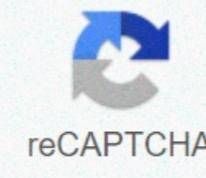




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How long to study medical assistant

By Ashley Donohoe Updated April 05, 2018 Working at the front desk or helping out in the examination room, medical assistants assist with a variety of front office and clinical tasks that depend on the individual medical facility and any specialized training. Duties can range from booking appointments and keeping records to giving injections and taking vital signs. With medical assistants needing a shorter period of education, this career can be a good fit if you have a passion for helping patients and want to enter the medical field more quickly. You can also find a position that fits your family's needs since there's the opportunity for regular work hours in facilities like doctors' offices. Factors like the type of medical facility, specialized skills, experience and the state you work in all affect how much a medical assistant makes. Medical assistants help patients with administrative tasks like signing in, managing medical records and booking appointments, and they may also do clinical tasks involving physical examinations, blood testing and patient instruction. Some are hired exclusively to perform clinical or administrative work, while others help out wherever needed in the healthcare facility. Having good interpersonal skills is crucial for helping patients who are sick and distressed, while technical skills are important for using medical instruments for clinical work. When handling patients' records and information, you also are responsible for accuracy, which requires having an eye for detail. There are a few routes to becoming a medical assistant, with earning a certificate or associate's degree in medical assisting most common. These programs can last one to two years and include classes teaching science and medical topics along with laboratories and a clinical externship at a local medical facility. The alternative to a postsecondary program is to find a medical assistant position that has an on-the-job training program. You have options for voluntary certification in the field as well as through the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, including the Certified Clinical Medical Assistant, Certified Medical Assistant and Certified Medical Administrative Assistant options. The median salary for medical assistants, meaning half made less and half made more than this, in 2016 was \$31,540 a year or \$15.17 an hour. Salaries ranged from below \$22,870 a year or \$10.99 an hour for the bottom 10 percent to more than \$45,310 a year or \$21.78 an hour for the top 10 percent. Medical assistants who worked in physicians' offices made on average \$32,780 a year or \$15.76 hourly, while those who worked in retirement communities averaged less at \$27,240 annually or \$13.09 an hour. Medical assistants working in Alaska, Massachusetts and the District of Columbia averaged much more than those working in South Dakota, Louisiana and New Mexico. The largest number of medical assistants work in physicians' offices. Other assistants work in outpatient care centers, specialists' offices, nursing homes, hospitals and other settings. Some may sit at a front desk while helping patients book appointments and filling out documentation, while others stand on their feet and work with other medical professionals to examine patients and do testing around the facility. This is most commonly a full-time occupation with regular hours if you work in a doctor's office or another facility that has normal business hours. However, you may work irregular hours if you work in a hospital or other facility that doesn't close. Gaining specialized skills such as insurance or electronic medical records, becoming certified or continuing your education to become a nurse are some ways you can grow your salary over time. Your medical assistant salary too will usually change as you get more experienced, similar to this hourly pay example based on March 2018 data: Entry-level: \$10.14 - \$16.60 Mid-career: \$11.95 - \$18.71 Experienced: \$12.58 - \$20.38 Late-career: \$12.95 - \$21.22 For the decade spanning 2016 to 2026, medical assistants face good prospects with very strong job growth of 29 percent, leading to 183,900 new positions. Demand for health services from the aging population along with more health facilities opening drive this growth. You can find many opportunities in primary care, where more medical assistants are especially needed. Also, you can pursue one of the medical assistant certifications to improve your chances entering the field. Most medical assistants fulfill both front- and back-office tasks. Front-office tasks include clerical duties, such as answering phones and scheduling appointments. Back-office duties include recording a patient's vital signs, medical history, and any symptoms or concerns in preparation for her visit with the doctor. The expected pay rate of a back-office medical assistant depends on a number of factors. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, medical assistants earned an average of \$30,550 per year in 2012. A 2013 salary survey conducted by the American Association of Medical Assistants found that certified medical assistants enjoyed an average starting salary of \$25,848, earned an average of \$30,756 after between six and nine years of work experience, and made an average of \$36,038 per year with 16 or more years of experience. As of February 2014, back-office medical assistants earned an average of \$35,000 per year, reports job and salary site Indeed. While physicians' offices employ more medical assistants than any other type of health care facility, they tend to pay less than hospitals and outpatient care facilities. In 2012, the BLS found that physicians' offices paid an average of \$30,740 per year, while hospitals paid an average of \$31,750 and outpatient centers paid an average of \$31,980. The AAMA reported similar findings in its 2013 salary survey, with medical assistants working in physicians' offices averaging \$29,749 and those employed by hospitals averaging \$33,745 per year. When it comes to high pay for medical assistants, the Western Pacific region of the U.S. -- including the states of Alaska and Hawaii -- is one of the highest on average in the nation, with average pay of \$33,322. The AAMA reports that New England CMAs enjoyed the second-highest average regional pay, \$30,997 per year. The East North Central states surrounding the Great Lakes reported the lowest average salary -- \$28,614. According to the BLS, Alaska reported the highest average medical assistant pay in 2012, at \$39,900 per year. West Virginia reported the lowest average salary -- \$24,360. Indeed found that California offered a high average salary of \$38,000 to back-office medical assistants as of February 2012, while those in New York reported an even higher average salary of \$42,000 per year. The BLS estimates that the number of medical assisting jobs in the United States will grow by 29 percent between 2012 and 2022, much faster than the average job growth rate of 11 percent expected for all occupations. In addition to a positive job outlook, the career also offers the possibility of benefits; according to the AAMA, 73.7 percent of medical assistants receive health insurance through their employers, 71.6 percent receive dental coverage and 60.5 percent receive vision coverage. Medical assistants earned a median annual salary of \$31,540 in 2016, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. On the low end, medical assistants earned a 25th percentile salary of \$26,860, meaning 75 percent earned more than this amount. The 75th percentile salary is \$37,760, meaning 25 percent earn more. In 2016, 634,400 people were employed in the U.S. as medical assistants.

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