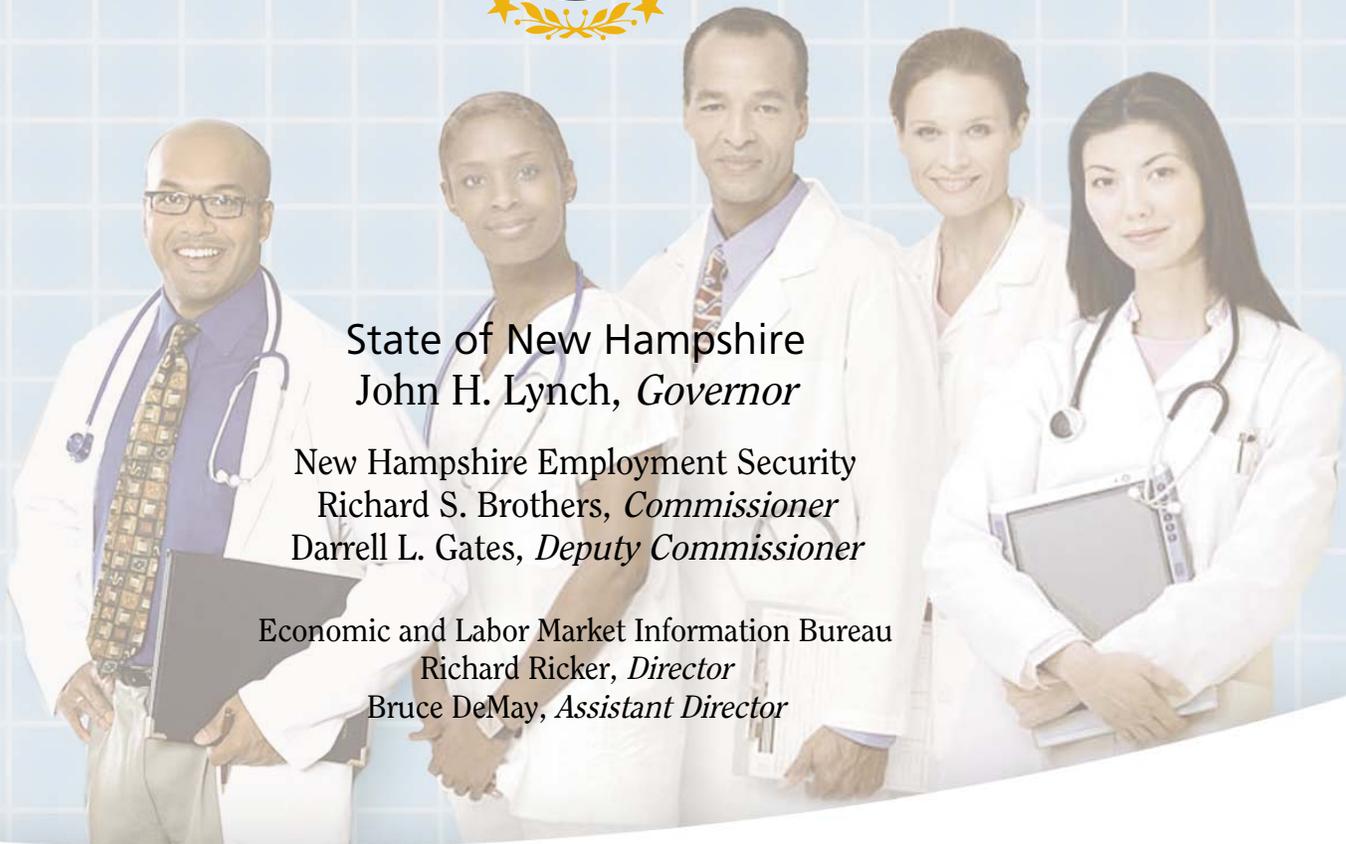


Medical Assistants *in New Hampshire*

a Labor Market Information Report



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Medical Assistants

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“The doctor will see you now...”

