



2021 Industry Outlook

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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 starting point, healthcare professionals can then work on developing their soft skills, seeking more clinical training, taking on more responsibilities, and developing advanced skills to continue moving forward.

As we've done each year, our survey for the Industry Outlook collected insights and data from employers of allied health professionals, digging deeper to understand what they seek in candidates, what these professional's daily work looks like, and what traits and skills make them most successful in their roles.

Trend analysis yielded little change in responses from 2020 to 2021, although there were some notable differences in a few key areas:

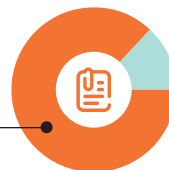
- There was a **significant increase** across all professions (except medical assistants) in partnering with schools to create programs from 2020 to 2021.
- There was a **significant increase** across employers of all professions reporting that employees have more responsibilities compared to last year from 2020 to 2021.
- Employers of medical assistants and billing and coding specialists reported a significant increase **in the level of difficulty it takes to find qualified candidates** from 2020 to 2021.
- Employers of medical administrative assistants reported a **significant drop in preparedness of new certificate holders** performing their job duties.

These insights are telling. They speak to the resilience of our frontline healthcare workers in the face of a pandemic. They also tell us of the continued opportunities educators and employers have to invest in these professionals and give them access to a better future by ensuring they have solid foundational knowledge, essential soft skills training, and career advancement options.

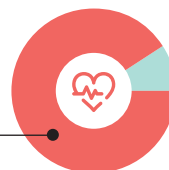
We hope you find these statistics helpful as you continue to advocate for the role of the allied health professional.

Which of the following best describes the current professional certification requirements at your institution?

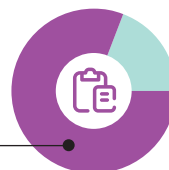
87% encourage or require certification for billing & coding specialists (n=156)



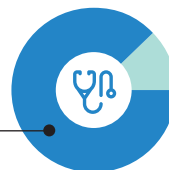
91% encourage or require certification for EKG technicians (n=100)



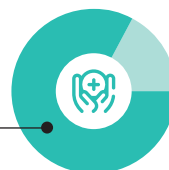
81% encourage or require certification for medical administrative assistants (n=130)



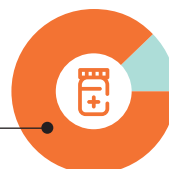
88% encourage or require certification for medical assistants (n=157)



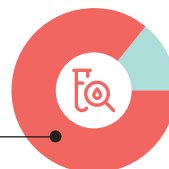
83% encourage or require certification for patient care technicians (n=129)



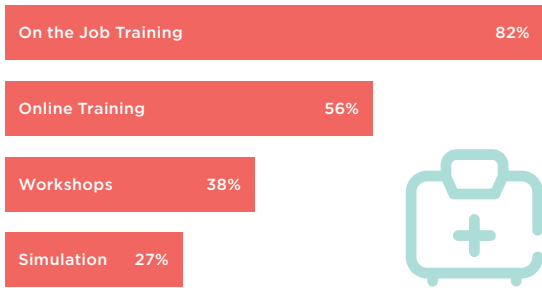
88% encourage or require certification for pharmacy technicians (n=108)



86% encourage or require certification for phlebotomy technicians (n=113)

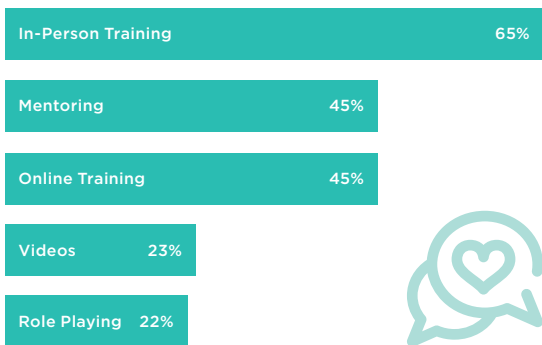


Training methods used to develop employees' clinical skills (n=195)



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

Training methods used to develop employees' soft skills (n=195)



