2020 Industry Outlook
Pathways to professional success are not always straightforward. Circumstances—including access to education, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geography among other factors—can create twists and turns that shape each path. It can be long and winding, but with training, education, and commitment to themselves and from others, individuals can navigate to success.

National certification is a starting point, like the red star on a map that shows “you are here.” It designates readiness for the career journey ahead because it demonstrates a standardized measure of knowledge and skills. Once you’ve earned it, you’re ready to traverse a journey to career success. Again, the pathway is unique to the individual.

Educators see certification as a milestone for students. Passing a nationally accredited exam means a student is more likely to be work-ready. Employers value the standardization national certification provides and use it to screen job applicants. By using certification as a start, healthcare professionals can carve their paths by honing soft skills, seeking additional clinical training, taking on more responsibilities, and developing advanced skills to continue moving upward.

Because no pathway to professional success looks the same, NHA sought to uncover what factors impact the journey. The 2020 Industry Outlook collected insights and data from employers of allied health professionals, digging deeper to understand what they seek in candidates, what these professionals’ daily work looks like, and what traits and skills make them most successful in their roles.

As an advocate for allied health professionals, we hope you can use this data to help your students and employees navigate their own path to achieve their career dreams.
Training methods used to develop employees’ clinical skills (n=277)

- On the Job Training: 88%
- Online Training: 52%
- Workshops: 44%
- Simulation: 35%

Employers were asked to select all methods that apply. These are the top four responses.

Training methods used to develop employees’ soft skills (n=277)

- In-Person Training: 72%
- Mentoring: 46%
- Online Training: 40%
- Videos: 33%
- Role Playing: 33%

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63% of institutions increase pay when an employee earns professional certification. (n=277)

Approximately what percent of the following professions are certified within your organization?

- 68% Billing & Coding Specialists (n=203)
- 79% EKG Technicians (n=120)
- 64% Medical Administrative Assistants (n=171)
- 74% Medical Assistants (n=197)
- 68% Patient Care Technicians (n=162)
- 81% Pharmacy Technicians (n=159)
- 80% Phlebotomists (n=152)

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Medical Assistant

Medical assistant salary range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10th%</th>
<th>25th%</th>
<th>50th%</th>
<th>75th%</th>
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<td>$27,580</td>
<td>$32,480</td>
<td>$38,340</td>
<td>$45,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

1. Professionalism
2. Verbal Communication
3. Critical Thinking

Most lacking soft skills

1. Critical Thinking
2. Professionalism
3. Self-Awareness

Institutions report medical assistants are responsible for performing advanced skills

24% of employers said it’s difficult to find qualified medical assistants.

Screening criteria for medical assistant applications

48% Basic Life Support/CPR Certification
56% Years of Experience
58% Medical Assistant Training
72% Medical Assistant Certification

Institutions that encourage or require certification

Employers that report newly certified medical assistants are prepared for their job duties

35% of employers believe that MAs have more responsibility this year compared to last.
76% of institutions encourage/require certification.

62% of employers report newly certified patient care technicians are prepared for their job duties.

**Institutions with formal training programs for patient care technicians**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of institutional training programs</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship Programs</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships with Schools</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Training Programs</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship Programs</td>
<td>8%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Screening criteria for patient care technician applications**

- CNA Certification: 58%
- Patient Care Technician Certification: 57%
- HS Diploma or Equivalent: 51%
- Basic Life Support/CPR Certification: 48%
- Years of Experience: 40%

**Patient care technician main job responsibilities include:**

- Provide Basic Patient Care: 76%
- Perform Safety Checks: 58%
- Acquire/Administer Patient Care Supplies: 56%
- Ensure Cleanliness of Patient Rooms: 55%
- Monitor Vital Signs: 52%
- 12% of employers say it’s difficult to find qualified patient care technicians.
- The average patient to patient care technician ratio is 6.5:1
- 35% of employers believe that patient care technicians have more responsibility this year compared to last.

**Patient care technician salary range**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10th%</th>
<th>25th%</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
Pharmacy Technician

Pharmacy technician salary range

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<tr>
<th>10th%</th>
<th>25th%</th>
<th>50th%</th>
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<td>$39,290</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Most important soft skills
1. Critical Thinking
2. Professionalism
3. Verbal Communication

Most lacking soft skills
1. Critical Thinking
2. Professionalism
3. Verbal Communication

Pharmacy technicians have a number of responsibilities, often requiring advanced skills.

Screening criteria for pharmacy technician applications
- 55% State Licensure
- 81% Certification (CPhT)
- 40% HS Diploma or GED
- 43% Years of Experience
- 50% Completed Program

70% Management of Inventory
69% Prescription Processing
63% Prescription Dispensing
59% Technician Product Verification
56% Calculation & Measurement of Medication

23% of employers said it’s difficult to find qualified pharmacy technicians.

40% of employers report that pharmacy technicians have more responsibility this year compared to last.