Medical assistants are the gatekeepers in physician’s offices, clinics, and other outpatient care facilities. They are usually the first person a patient sees after registering for an appointment, providing a human touch and making patients feel at ease in what can be a stressful experience.

Medical assistants have a variety of duties and are cross-trained in both administrative and clinical aspects of the job. Duties can vary, depending on the size of the practice and the specialty of the practitioner. *Medical assistants* in small offices tend to be generalists, reporting directly to the practitioner or an administrative manager. In larger practices, *Medical assistants* tend to specialize in a particular area, focusing on specialized administrative or clinical duties.

A *Medical assistant* does not need a degree or certificate, but employers prefer graduates of a formal program in medical assisting.

Medical assistants are among the fastest growing occupations in New Hampshire and the United States. Employment in the healthcare industry is expected to grow rapidly over the next decade because an increasingly aging population and rapidly expanding medical technology create a need for trained professionals. According to the latest employment projections published by the Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, the Health care and social assistance sector is expected to increase employment by nearly 34 percent by 2014, adding 25,422 new jobs.

What does a *Medical Assistant* do?

A *Medical assistant* will be asked to perform routine tasks, interact with people, and may have to juggle many responsibilities at once. Specific tasks include:

Administrative Duties

- Answer telephones
- Schedule appointments
- Update patient records
- Fill out insurance forms
- Handle billing and bookkeeping
- Arrange for hospital admissions and laboratory services

Clinical Duties (can vary by state)

- Take medical histories and record vital signs
- Prepare patients for examination
- Assist the physician during the exam
- Collect and prepare laboratory specimens
- Draw blood
- Remove sutures and change dressings
- Telephone prescriptions to a pharmacy
- Be aware of the confidential nature of patient information

An example of a specialty *Medical assistant* described in the Occupational Outlook Handbook is ophthalmic medical assistants who work in offices of ophthalmologists where they conduct diagnostic tests, measure vision, test eye muscle function, and administer eye medications under the direction of the physician.

***Medical assistant* can be a meaningful career for someone who is good with details, enjoys working with people, and is interested in health and medicine.**

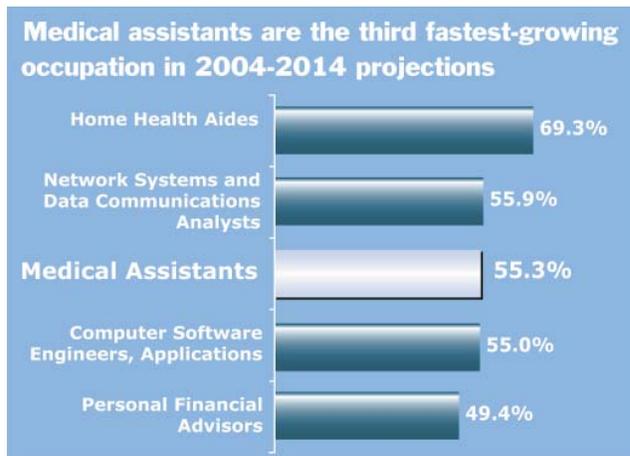
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What is the job outlook for Medical Assistants?

Medical assistants are projected to be one of the fastest growing occupations in New Hampshire from 2004 to 2014. In 2004 there were approximately 1,045 *Medical assistants* working in the state. By 2014, the number of *Medical assistants* is expected to increase to 1,623, a gain of 55.3 percent. Only two other large occupations (employment greater than 500 in 2004) are projected to grow faster. Nationally, employment of *Medical assistants* is projected to grow by 52.1 percent during the 2004-2014 period.

The gain of 578 jobs between 2004 and 2014 can be thought of as the number of jobs created because of expected growth in the occupation. *Medical assistants* who leave their jobs to enter other occupations, retire, or leave the labor force for other reasons will need to be replaced, creating additional job openings in the occupation. The estimated number of these replacement openings is 193 over the ten-year period. On an annual average, 58 openings are attributed to increasing demand and 19 are due to replacement needs, adding up to an average total of 77 openings per year.



