

Medical Provider Glossary

Advanced Practice Nurse: A registered nurse with a state license and at least a master's degree and specialty certification as a nurse practitioner, nurse anesthetist, nurse midwife or clinical nurse specialists. Advanced practice nurses must have a physician supervisor in order to practice in Tennessee.

Audiologist: A healthcare provider who treats hearing loss and works to prevent hearing damage. In Tennessee, licensed audiologists must have a doctoral degree with an emphasis in audiology or hearing science and a certificate of clinical competence in audiology or 1,820 hours of supervised clinical practicum with a licensed audiologist.

Certified Midwife: A graduate of an accredited midwifery education program without a nursing background. Certified midwives provide prenatal, postpartal and newborn care, in addition to care during delivery, but are required to have each client sign an Informed Choice Disclosure letting them know about their training, education and collaborating or consulting physicians. They are also may be required to refer or transfer care to a physician under a number of pre-existing conditions.

Certified Nurse Anesthetist: A registered nurse with at least a master's degree in a nursing specialty and certification as a registered nurse anesthetist. They are responsible for managing patient pain and vitals during surgeries. In Tennessee, certified nurse anesthetists must have a physician supervisor in order to practice.

Certified Nurse Midwife: A registered nurse with 1-2 years of nursing experience who is a graduate of a nurse-midwifery education program. In Tennessee, nurse midwives must have a physician supervisor in order to practice.

Chiropractor: A healthcare provider focusing on treating musculoskeletal and nervous system disorders including back, neck and joint pain. A chiropractor must complete four years of undergraduate study at a chiropractic college followed by a year-long internship at a college clinic.

Clinical Nurse Specialist: A licensed registered nurse with at least a master's degree in a nursing specialty with specialty certification as a clinical nurse specialist. In Tennessee, clinical nurse specialists must have a relationship with a physician supervisor in order to practice.

Dentist: A provider who has completed four years of dental school and received a Doctor of Dental Surgery Degree or a Doctor of Dental Medicine Degree who evaluates and treats conditions of the oral cavity.

Doctor: A doctor, also called a physician, is a healthcare provider with a Doctor of Medicine or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine Degree. Doctors practice in a wide range of settings and with a wide scope of practice that includes diagnosis and treatment as well as prescription of medications. Doctors also supervise mid-level providers including nurse practitioners and physician assistants.

Doctor of Medicine: A licensed physician with a doctor of medicine degree (MD) from an accredited program. Sometimes also called allopathic doctors, MDs can be generalists or specialize in a specific field. They go through rigorous training including up to 11 years of post-graduate school and training, depending on specialty, to provide high-quality medical care.

Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine: A licensed physician with a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine Degree, a separate branch of medicine on equal footing with allopathic physicians. A DO receives special training in the musculoskeletal system. DOs focus on looking at how lifestyle and environmental factors impact patient wellbeing. Some osteopathic doctors provide manual therapies such as spinal manipulation or massage therapy as part of their treatment. Like allopathic doctors, DOs attend a medical school for four years with an additional 4-7 years of residency or fellowship training.

Emergency Medical Technician: EMTs respond to emergency calls for medical care, providing assistance while transporting patients to hospitals or other medical facilities.

Licensed Practical Nurse: A healthcare provider who has completed a typically one-year practical nursing program. LPNs provide basic care to patients.

Naturopath: A practitioner of alternative medicine, with a focus on natural remedies and self-healing. Naturopaths are not licensed in Tennessee.

Nurse Practitioner: A nurse with a graduate degree in advanced practice nursing. Graduate training for a nurse practitioner can take as few as two years. In Tennessee, Nurse Practitioners must be supervised by a physician who has experience in the same area of medicine in which the nurse practitioner is practicing and who reviews a percentage of the NPs charts. While they can prescribe controlled substances, the medications they prescribe have to be laid out in a set formulary, and many of the medications they prescribe have to be specifically authorized by a physician before they are issued.

Optometrist: A healthcare provider who diagnoses and treats visual system diseases and disorders. Optometrists go through a four-year doctorate program before being licensed in Tennessee.

Ophthalmologist: A medical doctor with a MD or DO degree who specializes in vision and eye care. An Ophthalmologist has completed medical training and is licensed to practice medicine and surgery. They can diagnose and treat all eye diseases, perform eye surgery and prescribes glasses and contact lenses.

Pharmacist: A pharmacist dispenses prescription medications, provides guidance on the safe use of those medications and sometimes provides immunizations and wellness screenings. Pharmacists must complete a 4-year Doctor of Pharmacy degree in order to practice.

Physician Assistant: A healthcare provider with a master's degree from a physician assistant program who practices under supervision of a physician to treat patients and prescribe medication. In Tennessee the range of services a physician assistant is able to provide is set out in a written protocol agreed upon by the PA and his or her supervising physician.

Primary Care Physician: A physician specializing in family medicine, internal medicine or pediatrics who provides continuing comprehensive care for a patient. They often serve as an entry point for most of a patient's other healthcare needs.

Registered Nurse: A nurse with a minimum of an associate's degree with duties including administering medication and treatment, performing diagnostic testing and overseeing other workers.