

Medical Office Assistant

Run the front of a clinic and help with patients at the back. About a year of training, and clinics everywhere are hiring.

TYPICAL PAY

\$45,690

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$36k to \$59k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Doctors' offices, clinics, urgent care, specialist practices

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Biology and any health science class help. A diploma or equivalent is the entry requirement.
- 2 Accredited certificate program** About 1 year
Anatomy, medical terminology, clinical skills, records and insurance billing. Full time it takes about a year.
- 3 Clinical externship** 4 to 6 weeks
An unpaid placement in a real clinic. The Community College of Allegheny County requires 160 hours, and other programs run similar blocks of about 160 to 200 hours.
- 4 Certification exam** Weeks
Take a national medical assistant exam. It is not legally required in most states, but employers increasingly insist on it.
- 5 First clinic job** Year 1
You start at the front desk and on basic clinical tasks, then take on more as you are trusted.

Pros and cons

- + About a year of training and a community college price
- + Rapid projected growth and openings almost everywhere
- + Weekday hours, unlike most hospital careers
- Pay is the lowest of the clinical health careers
- Very little room to climb without going back to school
- You absorb the frustration of every delayed patient

Good to know

160 unpaid hours is the usual finish

Most accredited medical assisting certificates end with a clinical externship. At the Community College of Allegheny County it is 160 unpaid hours, typically done full time over four to five weeks in a real...

One accreditor, 31 professions

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs accredits 2,710 programs at 1,471 institutions across 31 health science professions. If a program is not on its list, employers may not count it.

Optional boosts

Phlebotomy certification. Electrocardiogram training. Medical coding and billing. Waived laboratory testing.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Medical Assistants (31-9092.00)
American Association of Medical Assistants
Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs
Community College of Allegheny County: Medical Assistant program

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/medical-office-assistant>



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