



## get on the administrative services path

### Is this the job for me?

Take this quick quiz to find out if coding/billing specialist is a good direction for you:

- 1 Are you interested in health care, but don't want to perform patient care?  
 YES  NO
- 2 Are you organized and good at looking things up quickly?  
 YES  NO
- 3 Do you like working with numbers?  
 YES  NO
- 4 Are you careful, detailed and accurate?  
 YES  NO
- 5 Do you have excellent communication skills?  
 YES  NO
- 6 Are you good with computers?  
 YES  NO
- 7 Do you want to get into a career in two years or less?  
 YES  NO

If you answered yes to several of these questions, you may be on the right track!

### What's it all about?

Coding/billing specialists, who work in doctors' offices, hospitals and other medical facilities, specialize in coding patient information for billing and research purposes. Using standard coding systems, coding/billing specialists review patients' records and assign codes for each diagnosis and procedure. They then report this information to insurance companies or other third-party payors, so the medical provider can be reimbursed for expenses. Coded information may also be used by researchers and public health officials.

In addition to being organized and having good computer skills, coding/billing specialists must also have a solid background in medical terminology, disease processes, pharmacology, anatomy and physiology, and patient privacy laws.

### What do coding/billing specialists do?

Tasks commonly performed by coding/billing specialists include:

- Review and analyze patients' medical records.
- Assign numeric or alphanumeric codes for each diagnosis and procedure, using standard coding systems.
- Code and enter data on insurance forms.
- Calculate how much patients owe.
- Bill insurance companies and prepare patients' invoices.
- Operate computers and use software to post totals, transcribe data

and encode documents.

- Update records when payments are received.
- Sort items for processing or collection.
- Talk with patients to obtain or give account information.
- Answer questions about rates and procedures.
- Resolve billing errors.
- Keep files secure and confidential.

### How much money can I make?

Alaska-specific wage information on medical coding/billing specialists is not available. However, general billing and posting clerks in Alaska earn an average hourly wage of \$16.50, and have an average annual salary of \$34,320.

### How do I become a coding/billing specialist? How long does it take?

To become a coding/billing specialist, you must:

- Have a high school diploma or GED.
- Complete coding/billing courses, receive on-the-job training or obtain a certificate.
- May earn national certification.

While a formal training program is not required for this position, there are a number of courses and certificate programs that prepare students to work as coding/billing specialists. Most certificate programs take two years or less to complete.

Coding/billing specialists may also become certified. Due to the constant changes in medical office technology, it is also important for coding/billing specialists to take classes to keep their skills up-to-date.

Learn more about coding/billing specialist programs in Alaska by reviewing the “training providers” section later in this publication.

### Attention high school students!

Think you want to become a coding/billing specialist? Well, the time to start planning is now. Review this list of recommended courses to take in high school, then discuss your plans with your parents or school counselor.

- Office procedures
- Keyboarding
- Business and applied English
- Health education
- Medical terminology
- Anatomy and physiology
- Biology
- Business math

Also, check with a teacher or counselor to see what work-based learning opportunities, such as field trips, job shadowing and internships, are available in your community.

### Are there jobs available?

While the specific number of job openings for coding/billing specialists in Alaska is not available, this occupation has been identified as a high-demand job in the state.

### Where are the jobs?

Coding/billing specialists can be found in hospitals, medical clinics, doctors' offices, veterinary hospitals, long-term care facilities and behavioral health facilities. Native health corporations also provide job opportunities.

### What else is on this pathway?

Want to learn about other possible opportunities in the administrative services career pathway? Be sure to read about health information technicians – another administrative services “hot job” in Alaska!