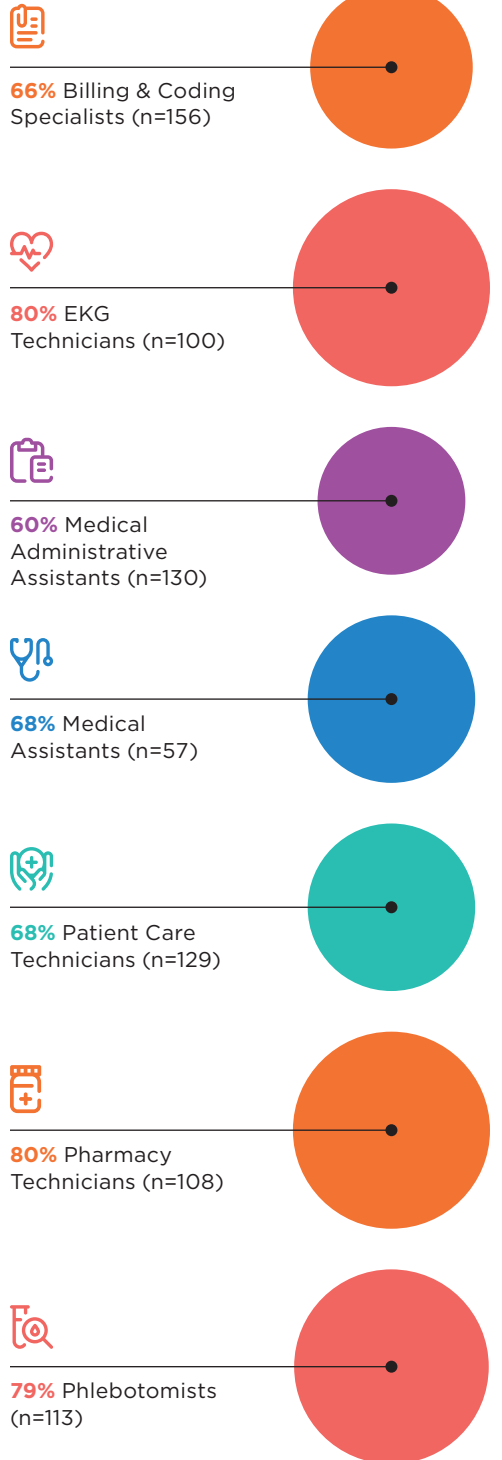
Employers were asked to select all methods that apply. These are the top five responses.

56%



56% of institutions increase pay when an employee earns professional certification. (n=195)

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

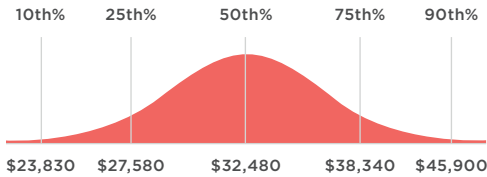




Medical Assistant

n=157

Medical assistant salary range



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

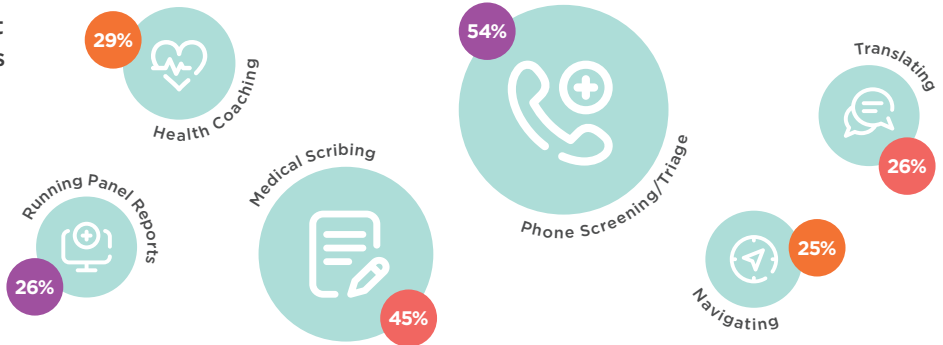
Most important soft skills



Most lacking soft skills



Institutions report medical assistants are responsible for performing advanced skills

