

Career Focus on...

# Medical Support Specialist

## Introduction

- Are most people at ease with you talking about personal information related to their health?
- Are you curious about the details of health conditions and illnesses?
- Do you have a patient and friendly manner when listening to the health concerns of others?
- Are you interested in a career that combines health science and biology with office administration?

If you have answered yes to these questions, you may want to consider a career as a Medical Support Specialist, or Medical Assistant.

## Did You Know... ?

- “Job seekers who want to work as a medical assistant should find excellent job prospects” (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Those with formal training and certification in the field will have the best job opportunities.
- Medical Assisting is ranked among the fastest growing occupations for the decade 2008-2018.
- Through the year 2018, careers in medical assisting are expected to grow 34%; which is higher than the average rate of growth in other careers.
- About 62% of medical assistants work in physicians’ offices, while 13% work in hospitals and 11% work for other specialists, such as chiropractors, podiatrists and optometrists.

## QCC Alumni Success Story

Kim Houke worked part time as a preschool teacher and had been busy raising her family when she decided to go back to school for a career in the medical field. She wanted to work in a medical setting, but wasn't sure about clinical work. Kim was attracted to the Medical Support Specialist Certification program, which gave her training in both the clinical and administrative aspects of a medical office, in a timely manner. When she began the program, she had no idea that after taking her first clinical class, that this would be her true passion! There was no turning back and she excelled from that point forward. As a medical assistant, one is required to have a functional background in the flow and function of the medical office and the clinical exam areas. Quinsigamond Community College faculty prepared Kim extremely well in both the clinical and administrative settings. Her six-month internship at Shrewsbury Internal Medicine prepared Kim on a practical level for a successful career as a Certified Medical Assistant. Kim graduated with honors and received a Medical Support Specialist Certificate in May of 2008. After graduating, she received national medical assisting certification through the American Association of Medical Assisting. She then began work as a Medical Assistant in Dr. Edward Klayman's Office, through the Leominster Health Alliance. Kim is continuing her education at QCC, currently taking prerequisites to qualify for the Radiologic Technology program.

## Career Options

### OFFICES OF OPTOMETRISTS

Median Annual Salary: \$25,240

Recommended Education: Post High School certificate, Associate's degree

[www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm#earnings](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm#earnings)

### OFFICES OF CHIROPRACTORS

Median Annual Salary: \$25,240

Recommended Education: Post High School certificate, Associate's degree

[www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm#earnings](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm#earnings)

### OFFICES OF PHYSICIANS

Median Annual Salary: \$28,710

Recommended Education: Post High School certificate, Associate's degree

[www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm#earnings](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm#earnings)

### OUTPATIENT CARE CENTERS

Median Annual Salary: \$28,570

Recommended Education: Post High School certificate, Associate's degree

[www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm#earnings](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm#earnings)

### GENERAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL

#### HOSPITALS

Median Annual Salary: \$29,720

Recommended Education: Post High School certificate, Associate's degree

[www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm#earnings](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm#earnings)

## Worcester Area Employers

- Leominster Health Alliance
- UMass/Memorial Medical Center
- St. Vincent's Hospital
- Fallon Clinic
- Shrewsbury Internal Medicine – UMass Affiliate
- Tricounty, Milford, MA-UMass Affiliate

## Other Professionals in the Field

In their 2007 “Spotlight” article, CMA Today, the periodical put out by the American Association of Medical Assistants, called Matt Campbell the ideal medical assistant. At that time Matt split his work week by doing three days at a rural health clinic and two days at a hospital based clinic. In both locations he would do routine medical assisting chores such as taking vital statistics, drawing blood, answering phones, processing paperwork and interacting with patients. Matt is not a typical Medical Assistant. When Matt was 15 he fell out of a tree and broke his back. “Ever since then, I’ve been a paraplegic,” he says.” His injury not only didn’t stop him from pursuing a successful career as a Medical Assistant, it actually inspired him to go into the field. While undergoing medical treatment, he became interested in all the information the doctors and nurses were giving him about his body.

Matt graduated from Baker College in 2003 and passed his certification exam shortly afterwards. He finds the one-on-one interaction with the patients rewarding. Some patients are put off a bit because he’s in a wheelchair, but he is usually successful in getting people to look past his disability. Matt has done some teaching and hopes to do more in the academic preparation of Medical assistants when he finishes his bachelor’s degree in health services administration.

To read Matt’s full story, see [www.aama-ntl.org/CMAToday/archives/spotlight/details.aspx?ArticleID=441](http://www.aama-ntl.org/CMAToday/archives/spotlight/details.aspx?ArticleID=441)

## Next Steps

Wondering if the Medical Support Specialist field is right for you?

- Take a Career Assessment to match your interests with potential careers: [www.qcc.mass.edu/t3/ort/sites.html#careerassess](http://www.qcc.mass.edu/t3/ort/sites.html#careerassess)
- Research the web links on this page and more: [www.qcc.mass.edu/t3/ort/sites.html#careerinfor](http://www.qcc.mass.edu/t3/ort/sites.html#careerinfor)
- Conduct an Informational Interview. Speak with a live person employed in this field: [www.qcc.mass.edu/t3/ort/sites.html#infointerview](http://www.qcc.mass.edu/t3/ort/sites.html#infointerview)
- Attend a Career Planning Session: [www.QCC.edu/images/capssession.pdf](http://www.QCC.edu/images/capssession.pdf)
- Speak with an Advisor: [www2.qcc.mass.edu/advising/advCalladvCall.asp](http://www2.qcc.mass.edu/advising/advCalladvCall.asp)
- Speak with QCC Faculty who teach Medical Support Specialist courses.

## Sources Used

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition*:

- Medical Assisting at [www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm)

Cassata, Cathy. “CMA Beats the Odds.” American Association of Medical Assistants. March/April 2007. v 40. [www.aama-ntl.org/CMAToday/archives/default.aspx](http://www.aama-ntl.org/CMAToday/archives/default.aspx)

## Professional Associations

- American Association of Medical Assistants: [www.aama-ntl.org](http://www.aama-ntl.org)
- American Medical Technologist: [www.amt1.com/index.asp](http://www.amt1.com/index.asp)
- Massachusetts State Society of Medical Assistants: [www.medicalassistant.org](http://www.medicalassistant.org)

## Positions Entered by QCC Graduates

- Certified Medical Assistants
- Hospital Admissions Representatives
- Clerical Aides

## Looking for employment, co-op, internship, or service learning opportunities?

Contact the Career Placement Office:

[www.QCC.edu/pages/Career\\_Placement.html](http://www.QCC.edu/pages/Career_Placement.html)

## Possible Transfer Schools

- Worcester State University
- Assumption College

## Looking for Specific Transfer Information?

- Start at the QCC Transfer web site: [www.qcc.mass.edu/transfer](http://www.qcc.mass.edu/transfer)
- Make an appointment online with the Transfer Advisor: [www.qcc.mass.edu/transfer/calendar](http://www.qcc.mass.edu/transfer/calendar)
- Email questions to: [transfer@qcc.mass.edu](mailto:transfer@qcc.mass.edu)