



Protecting Health Care Quality, Access  
and Choice of Providers

## Meet Your Healthcare Professionals

Did you know that there are more than three million licensed and certified health care professionals who are well-prepared to provide the health care you need but who are not medical doctors (MDs) or doctors of osteopathy (DOs)? Without the contributions of these professionals, many patients would not have access to important health care services, especially in rural and medically underserved areas.

Take a moment to “meet” some of the health care professionals who can help you maintain your health and address problems you may have. Visit the links for further information.

### Registered Nurses and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses

With 3.1 million **registered nurses** (RNs) in the United States, including **advanced practice registered nurses** (APRNs) such as **nurse practitioners**, nursing represents the largest group of health care professionals. There are many RNs and APRNAs who are educated and licensed to provide specialized care. Through their extensive knowledge and experience, they advocate and provide care for individuals, families and communities to maintain or restore health and wellness. RNs and APRNs are essential providers within our health care system, and the services they offer are regulated at the state level. The following professional membership organizations can provide more information about the types of care provided by the nurses they represent.

Organization Name	Description	Website
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN)	Nurses who care for critically ill patients and patients with complex medical conditions and needs. Critical care nurses often work in Intensive Care Units (ICUs).	<a href="http://www.aacn.org">www.aacn.org</a>
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN)	Nurses who function as first assistants, scrub nurses or circulating nurses during surgery.	<a href="http://www.aorn.org">www.aorn.org</a>
American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP)	Nurse practitioners are APRNs who practice in ambulatory, acute and long-term care settings as primary and/or specialty care providers.	<a href="http://www.aanp.org">www.aanp.org</a>
Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA)	Nurses who prevent and relieve suffering, regardless of the stage of a disease.	<a href="http://www.advancingexpertcare.org">www.advancingexpertcare.org</a>



Protecting Health Care Quality, Access  
and Choice of Providers

### Naturopathic Physicians

With an emphasis on a holistic approach to patient care, **naturopathic physicians** use diet, exercise, lifestyle changes and natural therapies to enhance the body's ability to heal and fight disease. These health care professionals treat the whole person through modern medical science and traditional natural medical approaches. Visit the link below to learn more.

Organization Name	Description	Website
American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP)	Providers who treat the whole person through modern medical science and traditional natural medical approaches.	<a href="http://www.naturopathic.org">www.naturopathic.org</a>

### Psychologists

Practicing **psychologists** are experts in behavioral health with the professional training and clinical skills to help people learn to cope more effectively with life issues and mental health problems. Psychologists receive an average of seven years of extensive education and training, hold doctoral degrees, and are licensed to provide numerous services including evaluations and psychotherapy. Psychologists are also trained to administer and interpret tests and assessments that can help diagnose a condition or tell more about how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. Psychologists recognize that the mind and body are linked and many work in primary care settings often as members of multidisciplinary treatment teams to address the psychological aspects of physical illnesses and injuries, and taking the lead when a patient has a primary mental health or substance abuse diagnosis. Learn more through the website below.

Organization Name	Description	Website
American Psychological Association	Experts in behavioral health with the professional training and clinical skills to help people learn to cope more effectively with life issues and mental health problems.	<a href="http://www.apa.org">www.apa.org</a>

### Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists

Patients with hearing or balance problems should consider consulting with an **audiologist**, a health care professional who identifies, diagnoses, treats and monitors hearing disorders. This includes the prevention of hearing loss and the rehabilitation of persons with hearing and balance disorders. Audiologists complete a post-graduate doctoral degree in audiology and fulfill certification requirements at the national and state levels.

Working with the full range of human communication and its disorders, **speech-language pathologists** are highly skilled professionals who evaluate, diagnose and treat speech, language, and swallowing



Protecting Health Care Quality, Access and Choice of Providers

disorders in individuals of all ages, from infants through the elderly in a variety of settings including the client’s home, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, skilled nursing facilities, schools and early childhood centers.

