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# **Medical Assistants Further Their Careers Through Online Schools**

What's one of the hottest jobs in the market today? You'd actually be surprised. It's personified by the person who greets you every time you walk into a doctor's office, the assistant. That's right, kids. The Bureau of Labor Statistics states medical "assisting" (as they call it) is one of the fastest growing professions in the country. While the receptionist can get by with a warm smile and good organizational skills, a degree from on campus or [online college degree](#) is what's needed to advance.

According to the Bureau, there are currently slightly over 480,000 medical assistants in the U.S. as of 2008. They predict there will be a need for an additional 160,000-plus by 2018. That's a whopping 34% increase. The average growth rate for most professions over that same period of time is a much more modest 11-12% per profession.

One important thing though, a medical assistant can't get by with just a sweet smile and smooth demeanor. This still predominantly female occupation does require strong organizational, communications and management skills. While a heavy knowledge of medical procedure isn't a requirement, a fundamental comprehension will work wonders. The occupation actually breaks down into three distinct categories, each one more advanced-and thus better paying than the latter. They are:

(1) Administrative Medical Assistants - These are the women you actually see on the other side of the glass panels. They update and file records, arrange laboratory services and handle similar tasks besides answering telephones, greet patients, scheduling appointments, some billing and bookkeeping. This is usually the first step to the next following positions.

(2) Clinical Medical Assistants - They have more duties, depending on state law. Common tasks include taking medical histories and recording vital signs, explaining treatment procedures, preparing and assisting during exams. They also collect and prepare specimens and perform basic tests, and dispose of and/or sterilize medical instruments. It's also not uncommon for them to instruct patients, administer medications, telephone prescriptions, draw blood, and much, much more - all the while keeping the examination rooms neat and clean.

(3) Specialized Medical Assistants - Their tasks revolve around their practice's specialization. More exact titles are, for instance, ophthalmic, optometric (both eye) or podiatric (feet). To illustrate, podiatric medical assistants make castings of feet, expose and develop x rays, and assist podiatrists in surgery.

For those who wish to get into this growing field, it's not that complicated. A new high school grad might be able to land a front desk job, although a year of secretarial school polish would actually aid in the cause. From there, enrolling in an online college, taking classes when home and increasing one's knowledge will get her from behind the desk to the exam rooms. Two years of continued education will certainly help move her into the specialty positions. From there, she can further educate herself into nursing and beyond.

In regards to salary, a student with no experience usually starts at \$19,000 to \$23,000. The average salary is approximately \$25,000 and at the upper is around \$30,000. There are health benefits. Yes, the salary is low, so look at that as further incentive to eventually get from behind the desk and into more demanding work. There's no better vantage point than from the other side of those glass panels through [online schools](#).

The availability of [online programs](#) allows someone in the medical field to continue their real life experience as they advance their education. Some will remain top notch assistants, some will move into nursing, and others will go for their medical [college degree](#). Once in the health care field, the possibilities are unlimited.

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