Medical assistants work in every county in New Hampshire, with most of the employment concentrated in the state's three largest counties. (Due to confidentiality requirements, employment cannot be disclosed for five counties.) Hillsborough County accounted for more than a third of employment in 2004, while another 18 percent worked in Rockingham County. Projected growth in each of the counties is expected to be close to the average rate for the occupation in the state, with the exception of Sullivan County, which is expected to grow slower than the state average.

Medical Assistants in New Hampshire by County

Area	2004 Employment	2014 Projected	Change		Annual Openings
			Number	Percent	
New Hampshire	1,045	1,623	578	55.3%	77
Belknap	n	n	n	n	n
Carroll	n	n	n	n	n
Cheshire	n	n	n	n	n
Coos	n	n	n	n	n
Grafton	69	106	37	53.6%	5
Hillsborough	367	567	200	54.5%	27
Merrimack	148	230	82	55.4%	11
Rockingham	193	305	112	58.0%	15
Strafford	n	n	n	n	n
Sullivan	67	83	16	23.9%	2

n= not publishable

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What Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities does a *Medical Assistant* need?

Medical assistants use their Knowledge of the English language and medical terminology to explain treatment procedures to patients. To do this effectively, *Medical assistants* must have a good Knowledge of both the English language and medical information. *Medical assistants* must also have listening Skills to understand any questions a patient may have and the Ability

to express themselves orally in order to explain treatment procedures to patients.

The following are some important areas of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA) for *Medical assistants*, along with examples of related tasks, ranked by the relative importance (from 1-100) given to that KSA by O*Net, a national source of occupational information.

Knowledge is a learned set of facts required in work situations			
Knowledge	English Language	Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.	75
	Customer and Personal Service	Knowledge of processes for providing customer and personal services. (Handle correspondence, fill out insurance forms)	68
	Medicine and Dentistry	Knowledge of the information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities. (Draw blood, give injections)	64
Skills are learned capabilities specific to job activities			
Skills	Active Listening	Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times. (Obtain medical histories)	86
	Speaking	Talking to others to convey information effectively. (Provide prescription information to pharmacies)	79
	Social Perceptiveness	Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do. (Interview patients to obtain medical information)	78
Abilities are attributes of an individual that influence performance. These attributes are needed to be successful in a particular job			
Abilities	Oral Comprehension	The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words. (Assist physician during exams)	88
	Oral Expression	The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand. (Explain treatment procedures to patients)	84
	Speech Clarity	The ability to speak clearly so others can understand you. (Answer telephones)	78

Source: Occupational Information Network (O*Net), www.onetcenter.org/

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Do I have to go to school to become a *Medical Assistant*?

Some *Medical assistants* are trained on the job, but most employers prefer graduates of formal programs in medical assisting. In New Hampshire, programs are offered at Community Technical Colleges, postsecondary vocational schools, and two-year colleges. Programs usually last one or two years, resulting in a certificate or an associates degree, respectively. At some schools, an internship may be required that provides practical experience in physicians' offices, hospitals, or other healthcare facilities.

New Hampshire schools that offer accredited training programs for *Medical Assistants*

Hesser - Manchester	Associates Degree
Hesser - Continuing Education Manchester	Certificate
Hesser - Continuing Education Manchester	Associates Degree
Hesser - Continuing Education Nashua	Associates Degree
Hesser - Continuing Education Portsmouth	Associates Degree
Hesser - Continuing Education Salem	Certificate
Hesser - Continuing Education Salem	Associates Degree
Hesser - Continuing Education Concord	Certificate
Hesser - Continuing Education Concord	Associates Degree
McIntosh College - Dover	Associates Degree
NHCTC - Berlin	Certificate
NHCTC - Claremont	Certificate
NHCTC- Manchester	Certificate
NHCTC- Manchester	Associates Degree
NH Career Institute - Concord	Certificate
Seacoast Career Schools - Manchester	Certificate

Typical subjects covered in Medical Assisting programs

- Human anatomy and physiology
- Medical ethics and law
- Clinical procedures
- Medical terminology
- Pharmacology
- Medical records management
- Oral communications
- Emergency medical training (CPR certification)
- Medical office administration

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) and the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) are two agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education that accredit Medical assistant programs. In 2005, the most recent year for which this data is available, there were more than 500 Medical assistant programs nationwide accredited by CAAHEP and about 170 accredited by ABHES.¹

In New Hampshire, many schools offer an accredited Medical assistant program. Some of them offer the program at multiple satellite locations throughout the state.