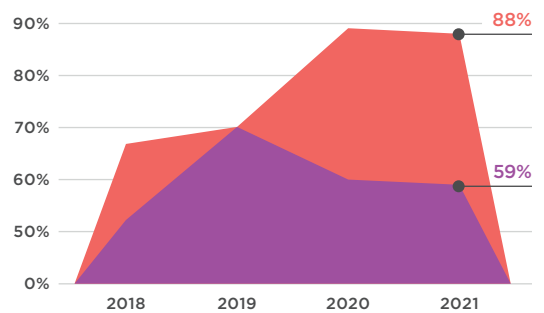


52%

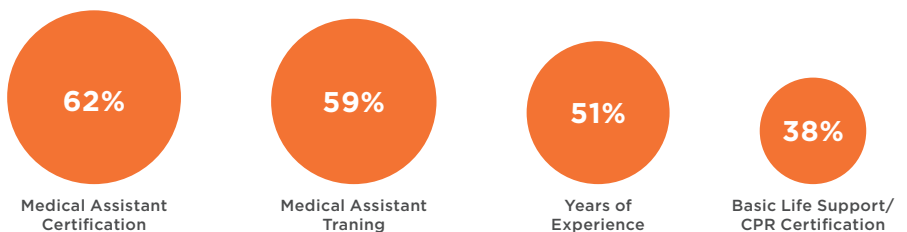
of employers believe that MAs have more responsibility this year compared to last.

- Institutions that encourage or require certification

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



Screening criteria for medical assistant applications

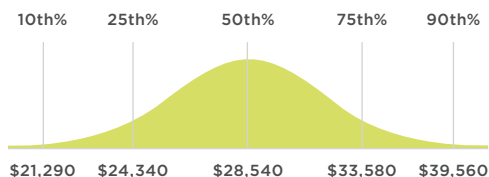




Patient Care Technician

n=129

Patient care technician salary range



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

- 1 Professionalism
- 2 Verbal Communication
- 3 Active Listening

Most lacking soft skills

- 1 Critical Thinking
- 2 Dependability
- 3 Active Listening

Patient care technicians main job responsibilities include:



61% Provide Basic Patient Care



43% Perform Safety Checks



47% Acquire/Administer Patient Care Supplies



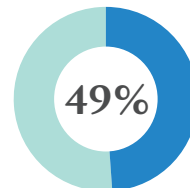
41% Ensure Cleanliness of Patient Rooms



45% Monitor Vital Signs



The average patient to patient care technician ratio is **7 : 1**

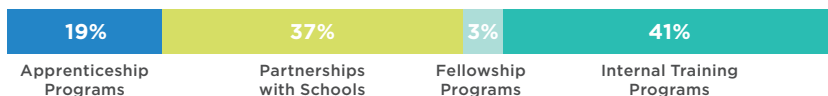


49% of employers believe that patient care technicians have more responsibility this year compared to last.

Institutions with formal training programs for patient care technicians

46%

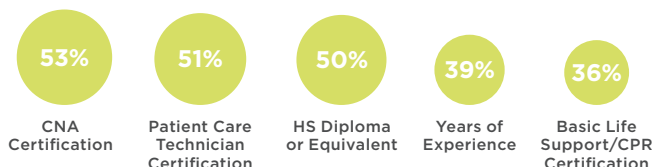
Types of institutional training programs



83% of institutions encourage/require certification.

68% of employers report newly certified patient care technicians are prepared for their job duties.

Screening criteria for patient care technician applications

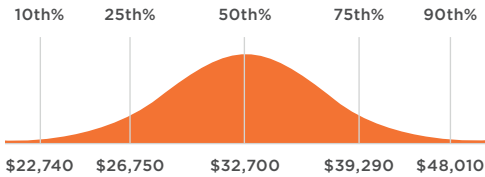




Pharmacy Technician

n=108

Pharmacy technician salary range



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

- 1 Critical Thinking
- 2 Professionalism
- 3 Verbal Communication

Most lacking soft skills

- 1 Dependability
- 2 Adaptability
- 3 Active Listening

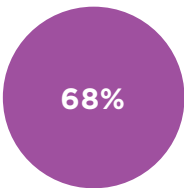
Screening criteria for pharmacy technician applications



Years of Experience



State Licensure



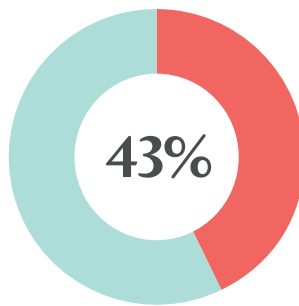
Certification (CPhhT)



