

Health Care Careers



Fastest-Growing Jobs

Health care is still adding more jobs than any other field.

As many as 3 million new positions are expected through 2030, but which occupations should you be focused on?

The U.S. Department of Labor is estimating a job projection growth of 16% over the next eight years, much faster than averages for any other occupation. The growth is mainly the result of our aging population, according to government officials. As we grow older, we have a greater demand for health care.

Median annual income for practitioners and technical staff like doctors, surgeons, registered nurses and dental hygienist is also higher than that of any other occupation: They averaged \$75,000 in 2021, compared to others' median annual wage of \$46,000.

Some specific areas of health care are of greater need, and so they're besting the average growth rates according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Here's a look.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

The government's projected rate of job growth for these well-paid health care workers is an impressive 52%. Nurse practitioners usually have more certifications and training than the typical registered nurse, but not so much as a physician. They assess a patient's specific needs, order lab and diagnostic testing and



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interpret the results, identify special diagnoses, then form and prescribe treatment.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANTS

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' projected growth rate for occupational therapy assistants is 34%, also much faster than the averages for other jobs. They help patients recover and improve after sur-

gery or injury, while also helping with physical skills required for daily life.

GENETIC COUNSELORS

These counselors assess an individual or their family's risk for inherited conditions, in concert with local labs, hospitals and university medical centers. The projected growth rate is 26%. As with prosthetists, an advanced degree

is required.

ATHLETIC TRAINERS

Trainers are tasked with diagnosing, treating and preventing injuries to the muscle and bones, as well as other sports-related issues and illnesses. The predicted growth rate for these jobs is 23%, with principal placement at college and university athletic programs, fitness centers and pro

sports teams.

PROSTHETISTS AND ORTHOTISTS

These specialists are tasked with designing and creating medical devices meant to support and aid in movement, while also ensuring that they properly fit. Upper-level college degrees and certification are required. The projected growth rate is 18%.

Psychiatric Pharmacists

These specialists provide timely help in an area of growing need.

Medication therapy has become critical as more people deal with mental-health issues, and opioid and substance abuse.

The College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists reports that interest in the required degree work has recently leapt by more than 250%. Job demand has, too. Here's why:

WHAT THEY DO

As many as four in 10 American adults reported anxiety or depression during the lockdown era. At the same time, projections indicate a shortage of mental-health counselors into the next decade. Those numbers underscore the pressing need for more psychiatric pharmacists, who can help fill the gaps. They recommend or prescribe medication, evaluate a patient's response and then potentially modify treatments based on adverse reactions or drug interactions, monitor adherence and offer any additional needed information on medications. They may work in a very broad range of settings, including public and private hospitals, outpatient primary-care or mental-health clinics, and government-supported or correctional facilities.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

As so many of us continue to experience mental-health issues, the shortage of behavioral health providers will only become more pronounced. There's never been a greater need for professionals like psychiatric pharmacist who focus on chemical dependency, mental wellness and developmental disabilities. So how do you join this promising field? In addition to graduating from an ACPE-accredited

program, employers typically require a completed post-graduate year-two residency, as well as the proper board-certified credentials, in order to get hired. Residencies offer a range of educational experiences including teaching and research. These residency spots reportedly increased by 23% between 2016 and 2020. Clinical work or teaching experience is not necessarily required, but can improve your chance of landing

the job.

GETTING CERTIFIED

There are currently nearly 1,500 board-certified psychiatric pharmacists, an increase of more than 20%. The Board of Pharmacy Specialties offers this specialized certification, which requires graduation from an Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education-approved doctor of pharmacy program, and a current license to practice. Applicants

must also have practical experience, either through four years of work in a pharmacy or through residencies. Once the exam is passed, board-certified psychiatric pharmacists help improve medical outcomes while minimizing side effects alongside physicians, medical researchers, counselors and other caregivers. They must re-certify every seven years to ensure that skills and knowledge are continuously maintained.



The Backbone of Nursing

LPNs are one of the most important, and varied jobs in health care.

Licensed practical nurses play a critical role, since they have a broad range of duties and they're found in so many places.

WHAT THEY DO

Those who are inspired to work as a nurse should consider an LPN position as an entry-level option. You'll perform basic-care tasks, helping to keep patients informed and comfortable under the supervision of registered nurses and other medical-care professionals. Practicing nurses number more than 4.5 million in the U.S., making them among the largest group of licensed professionals.

