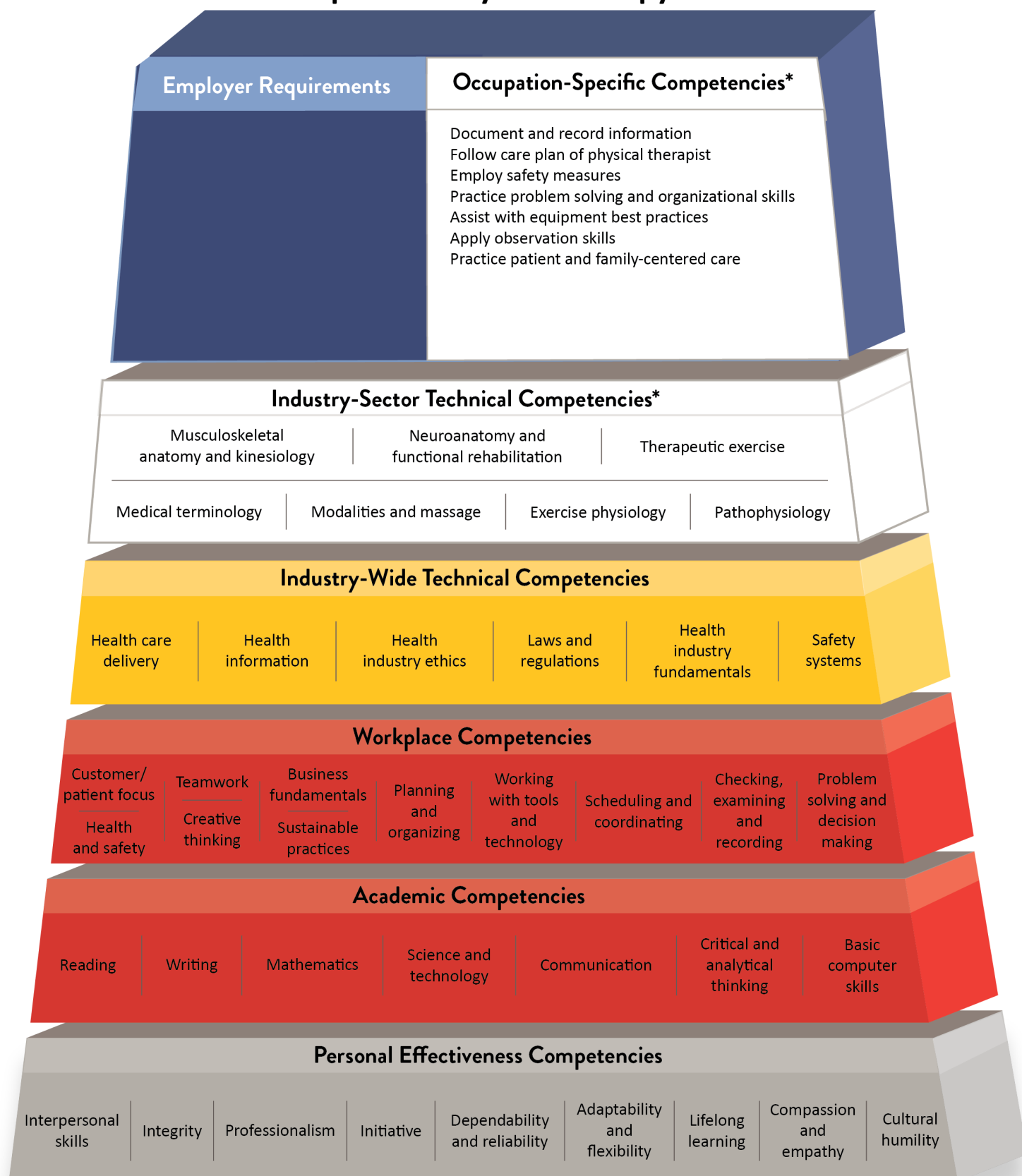


Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline

Competency Model for Health Care Services

Occupation: Physical Therapy Assistant



Based on: Fundamentals of Health Care Competency Model, Employment and Training Administration, United States Department of Labor, February 2025. For more detailed information about competency model creation and sources, visit dli.mn.gov/business/workforce/health-care-services.

Competency Model for Physical Therapy Assistant

Physical Therapy Assistant – A physical therapy assistant supports physical therapists in helping patients who are recovering from injuries so that they can better manage pain and regain their full range of mobility.

*Pipeline recommends the Industry-Sector Technical Competencies as formal training opportunities (provided through related instruction) and the Occupation-Specific Competencies as on-the-job (OJT) training opportunities.

Industry-Sector Technical Competencies

Related Instruction for dual training means the organized and systematic form of education resulting in the enhancement of skills and competencies related to the dual trainee's current or intended occupation.

- **Musculoskeletal anatomy and kinesiology** – Understanding of normal human body movement as related to skeletal, articular, neurological, and muscular systems.
- **Neuroanatomy and functional rehabilitation** – Understand the theory and treatment techniques used for muscle re-education, motor learning to regain functional independence, normalization of muscle and gait training for the patient with injury or disease of the nervous system. Normal motor development, pediatric disorders and pediatric physical therapy.
- **Therapeutic exercise** – Understand the effects of exercise on the musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, and pulmonary systems. Know how physical therapy interventions can improve strength, balance, and flexibility.
- **Medical terminology** – Knowledge of standard medical terms used when interacting with patients and medical professionals.
- **Modalities and massage** – Understand modalities, superficial heat and cold techniques, deep heat therapies, hydrotherapy, ultrasound, the use of ultraviolet and infrared light, electrical muscle stimulation, iontophoresis, NMES, TENS, biofeedback, diagnostic tests to determine nerve involvement, and massage.
- **Exercise physiology** – Understand the study of the body's responses to physical activity as well as how the body adapts to physical activity over time while also ensuring safety.

- **Pathophysiology** – Knowledge of common disorders and diseases affecting the body's organ systems. Understand etiology, diagnosis, signs, symptoms, common lab values, and implications for physical therapy treatment.

Occupation-Specific Competencies

On-the-Job Training is hands-on instruction completed at work to learn the core competencies necessary to succeed in an occupation. Common types of OJT include job shadowing, mentorship, cohort-based training, assignment-based project evaluation and discussion-based training.

- **Document and record information** – Understands how to observe and record quality of room care, sanitation, and patient concerns. Demonstrates comprehension of medical documentation patient charts and workflow.
- **Follow care plan of physical therapist** – Understands how to follow the direction of physical therapist throughout treatment and ensures adherence to OSHA and CDC guidelines throughout care while also working to minimize infections by maintaining and effectively cleaning physical therapy equipment and accessories.
- **Employ safety measures** – Understand facility safety procedures and proficiency in basic First Aid and CPR. Be able to identify signs of cardiac distress and arrest.
- **Practice problem solving and organizational skills** – Know how to solve problems within the practices and how to prepare equipment and supplies to prevent backtracking prior to care delivery.
- **Assist with equipment best practices** – Understand how to set up, use and clean specific equipment including ramps, resistance exercise bands, electrotherapy, ultrasound, hydrotherapy and various gym equipment.
- **Apply observation skills** – Understand the need for strong observation skills to keep track of patient progress and make adjustments when needed to ensure patients are progressing in their treatment.
- **Patient and family-centered care** – Demonstrates an approach to the delivery and evaluation of health care that is grounded in mutually beneficial partnerships among health care professionals, patients and families.

Updated December 2025