Completed Program

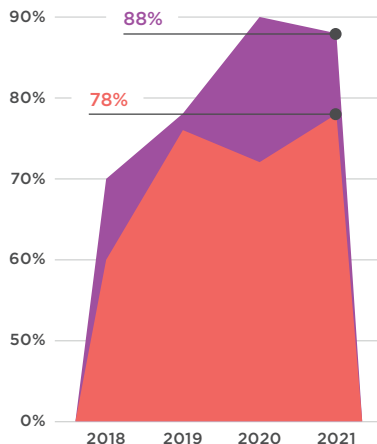


HS Diploma or GED



43% 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 pharmacy technicians are prepared for their job duties



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



63% Management of Inventory



63% Prescription Processing



54% Prescription Dispensing



53% Technician Product Verification



52% Calculation & Measurement of Medication



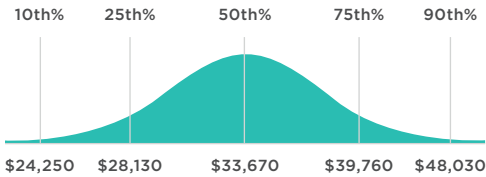
28% Administration of Vaccines



Phlebotomy Technician

n=113

Phlebotomy technician salary range



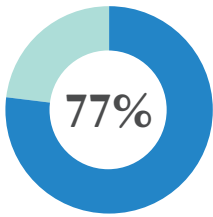
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

- 1 Professionalism
- 2 Dependability
- 3 Verbal Communication

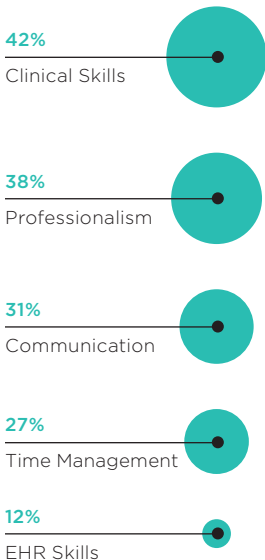
Most lacking soft skills

- 1 Dependability
- 2 Active Listening
- 3 Verbal Communication

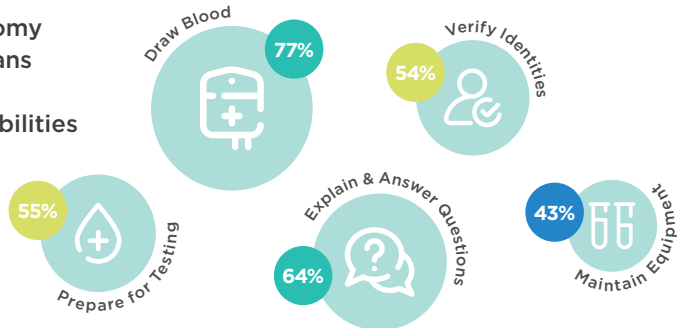


77% of employers report that newly certified phlebotomy technicians are prepared to do their job duties.

Skills newly certified phlebotomy techs lack (n=26)



Phlebotomy technicians main job responsibilities

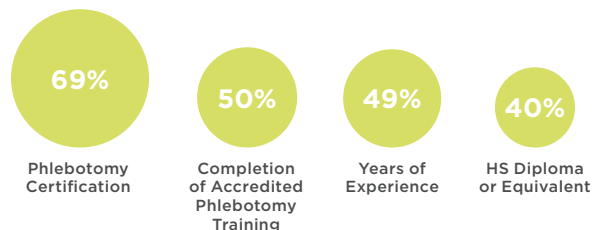


The average phlebotomist technician performs 28 sticks a day.

86% of institutions encourage/require certification.