Institutions that encourage or require certification
Employers that report newly certified medical assistants are prepared for their job duties

Pharmacy technician salary range

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

$22,740 $26,750 $32,700 $39,290 $48,010

2018 2019 2020
Phlebotomy Technician

Phlebotomy technician salary range

10th% 25th% 50th% 75th% 90th%
$24,250 $28,130 $33,670 $39,760 $48,030

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Phlebotomy technicians main job responsibilities

- Draw Blood: 86%
- Verify Identities: 68%
- Explain & Answer Questions: 75%
- Prepare for Testing: 70%
- Maintain Equipment: 59%

Most important soft skills

1. Professionalism
2. Dependability
3. Verbal Communication

Most lacking soft skills

1. Verbal Communication
2. Dependability
3. Critical Thinking

73% of employers report that newly certified phlebotomy technicians are prepared to do their job duties.

Skills newly certified phlebotomy techs lack (n=41)

- Communication: 49%
- Professionalism: 41%
- Clinical Skills: 39%
- Time Management: 29%
- EHR Skills: 15%

The average phlebotomist technician performs 28 sticks a day.

93% of institutions encourage/require certification.

80% of employers report that their phlebotomy techs are certified.

Screening criteria for phlebotomy applications

- Phlebotomy Certification: 81%
- Completion of Accredited Phlebotomy Training: 55%
- Years of Experience: 53%
- HS Diploma or Equivalent: 51%

n=152
EKG Technician

75% of employers report that newly certified EKG technicians are prepared to do their job duties.

75% of employers report it’s difficult to find qualified EKG technicians.

Most important soft skills:
1. Professionalism
2. Dependability
3. Verbal Communication

Most lacking soft skills:
1. Critical Thinking
2. Professionalism
3. Verbal Communication

EKG technician salary range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>$38,170</td>
<td>$56,850</td>
<td>$75,240</td>
<td>$93,100</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Top 3 tasks EKG technicians are responsible for:
1. Set Up & Administer EKGs
2. Prepare Patients for Holter or Ambulatory Monitoring
3. Set Up & Administer Stress Tests

87% of institutions encourage or require certification.

79% of employers report that their EKG techs are certified.

Why is professional certification important for EKG technicians?

65% Standardized Evidence of Knowledge/Skills
62% Improves Standard of Care
54% Provides Credibility

The average EKG technician runs 13 tests a day.

Screening criteria for EKG technician applications

81% EKG Technician Certification
58% Understanding of Basic Cardiac Anatomy
54% Experience with Cardiac Event/Holter Monitoring
Billing & Coding Specialist  

n=203

Billing & coding specialist salary range

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>$52,730</td>
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</tr>
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Most important soft skills

1. Professionalism
2. Dependability
3. Critical Thinking

Most lacking soft skills

1. Critical Thinking
2. Professionalism
3. Dependability

68% of employers report that newly certified billing & coding specialists are prepared to do their jobs.

68% of employers report that their billing & coding specialists are certified.

Institutions that require or encourage certification

Top 3 tasks billing & coding specialists are responsible for:

- Submitting Claims
- Billing & Coding Process
- Auditing Billing

52% Professionalism
51% Time Management
48% Clinical Skills
49% Communication
39% EHR Skills

26% of employers said it’s difficult to find qualified billing & coding specialists.

64% of billing & coding specialists are able to reduce payment delays & obtain maximum reimbursement from insurers.

31% of employers report that billing & coding specialists have more responsibility this year over last.

Screening criteria for billing & coding specialist applications

- Knowledge of Billing Terms
- Billing & Coding Specialist Certification
- Years of Experience

71% 65% 60%
Medical Administrative Assistant

Medical administrative assistant technician salary range

<table>
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<td>$29,580</td>
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Most important soft skills

1. Professionalism
2. Dependability
3. Verbal Communication

Most lacking soft skills

1. Critical Thinking
2. Professionalism
3. Verbal Communication

67% of employers report that newly certified medical administrative assistants are prepared to do their jobs.

Medical administrative assistant main job responsibilities

- Answer Calls: 81%
- Operate Computer Systems: 71%
- Greet Patients: 68%
- Schedule Appointments: 68%
- Maintain Files: 59%

Skills newly certified medical administrative assistants lack (n=70)

- Communication: 44%
- Professionalism: 39%
- Time Management: 37%
- EHR Skills: 35%

75% of institutions encourage or require certification.

64% of employers report that their medical administrative assistants are certified.

30% of employers believe that medical administrative assistants have more responsibility this year compared to last.

Screening criteria for medical administrative assistant applications

- HS Diploma or Equivalent: 62%
- MA Assistant Certification: 55%
- Customer Service Experience: 55%
- Proficiency in MS Office: 48%
- Years of Experience: 46%
Research Methodology

A third-party research firm conducted the research within the 2020 Industry Outlook. The survey was structured to assess the opinions of employers concerning the professional outlook for billing and coding specialists, EKG technicians, medical administrative assistants, medical assistants, patient care technicians, pharmacy technicians and phlebotomists. This survey was in market December 31, 2019 through January 9, 2020, and evaluated the opinions of 277 employers, of which 12 (1.02%) were current NHA customers.

References


About NHA

Since 1989, NHA has been partnering with allied health education programs, organizations, and employers across the nation to award more than 900,000 allied health certifications. The organization offers eight nationally accredited exams, certification preparation and study materials, two specialty certificate programs, industry-leading outcomes-based data analytics, as well as ongoing professional development and continuing education. For more information, visit www.nhanow.com.

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