As with most occupations, *Medical assistants* can advance their career. Experienced *Medical assistants* may lean toward office management or support positions. Other *Medical assistants* may get additional training and pursue careers in other healthcare positions, such as medical technology or nursing.

¹ "Medical Assistants." *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-07 Edition*. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. Accessed April 2, 2007. <www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm>.

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How much can *Medical Assistants* expect to earn?

On average, *Medical assistants* in New Hampshire made \$13.89 an hour based on the Occupational Employment Statistics' May 2005 survey.

This is higher than the national average of \$12.58 for the occupation. At different levels of experience, the entry-level wage (average of the lower third) was \$11.82 per hour and the experienced level (average of the upper two-thirds) wage was \$14.92 in New Hampshire.

Medical assistants who worked in Belknap County had the highest average hourly wage in 2005 at \$15.36. This was \$1.47 above the statewide average of \$13.89 for this occupation.

On the other end of the scale (of those counties that had wage data available), Carroll County came in at the lowest average hourly wage for *Medical assistants* with \$12.33 in the May 2005 survey. That was \$1.56 below the statewide average.

New Hampshire's average hourly wage of \$13.89 for *Medical assistants* ranked as the third highest in New England. *Medical assistants* in Connecticut were paid the most, on average, at \$14.92 per hour. Maine, with an average hourly wage of \$12.61, ranked lowest in New England but was slightly above the national average of \$12.58.



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Do Medical Assistants need certification?

According to the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA), a *Medical assistant* does not have to be certified to practice in any state. However, liability issues are causing many employers to require certification. Some states also have mandatory educational and/or experiential requirements for a very limited number of duties such as radiography and injections.²

There are two major agencies that offer certification of *Medical assistants*. The American Association of Medical Assistants offers the Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) designation and the American Medical Technologists offer a Registered Medical Assistant (RMA) designation.³ Both CMA and RMA certifications are acceptable to potential employers. Other organizations award a certificate in related specialties such as podiatry and ophthalmology.

The Certifying Board of the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) awards a credential to *Medical assistants* who have accomplished two objectives:

- ➔ Successfully completed a *Medical assistant* educational program accredited by either the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Educational Programs (CAAHEP) or the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES).
- ➔ Passed the AAMA CMA Certification Examination.

According to the AAMA, this credential is recognized by employers across the country. A Certified Medical Assistant must re-certify the credential every five years, either by earning credits known as continuing education units or by taking the AAMA CMA Certification/Recertification Examination. This provides an excellent way to stay current on medical issues and findings. It also demonstrates the commitment of the *Medical assistant* to quality care.

In general, employers prefer to hire experienced, knowledgeable workers. Obtaining a national certification indicates that the *Medical assistant* has broad, thorough knowledge of the field and that they care about their profession enough to attain that knowledge.

As of December 2006, there were 545 *Medical assistants* in New Hampshire with active certifications.⁴ However, the AAMA does not keep track of the states in which these Certified Medical Assistants (CMA) are working.

² Certification and Licensure. American Association of Medical Assistants. Accessed April 2, 2007. <www.aama-ntl.org>.

³ "Healthcare Careers." Medical Assistant Educational and Training Requirements. Accessed April 3, 2007. <www.health-care-careers.org/medical-assistant-career-training.html>.

⁴ Johnson, Anna. Director of Certification. "Medical Assistants in New Hampshire with Active Certifications." E-mail to the author. March 29, 2007.