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

Screening criteria for phlebotomist applications

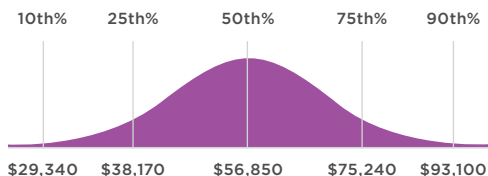




EKG Technician

n=100

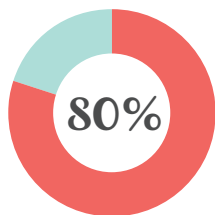
EKG technician salary range



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

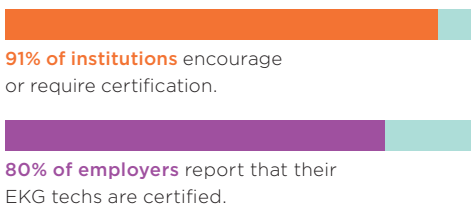
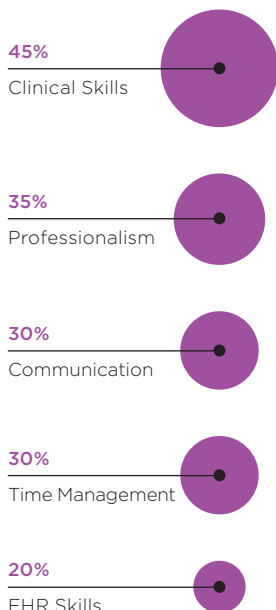
Most important soft skills

Most lacking soft skills



80% of employers report that newly certified EKG technicians are prepared to do their job duties.

Skills newly certified EKG techs lack (n=20)



Why is professional certification important for EKG technicians?



The average EKG technician runs 14.5 tests a day.



Top 3 tasks EKG technicians are responsible for:



Set Up & Administer EKGs

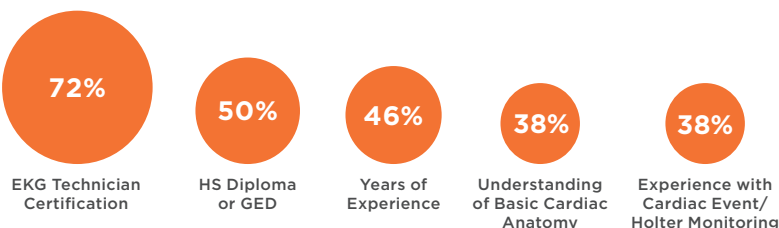


Prepare Patients for Holter or Ambulatory Monitoring



Set Up & Administer Stress Tests

Screening criteria for EKG technician applications

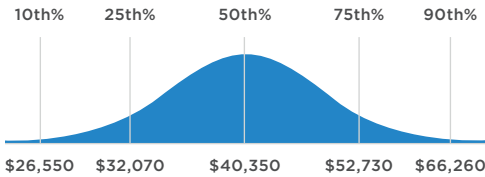




Billing & Coding Specialist

n=156

Billing & coding specialist salary range



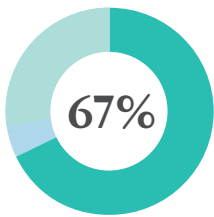
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

- 1 Dependability
- 2 Critical Thinking
- 3 Written Communication

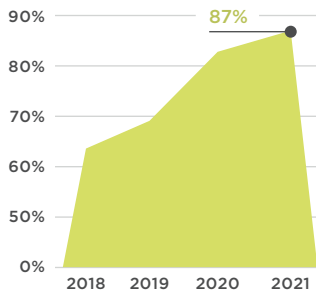
Most lacking soft skills

- 1 Critical Thinking
- 2 Written Communication
- 3 Adaptability



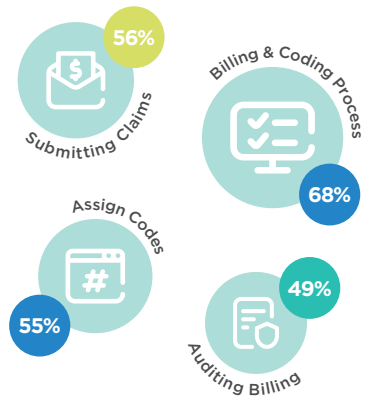
67% of employers report that newly certified billing & coding specialists are prepared to do their jobs.

Institutions that require or encourage certification

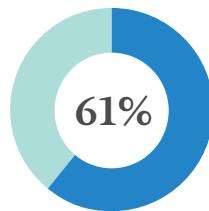
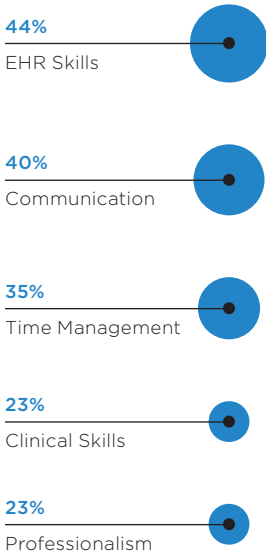


66% of employers report that their billing & coding specialists are certified.

