

Petition for the Addition of a Related Health Science Discipline for the Profession of Orthotics and Prosthetics

The National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE) a current Committee on Accreditation (CoA) within the CAAHEP system would like to petition the board of directors for the addition of a related health science discipline within the orthotics and prosthetics profession. The level is identified as the **Assistant**. Below are the answers to the questions concerning this level:

1. The health science discipline must represent a distinct and well defined field.

Provide a detailed description of the profession:

An assistant is an individual that participates in directed orthotic and/or prosthetic care while under the supervision of a certified and/or licensed orthotist and/or prosthetist. They perform orthotic and/or prosthetic procedures and related tasks associated with patient care. The evaluation and formulation of the treatment plan is the responsibility of the supervising orthotist and/or prosthetist.

The practice of an orthotic/prosthetic assistant includes, but is not limited to:

- 1) Assistance with the assessment of patients.*
- 2) Assistance with the implementation of the established orthotic or prosthetic treatment plan under the supervision of an orthotist/Prosthetist.*
- 3) Assistance with the follow-up treatment plan that ensures successful orthotic and/or prosthetic outcomes*
- 4) Compliance with organizational policies and procedures.*
- 5) Promotion of competency and enhancement of the orthotic and/or prosthetic profession.*

The credentialed assistant supports the credentialed orthotist/prosthetist practitioner in providing comprehensive orthotic and/or prosthetic patient care. Under the guidance and supervision of the credentialed practitioner, credentialed assistants may perform orthotic and/or prosthetic procedures and related tasks in the management of patients. This includes fabrication, repairs and maintenance of devices to provide maximum fit, function and cosmesis that reflect the level of education and training received. Credentialed assistants may not use their credential as independent practitioners engaged in unsupervised patient care.

- Is there a journal or published literature? If yes, please describe/name.

There are several publications printed on behalf of the profession that will provide information to assist and aid the assistant. These publications are as follows:

- *“O&P Edge” – monthly on-line newsletter that provides articles relative the O & P profession.*

- “O&P Business News” – occasional news or articles related to the profession.
 - *Journal of Prosthetics and Orthotics* – occasional research and articles
 - “Orthotics and Prosthetics International” – occasional technical note regarding device design or fabrication
 - *Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development* – articles regarding performance outcome of device designs
 - *Alignment Magazine* – O&P publication in Canada that occasionally has provided articles to the profession regarding patient care and technical design and fabrication topics.
- Is there a professional society(s). If yes, please provide name of organization and contact information.

American Academy of Orthotist and Prosthetist

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- Is licensure or certification required for this profession? If yes, please describe.

There are credentialing programs available and offered by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics (ABC).

- Is the profession already associated with an accrediting body? If yes, please describe.

Yes, this level of practice within the orthotics and prosthetics profession is and would be associated with the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE).

2. There must be a demonstrated need for the health science occupation and for accreditation of educational programs which prepare persons to enter the field-workforce study?

- Define the need and scope for this health sciences occupation.

A credentialed assistant is an individual educated and trained to participate in comprehensive orthotic and/or prosthetic care while under the supervision of a credentialed orthotist and/or prosthetist. Certified assistants, under the supervision of a credentialed orthotist and/or prosthetist may perform orthotic and/or prosthetic procedures and related tasks in the management of patient care. The initial evaluation and formulation of the treatment plan is the responsibility of the supervising orthotist and/or prosthetist. The credentialed assistant may also fabricate, repair and maintain orthoses and/or prostheses. Credentialed assistants may not use their credentials as independent providers of patient care. The certified assistant is bound by the ABC Code of Professional Responsibility, which is enforced by a Professional Discipline program. The credentialed assistant is obligated to support and conform to professional responsibilities that

promote and assure the overall welfare of the patient and the integrity of the profession. The time limited certification expires without compliance with the Mandatory Continuing Education program. The practice of an ABC certified orthotic/prosthetic assistant includes, but is not limited to:

- 1) Participation in the assessment of patients with impairment of human movement or musculoskeletal abnormalities that would impede their ability to participate in their social environment or other activities in order to determine a functional intervention.*
- 2) Implementation of the established orthotic or prosthetic treatment plan.*
- 3) Utilization of a follow-up treatment plan that ensures successful orthotic and/or prosthetic outcomes, patient health and quality of life.*
- 4) Compliance with practice management plans to develop and document policies and procedures to ensure patient well being.*
- 5) Promotion of competency and enhancement of orthotic and/or prosthetic professional practice to contribute to the profession's body of knowledge.*

Based upon the 2015 study, "Projecting the Adequacy of Workforce Supply to Meet Patient Demand- Analysis of the Orthotics and Prosthetics (O&P) Profession", the need for assistants will increase over the next ten years. The study can be referenced here: [Workforce Study for O&P](#)

- Why is it important for this profession to have accredited programs?

Similar to the physical therapy profession, the orthotic and prosthetic profession is seeing a shift in models of care and treatment that makes the profession stronger and ensures higher standards of cares and makes practitioners more effective. Having accredited programs ensures that the education of the entry level care provider imparts the basic skills necessary to provide safe patient care regardless of which education program attended.

3. Educational programs for the health science occupation must not duplicate educational programs for already existing health science occupations.

- Are there other professions whose scope of practice overlaps with the proposed profession? If so, which professions are these? Where is the overlap?

Yes, the orthotist and prosthetist to a degree. However, the assistant profession, which has been in existence since 1970 differs in scope. Assistants will be able to assist the Orthotic & Prosthetic practitioner to enhance the patient care model.

They will only be able to assist and not complete the patient fittings or develop treatment plans Orthotists and Prosthetists are educated and trained in the same modalities/devices but their level of education and expertise extends to the responsibility and knowledge to create and develop treatment plans and follow the patient throughout their span of O&P care.

4. Educational programs must be no shorter than one academic year (two semesters). Programs must comply with established standards and submit documentation that graduates have gained the required skills and knowledge to obtain entry-level positions within the occupation.

What is the range of length of existing programs?

There currently are no assistant level programs offered.

What is the academic level(s) of this program (Associate, Baccalaureate, post Baccalaureate)?

The academic level planned will be at the Associate Degree level.

What type of educational institutions are these currently existing programs housed in?

None at the moment, but there is interest from several community colleges, which already offer the Technician level. The programs view this as a way to market to a broader student population. In addition, several of our Technician level programs have been engaged in a federal grant, with the goal to expand and enhance educational opportunities in O&P. The Assistant Level was one that was identified as an interest from a few of the schools engaged in the grant. Further information on this grant and the initiatives can be found here:

<https://hopecareers.org/>