



Health Career Directory

Medical Office Assistant

Overview

Medical office assistants (MOA) support doctors and other health care professionals by performing a wide variety of clerical and administrative tasks. These include, for example, scheduling appointments, word processing, bookkeeping, accounting, photocopying, filing, answering the phone, and correspondence.

Medical secretaries perform a variety of secretarial and administrative duties in doctors' offices, hospitals and other medical clinics.

Workers in this occupation must have excellent skills. They must also have the ability to be thoughtful and discreet. Organizational skills are also necessary for managing large amounts of detailed information

Medical office assistant should be capable in working both independently and in a team setting. They must also be comfortable working under pressure.

Changes in office technology and, the evolving responsibilities of medical secretaries, mean that adaptability and resourcefulness are important qualities.

Main Roles

Duties and responsibilities vary from one type of health care organization to another. In general, however, medical office assistants may perform any or all of the following duties:

- answer the phone, schedule and confirm medical appointments, greet patients, receive and communicate messages
- use health software, and other computer applications, to book appointments or prepare reports, invoices, financial statements, letters, case histories and medical records
- ask patients questions in order to complete intake forms or other documents. Help patients complete health history forms
- transcribe, from handwritten notes, electronic dictation or oral instructions
- complete insurance and other claim forms
- process payments, bank documents, and accounts receivable
- set up and maintain records management systems. This includes classifying and coding electronic, and hardcopy files
- operate office equipment. This includes voice mail messaging systems, photocopiers, fax machines, and document scanners
- keep examination areas clean, orderly, and stocked with supplies

- use word processing, spreadsheet, database, and presentation software to prepare medical documentation
- perform other clerical and administrative functions. This might involve, for example, ordering and maintaining an inventory of supplies.

Medical secretaries perform some or all of the following duties:

- schedule and confirm medical appointments
- receive and communicate messages for medical staff and patients. For example, those who work for surgeons schedule the Operating Room days and maintain an up to date waitlist
- use a computer to prepare, key in, edit, and proofread medical records, reports, articles, case histories and correspondence from machine dictation, shorthand and handwritten notes. using computers
- ask patients questions in order to complete forms, documents, and case histories
- complete insurance and other claim forms
- Start and continue confidential medical files and records
- prepare financial statements and billing procedures
- order supplies and maintain inventory
- decide and establish office procedures and routines
- may supervise and train other staff in procedures and in use of current software.
- those with an MOA certificate can take patients in and out of examining rooms, clean the room between the patients, and set up simple trays for procedures done in the office.

Who is suited to become a medical office assistants and/or a medical secretary?

- *Medical office assistants* and *medical secretaries* are most effective when they have the following skills and characteristics: the ability to maintain patient confidentiality
- excellent oral and written communication skills
- good organizational and time management skills
- the ability to maintain accuracy while doing multiple tasks or working under pressure
- a mature attitude toward the human body, wellness, and disease
- the ability to follow directions closely and accurately
- the ability to establish a professional relationship with patients and ensure that they have confidence in you
- the ability to deal effectively with the difficult behaviours that can sometimes be shown by people in distress
- the ability to work independently or as part of a team.

Medical office assistants should enjoy interacting with people. They should be comfortable with operating equipment such as computers and photocopiers. In addition, they should be skilled at compiling and organizing information.

Who employs medical office assistants and medical secretaries?

Medical office assistants work in:

- doctors' offices
- hospitals
- medical clinics and other health care settings
- public and private insurance companies
- health software companies.

Their working hours are usually decided by the employer's clinic hour. These hours may include evenings or weekends. Those who work as ward secretaries in hospitals may sometimes need to work on a shift system.

Salary

Hourly Range - \$14.00 - \$19.14

Required Training and Education to Become Medical Office Assistants and Medical Secretaries

General High School Admissions Requirements

Most employers require *medical office assistants* to be able to type at least 50 words a minute with a maximum of three errors. It is preferred however, if *medical office assistants* can type 60 words a minute. Knowledge of medical terminology, and some medical instruments or tray items is essential.

Completion of secondary school is the minimum education requirement. However, most employers require education beyond secondary school in a related certificate or diploma program. Programs structured for medical or dental office administrators, such as a one-year

Attending a *Medical Office Assistant (MOA)* certificate program is the best way to get the range of skills necessary to work in this field. These programs might include practical training in medical terminology or pharmacology, management software, and basic medical office procedures.

Knowledge of spreadsheet and database software may also be required for employment.

Changes in technology, such as the increasing use of electronic medical records (EMR), means that these workers must be comfortable adapting to new software programs. Some employers may require specialized training in EMR systems.

WCB Level 1 First Aid, CPR Level C and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) certification are all helpful to people looking for employment in this field.

Career Advancement

Medical secretaries often start their career as receptionists for general practice clinics or records clerks for hospitals. With experience, they may find work in a specialist practice or move into supervisory positions, such as office or clinic manager. In large organizations, experienced *medical office assistants* may move into supervisory positions.

Resources

Education Programs

Camosun College – Office Administration

<http://camosun.ca/learn/programs/officeadmin/index.html>

Camosun College – Medical Office Assistant

<http://camosun.ca/learn/programs/abtmoa/index.html>

Academy of Learning – Office Administration

<http://www.academyoflearning.com/BC/Home/Programs/OfficeAdministration/OfficeAdministration.aspx>

Academy of Learning – Medical Office Assistant

<http://www.academyoflearning.com/BC/Home/Programs/Healthcare/MedicalOfficeAssistant.aspx>

SprottShaw

<http://www.sprottshaw.com/programs/faculty-of-business/administrative-assistant-medical-office-assistant/>

Insignia College of Health & Business

<http://www.insigniacollege.com/medical-office-assistant.htm>

Vancouver Island University

<http://www.viu.ca/ccs/certificates/medicalofficeassistant.asp>

Financial assistance and bursaries

For information about Canada student loans and grants, please visit:

http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada_student_loan/index.shtml

Associations

British Columbia Medical Office Assistants Association

<http://www.medicalofficeassistantsofbc.com/page/page/1821867.htm>

British Columbia Medical Association

<http://www.bcma.org>

International Association of Administrative Professionals

<http://asp.iaap-hq.org/splash/index.html>