Median annual income for licensed practical nurses, and related licensed vocational nurses, was \$48,000 in 2021. Experts predict this field will grow by 9% through 2030, which mirrors the average for all jobs. Still, that translates to an average of about 61,000 openings each year, as new LPN positions are added, or as they transfer to different jobs and exit the workforce via retirement.

BEST CANDIDATES

Since they interact with so many different people, it's critically important that prospective LPNs have great communication skills, so they can



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effectively and helpfully share important information about care. They also must be adaptive in a variety of situations. LPNs don't simply work in hospitals, clinics or individual doctor's offices. They're also found in private-care facilities, nursing homes, educational settings and federal and states agencies.

Having a good bed-side

manner is just as important as being highly organized, as these nurses provide routine observation and patient updates, assisting both doctors and staff while also offering timely guidance and advice. Many work in teaching environments, and may also lend their expertise to related fields like billing, coding, customer service and call centers.

CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Like many other accredited health-care occupations, LPN must invest in a nursing school degree, often combining in-class coursework with online classes. They must take the Test of Essential Academic Skills exam, which is similar to SAT or ACT testing. The courses may be completed in

as little as 12 months, and can sometimes be completed while still transitioning from another job. The National Council Licensure Examination will then qualify a prospective LPN for work. In many cases, schools also offer LPN-to-registered nurse programs for those who want to continue up the ladder in their health-care career.

Medical Records Manager

Technology and rise in older patients make this job more important than ever.

These specialists navigate a complex world of information that has to be managed, organized and coded.

You'll find health care information jobs in hospitals and physicians offices, as well as in educational systems and governments institutions. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects these jobs to grow by around 10% through 2030, as an aging patient population's records are increasingly digitized. Within the field, the largest growth patterns are expected in medical registrars, health-information technology and related technical work

WHAT THEY DO

Medical records managers verify health information, including individual medical history, diagnostic reports, symptoms and treatment. They communicate with health care professionals, retrieving records when approved staff request them. Records are reviewed for accuracy and completeness. Health care information workers also update and organize these details in registries and databases, so familiarity with various clinical codes for analysis and insurance reimbursement is a must. They also handle security for the files through password protection, online encryption or other



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secure filing processes. Confidentiality is paramount, whether you're working as a medical coder or a cancer registrar.

A GROWING FIELD

This career is ideal anyone who possesses both a passion for healthcare and a great attention to detail. Medical records managers understanding begins with the medical industry, but then also encompasses database technology

and issues of collection and storage. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that these jobs are typically full time, but that health-information jobs may include overnight, evening or weekend work – in particular if the work is linked to a hospital. In some cases, you may be able to work from home or to work in a hybrid fashion that combines office work and home-based duties. The highest wages are found in federally employed

management positions.

GETTING STARTED

Medical records managers typically must have a high-school diploma, as well as post-secondary education achieved through a certification process. Some jobs require a college degree in health-information technology. This coursework may relate to health-data standards, medical terminology, coding and classification sys-

tems, and computer technology, among other things. Certified Professional Coders, Certified Tumor Registrar, Certified Coding Associates, and Registered Health Information Technicians are among those who have gone through a rigorous certification process. An exam is typically required, and in some cases the certificate may need to be regularly renewed by taking part in continuing education.

Pediatric Dentistry

Consider tailoring your aspirations toward the youngest dental patients.

Dentistry remains one of the most secure job sectors in health care, with a salary that averages of more than six figures.

Pediatric dentists, or pedodontist, take all of the knowledge associated with the field of dentistry and couple it with additional education and experience focused on serving children. They must be training in both classroom and clinical settings, in order to make sure they're ready to serve this special category of patients.

WHAT'S REQUIRED

Pediatric dentists must be a licensed doctor of dental surgery and doctor of dental medicine, with completed residency training administered by the American Association of Pediatric Dentistry. While the names are different, the American Dental Association confirms that both DDS and DDM degrees have the same course requirements.

Qualified candidates must complete dental-certification exams and then a two-year residency. They'll ultimately focus on youths, between infancy and teenaged years, before patients are subsequently transferred to a general dentist's care.

RIGHT FOR YOU?