For more information, click on the links to the AAA and ASHA websites below:

Organization	Description	Website
American Academy of Audiology (AAA)	Health care professionals who evaluate, diagnose, treat, and manage hearing loss and balance disorders in adults and children.	<a href="http://www.audiology.org">www.audiology.org</a>
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)	Providers who identify, diagnose, treat, and monitor speech, language and hearing disorders.	<a href="http://www.asha.org">www.asha.org</a>

### Therapists

**Physical therapists** (PTs) can help improve or restore mobility and function in people of all ages, including newborns, children, and elderly individuals. They provide care for people in a variety of settings, including hospitals, private practices, outpatient clinics, home health agencies, schools, sports and fitness facilities, work settings, and nursing homes. Physical therapists can help people with arthritis, back pain, knee pain, osteoporosis, overuse injuries, shoulder pain, stroke, sprains, strains, fractures, and more. Patients who are looking for a possible alternative to surgery and/or pain medication should consider seeking the advice of a physical therapist. For information on the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), see the following table.

**Occupational therapists** (OTs) help people of all ages live life to its fullest by promoting health, preventing problems, and providing guidance for a healthy, productive life despite limitations caused by illness, injury, disability or other conditions. By looking at a client’s entire health picture (psychological, physical, emotional and social make-up), modifying environments, and developing individual strategies, OT enables people to achieve their goals, focus on what matters most to them, and maintain or rebuild their independence. These health care professionals must pass a national examination and are often regulated at the state level. For information on the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), see the following table.

**Marriage and family therapists** (MFTs) are one of the five core mental health disciplines recognized by the Health Resources and Services Administration. MFTs are licensed to diagnose and/or treat mental and emotional disorders within the context of family systems, and do so primarily with individuals, but also serve couples and family units. They are required to obtain a minimum of a master’s degree (with over 30 percent holding doctorates), plus must have at least two years of post-graduate clinical supervised



experience. Unique to the profession, MFTs are the *only* mental health professionals required to receive specific training in family therapy and family systems. For information on the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), see the following table.

Organization	Description	Website
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT)	Providers who diagnose and/or treat mental and emotional disorders within the context of family systems, primarily serving individuals but also couples and family units.	<a href="http://www.aamft.org">www.aamft.org</a>
American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)	Providers who enable people of all ages to live life to its fullest by helping them promote health and prevent—or live better with—injury, illness or disability by using evidence-based therapy strategies.	<a href="http://www.aota.org">www.aota.org</a>
American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)	Providers who diagnose and treat problems with movement and function.	<a href="http://www.apta.org">www.apta.org</a>

### Doctors of Podiatric Medicine

**Doctors of podiatric medicine** graduate from accredited U.S. podiatric medical schools. Members of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS) have completed surgical residency programs of up to four years, and all Fellows of the College are certified by the American Board of Podiatric Surgery, the surgical board of foot and ankle surgeons recognized by the Joint Committee on the Recognition of Specialty Boards. Many have additional fellowship training in various aspects of foot, ankle, and lower extremity surgery. All ACFAS members are dedicated to surgical excellence in the treatment of foot, ankle, and lower extremity disorders. Learn more through the website below.

Organization	Description	Website
American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS)	Professionals dedicated to the art and science of foot, ankle, and related lower extremity surgery.	<a href="http://www.acfas.org">www.acfas.org</a>

### Nutrition Specialists

The American Nutrition Association and its members, **Certified Nutrition Specialists** (CNSs), envision a society of healthy people powered by nutrition and seek to bring this vision to life by championing the science and practice of personalized nutrition. The work of the ANA is guided by six foundational values: 1) nutrition is a science, 2) nutrition is medicine, 3) nutrition is personal, 4) nutrition is healthcare, 5)



Protecting Health Care Quality, Access  
and Choice of Providers

nutrition is an ecosystem, and 6) nutrition is for everyone. To learn more about the ANA and its mission, click on the link below.

Organization	Description	Website
American Nutrition Association (ANA)	Certified Nutrition Specialists (CNSs) promote personalized nutrition to help prevent/reverse chronic disease and obesity.	<a href="http://www.theana.org">www.theana.org</a>

### Pharmacists

The **National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations** (NASPA), which is comprised of state pharmacy associations and other stakeholder organizations, seeks to enhance the success of state pharmacy associations in their efforts to advance the profession of pharmacy. Public health, patient safety and quality care, and preventing prescription drug abuse are part of the alliance's provider education initiatives. Learn more at the link below.

Organization	Description	Website
National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA)	Alliance of state associations focused on advancing the profession of pharmacy, including provider education on public health, patient safety, and drug abuse prevention initiatives.	<a href="http://www.naspa.us">www.naspa.us</a>