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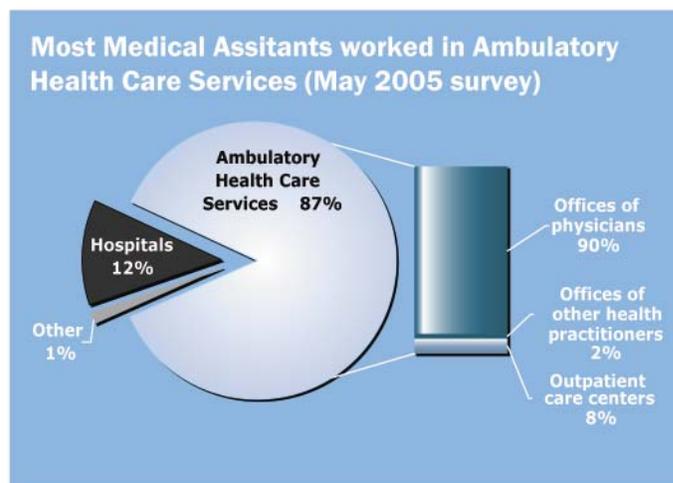
Where do *Medical Assistants* work?

According to the May 2005 survey of occupational employment, 86.5 percent of *Medical assistants* worked in the Ambulatory health care services subsector that involves patients who are able to walk about. Specifically, it includes Physician's offices, Dentist's offices, Outpatient care centers, Medical and diagnostic labs, and Other health practitioner's offices.

Employment in the Hospitals subsector accounted for 12.2 percent of *Medical assistants* working in New Hampshire. The remainder are designated as employed in "Other" industries, a category that includes the federal government and other private employers.

Within the Ambulatory health care services subsector, *Medical assistants* worked in three separate industry groups. Offices of physicians accounted for ninety percent, while another eight percent were employed at Outpatient care centers. The remaining two percent worked in Offices of other health practitioners (chiropractors, optometrists, and mental health practitioners, for example).

These shares are not expected to change significantly during the 2004-2014 projections period.



What hours do *Medical Assistants* work?

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook, most *Medical assistants* choose to work a regular 40-hour week (Physicians' offices are usually open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). *Medical assistants* who prefer evening and/or weekend shifts may choose to work in hospitals, clinics, or some other health care facility because many of these are open longer than the standard workday.

North American Industry Classification System

Major Employers of *Medical Assistants*

NAICS code

Healthcare and Social AssistanceSector	62
Ambulatory healthcare servicesSubsector	621
Offices of physiciansIndustry Group	6211
Offices of other health practitionersIndustry Group	6213
Outpatient care centersIndustry Group	6214
HospitalsSubsector	622

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What are some related occupations?

Medical assistants comprise one of many medical support occupations. Other occupations of this type include *Dental assistants, Medical records and health information technicians, Occupational therapy assistants, Medical secretaries, Pharmacy aides, and Physical therapist assistants and aides.*

Where can I find more information?

Certified Medical Assistant exam and general career information:

<http://www.aama-ntl.org/>

Lists of accredited educational programs in Medical Assisting:

<http://www.caahep.org/>

<http://www.abhes.org/>



Medical Assistants *in New Hampshire*

New Hampshire Employment Security Locations

Berlin (752-5500)

151 Pleasant St., P.O. Box 159, 03570-0159

Claremont (543-3111)

404 Washington St., P.O. Box 180, 03743-0180

Concord (228-4100)

10 West St., P.O. Box 1140, 03302-1140

Conway (447-5924)

518 White Mountain Highway, 03818-4205

Keene (352-1904)

109 Key Rd., 03431-3926

Laconia (524-3960)

426 Union Ave., Ste. 3, 03246-2894

Lebanon (448-6340)

85 Mechanic St., 03766-1506

Littleton (444-2971)

646 Union St., Ste. 100, 03561-5314

Manchester (627-7841)

300 Hanover St., 03104-4957

Nashua (882-5177)

6 Townsend West, 03063-1217

Portsmouth (436-3702)

2000 Lafayette Rd., 03801-5673

Salem (893-9185)

29 South Broadway, 03079-3026

Somersworth (742-3600)

243 Rt. 108, 03878-1512

