

HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNICIAN



get on the administrative services path

Is this the job for me?

Take this quick quiz to find out if health information technician is a good direction for you:

- 1 Are you interested in health care, but don't want to provide patient care?
 YES NO
- 2 Do you enjoy math, science, management, law and computers?
 YES NO
- 3 Do you like to organize and arrange things and information?
 YES NO
- 4 Do you like to work independently, with others or some of both?
 YES NO
- 5 Do you enjoy handling numbers?
 YES NO
- 6 Are you detail-oriented?
 YES NO
- 7 Do you want to get into a career in about two years?
 YES NO

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

What's it all about?

Health information technicians, also called medical records technicians, are responsible for gathering, organizing and updating patients' medical records. This is a very important job, as physicians and other health care workers rely on these records, which include comprehensive information on patients' symptoms, medical history, test results, X-rays, diagnoses and treatment plans.

What do health information technicians do?

Common tasks performed by a health information technician include:

- Collect, code and maintain patients' medical records.
- Process patient admission and discharge forms.
- Make sure records are complete and accurate.
- Develop organized filing and storage systems.
- Keep files secure and confidential.
- Talk to physicians and other health care workers to gather missing information about patients.
- Enter patient information, such as diagnoses and treatments, into computers.
- Assign codes to each diagnosis and procedure, using standard coding systems.
- Compile and maintain special records, called registries, on patients who have certain health problems, such as cancer. Analyze data to

provide research information.

- Assemble and analyze patient data to help improve patient care or control costs.
- Prepare medical records for release to authorized parties, such as insurance companies or lawyers.
- May specialize in coding diagnoses and procedures.
- May supervise and train other medical records staff.
- May bill insurance companies and prepare patients' invoices.
- May perform medical transcription.

How much money can I make?

In Alaska, health information technicians earn an average hourly wage of \$15.28, and have an average annual salary of \$31,780.

How do I become a health information technician? How long does it take?

To become a health information technician, you must:

- Have a high school diploma or GED.
- Graduate from a health information technology program.
- May become certified.

Most health information technology programs offer associate's degrees, which take about two years to complete. Some health

information technicians go on to earn bachelor's degrees, which prepares them to work as managers or administrators. This degree takes about four years.

After completing an accredited program, graduates are eligible to earn their Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) credential by passing a national exam. Technicians with the RHIT credential are required to complete 20 hours of continuing education every two years.

Learn more about health information technician programs in Alaska by reviewing the "training providers" section later in this publication.

Attention high school students!

Think you want to become a health information technician? Well, the time to start planning is now. In general, you should take four years of English, three years of math, three years of social studies, two years of science and possibly two years of a second language. You should also consider taking college-preparatory and advanced placement (AP) classes. Other recommended classes and electives include:

- Anatomy and physiology
- Introduction to health care
- Medical office
- Medical terminology
- Keyboarding
- Computer applications
- Probability and statistics

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

Are there jobs available?

Nationwide, the health information technician occupation is expected to grow twice as fast as all other occupations (28.9 percent growth for this job compared to 13 percent for all occupations). Health information technician has also been identified as a high-demand job in Alaska.

Where are the jobs?

Approximately one-third of all health information technicians work in hospitals. Jobs are also available in clinics, doctors' offices, nursing homes and outpatient care centers.

What else is on this pathway?

Want to learn about other possible opportunities in the administrative services career pathway? Be sure to read about coding/billing specialists – another administrative services "hot job" in Alaska!