These specialists handle a



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dentist's typical duties, including examinations and X-rays, routine checkups and cleaning, as well as any treatment required for cavities, injuries or oral diseases. But pediatric dentists must also have a great "bedside manner," since younger patients may not understand these procedures or experience deeper fears – especially those who have

never visited the dentist before or who are experiencing their first dental procedure. You must have the ability to connect with young people, foster a positive, calming environment and build trust with both children and their parents.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Children are quite obviously not just small adults. They

have their own special medical requirements, above and beyond the potential need for more emotional support. Baby teeth begin emerging in children during the first six months of age, then begin to fall out at age 6 or so as permanent teeth come in. An infectious disease known as early childhood caries is on the rise, and it's associated

with missing or decayed teeth. The condition is reportedly five times more common than asthma in children. As many as 20% of kids between 5 and 11 have at least one untreated cavity. Pediatric dentists also employ specially designed equipment for kids, while arranging and decorating their offices in a way that's inviting to children.

Residency Interviews

Nail the first interaction, and you're on your way.

Hands-on training in a medical environment might help you land that next job — or it might be required.

Either way, getting real-life experience will help smooth the transition from coursework to workplace, as you put everything you learned at school into action. Every residency is different, but they often require an interview before acceptance.

Preparation should begin long before you secure an appointment, since you'll want to be as fluent with the material as possible. Confidence will be a key element in securing this residency, just as it would be in a job interview.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

This is usually the final stage before becoming a practicing medical professional. Securing a residency begins by convincing someone that you're a great candidate, and your resume only tells them so much. These interviews aren't just about your personal history and academic record; they're also about who you are as potential health care worker. Research the other residency programs, and be ready to discuss how what you do fits into larger dynamics. At the same time, make sure that your interviews aren't creating conflicts with important duties like regular clinical



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rotations. Your performance there is critical, too.

GETTING READY

Begin by researching the typical questions that would arise during an interview. They don't have to be technical in nature. For instance, residency managers will likely ask you about yourself and how you reached this moment. They

might ask you what sparked your interest in this field, and where you see yourself in the future. Take a moment to practice your answers before the interview, so you can feel as confident as possible. Record your mock meetings to target points of improvement. Discuss your interview and the residency with friends or family who have medical back-

grounds for additional tips.

IN THE INTERVIEW

Answer their questions to the best of your ability, but also be prepared to ask your own. This shows that you've done the proper research into the residency program, while confirming your true passion for the work. The American Academy of Family Physicians

offers suggested topics, including patient demographics, graduate feedback and where others are finding post-residency work. How does this program compare with others in a similar field? What are the biggest challenges associated with the residency? Their answers will help you more easily navigate what's ahead.

Mental Health Case Manager

Here's a chance to help people navigate all of the programs and paperwork.

Taking advantage of the available services can be particularly difficult for those suffering from mental health issues.

The most vulnerable members of our society include those battling psychiatric issues, substance abuse and social anxieties. More than 51 million people place themselves in these categories, according to the National Alliance of Mental Illness. Unfortunately, they may not be able to advocate on their own behalf. Even those who are made aware of the help that's available may not know where to begin, or how to sort through various requirements.

WHAT THEY DO

These case managers connect potential patients and other clients to resources that will help with more positive healthcare outcomes, general wellbeing and quality of life. Beyond initially connecting the dots, they also monitor patients to make sure treatment plans remain on track, and that additional resources are made available, if needed. Mental health case managers remain in contact with clients even as they reintegrate into society once treatment plans are completed, shifting to a focus on healthy self-reliance. These offerings may include older-adult services, prisoner



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re-entry programs, substance abuse support groups and other specialized outreach initiatives.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

These jobs can be found in hospitals and mental health clinics, as well as home-care companies, related clinics, homeless centers and churches. Some individual case managers even work from home.

The ideal mental health case manager must be flexible and observant, since so much of the advice you'll be giving relates to the special challenges facing each individual client. An ability to make accurate psychiatric and mental health assessments, to protect confidential details, and to share compassionate care is a must. Deep roots in a community are also often a plus,

since that eases the way for quick referrals to other healthcare professionals. In the case of crisis or emergency.

GET INVOLVED

Job growth projections for mental-health case managers are at 11% through 2028, creating more than 81,000 positions. The average salary is around \$42,000. Typically, these jobs require at least a

bachelor's degree but in some cases they may also require master's level coursework in fields like human resources, psychology, social work or sociology. Board certification may follow through the Commission for Case Manager Certification, which has its own experience and education requirements. Recertification then must take place every five years.