and flying unit commander.

The wear and award of aeronautical wings must be in compliance with Air Force Instruction (AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel; AFI 11-402, Aviation and Parachutist Service, Aeronautical Ratings and Badges). The wear and award of other military service aeronautical badges must also comply with that service's eligibility as outlined by regulation. For example, after completion of the Army Flight Surgeon Primary Course (AFSPC 00-01), PAs may be eligible to wear the Army Aircraft Crew Badge if in compliance with Army Regulation AR-600-8-22, Military Awards. Such training does not qualify PAs to wear Army flight surgeon, Air Force flight surgeon, or Air Force Aircrew wings.

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