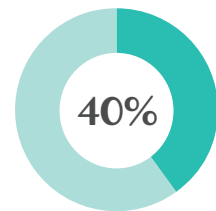
Top 4 tasks billing & coding specialists are responsible for:



Skills newly certified billing & coding specialists lack (n=52)

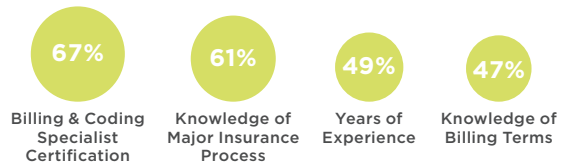


61% of billing & coding specialists are able to reduce payment delays & obtain maximum reimbursement from insurers



40% of employers report that billing & coding specialists have more responsibility this year over last.

Screening criteria for billing & coding specialist applications

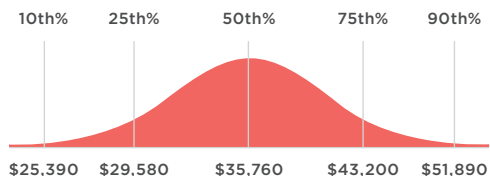




Medical Administrative Assistant

n=130

Medical administrative assistant salary range



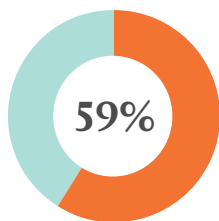
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

- 1 Professionalism
- 2 Dependability
- 3 Verbal Communication

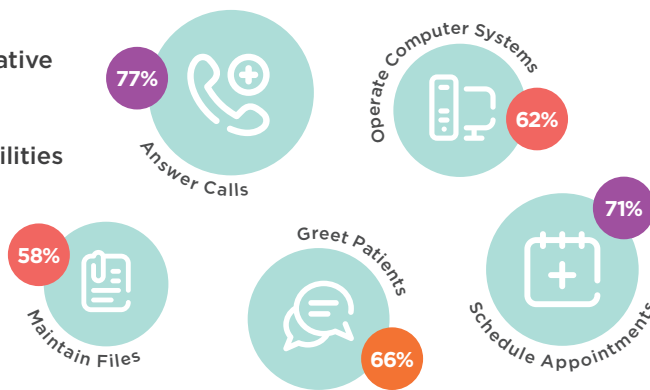
Most lacking soft skills

- 1 Dependability
- 2 Critical Thinking
- 3 Adaptability

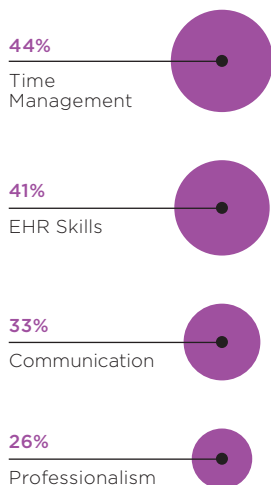


59% of employers report that newly certified medical administrative assistants are prepared to do their jobs.

Medical administrative assistant main job responsibilities



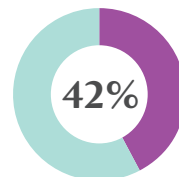
Skills newly certified medical administrative assistants lack (n=54)



81% of institutions encourage or require certification.



60% of employers report that their medical administrative assistants are certified.



42% of employers believe that MA assistants have more responsibility this year compared to last.

Screening criteria for medical administrative assistant applications



Research Methodology

A third-party research firm conducted the research within the 2021 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, certified clinical medical assistants, patient care technicians, pharmacy technicians and phlebotomists. This survey was in market February 25, 2021 through March 11, 2021, and evaluated the opinions of 195 employers, of which some were current NHA customers.

References

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). Occupational Outlook Handbook. Retrieved on February 12, 2021 from <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>.

National Healthcareer Association (2021). 2021 Industry Outlook.

About NHA

Since 1989, NHA has been partnering with allied health education programs, organizations, and employers across the nation to award more than one million allied health certifications. The organization offers eight nationally accredited exams, certification preparation and study materials, training solutions and 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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