

# Understanding the Local Labor Market

## Promising Career Pathways in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County

### Focus: Pharmacy Technicians

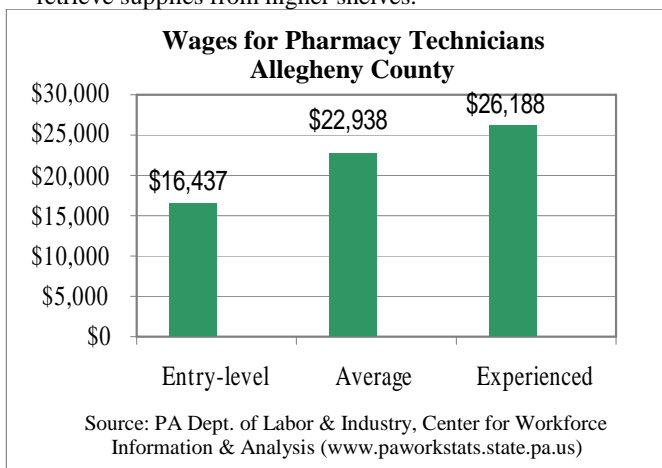
*Understanding the Local Labor Market: Promising Career Pathways in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County* is intended as a useful resource for career counselors and other professionals responsible for helping jobseekers make informed decisions about employment and training. Featured occupations are selected on the basis of vacancies, wages and benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

#### What do pharmacy technicians do?

- Pharmacy technicians — also called pharmacy assistants — help licensed pharmacists provide medication and other health care products to patients.
- Specific tasks may include: retrieving, counting, pouring, weighing, measuring, and mixing medications; labeling, pricing, and filing prescriptions; updating patient profiles; reading patient charts; delivering medicine; preparing insurance forms; taking inventory of medications; answering telephones, handling money, stocking shelves, and performing other clerical duties.
- Attention to detail and strong spelling, reading, communication, basic mathematical, customer service, and inventory skills are needed to successfully perform the tasks required of pharmacy technicians.

#### What are pharmacy technicians' wages, benefits, and work conditions?

- Pharmacy technician jobs may be full-time or part-time. Work shifts may vary and can include evening, weekend, and holiday hours. Most full-time positions require a standard 40-hour work week, provide an hourly wage, and provide healthcare and retirement benefits.
- Pharmacy technicians can work in retail pharmacies, hospitals, or nursing homes. Work environments are generally clean, organized, and well-lit.
- Pharmacy technicians may spend most of the work day standing and lifting heavy boxes. Stepladders may also be used to retrieve supplies from higher shelves.



#### What do pharmacy technicians like about their jobs?

- Pharmacy technicians like the challenge of utilizing different skill sets in a fast-paced environment.
- They enjoy being the primary customer service representative and interacting with people on a daily basis. Pharmacy technicians have a large amount of responsibility and they like being the “go to” person.
- They gain satisfaction from being involved in the health care arena and making a difference in patients’ lives.

#### What are related jobs and advancement opportunities?

- Other occupations with responsibilities and duties related to those of pharmacy technicians include: licensed practical nurses; physical therapist assistants and aides; dental hygienists; medical secretaries; and medical transcriptionists.
- A voluntary advancement opportunity is offered by the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) which develops, maintains, promotes, and administers a high-quality national certification and recertification program for pharmacy technicians. PTCB certification is becoming mandatory by some employers and many training programs prepare students to pass this exam.
- With further education, pharmacy technicians could also enter higher paying positions as pharmaceutical sales representatives or as pharmacists.

#### How many pharmacy technician openings are there?

- Local demand for pharmacy technicians is steady and expected to grow. The PA Department of Labor & Industry estimates that there are approximately 810 pharmacy technicians working in Allegheny County. Allegheny County is expected to add approximately 200 pharmacy technician jobs by 2010.
- The medication needs of an aging population and cost-reducing efforts in the health care industry will encourage the use of pharmacy technicians for routine tasks previously performed by pharmacists.
- 17 local pharmacy technician jobs were posted on the Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink website ([www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com](http://www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com)) between January 2005 and September 2005.

## FOCUS: Pharmacy Technicians

### How can I become a pharmacy technician?

- Although most pharmacy technicians receive on-the-job training, many employers prefer to hire those with a high school diploma or GED, formal training and/or the PTCB certification. High school coursework in chemistry and biology would be beneficial.
- Eligible candidates for the PTCB certification must have a high school diploma or GED. To find out more about the PTCB certification, please visit [www.ptcb.org](http://www.ptcb.org).
- There are a number of local training programs where individuals can acquire the knowledge and skills, degrees and/or certifications needed for pharmacy technician positions. (See list, right.)
- These programs tend to cover: medical technology; human biology; an introduction to pharmacology; and include an externship. Self-motivated individuals may independently prepare to take the PTCB certification exam by using books or online prep materials.
- Pharmacy technicians have a variety of employment options including: acute care; ambulatory care; long-term care settings; research facilities; mail-order pharmacies; home infusion companies; retail pharmacies; and hospitals.
- Pharmacy technicians are observant, organized, precise and work well with a team. Interested candidates for this type of work cannot have prior records of drug or substance abuse.
- Pharmacy technicians constantly interact with the public. A neat appearance and the ability to deal tactfully with the public are essential. Employers also may prefer to hire people with experience typing, handling money and operating computers.

### How do I find out about pharmacy technician jobs?

- **Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink** has pharmacy technician job postings (contact 1-866-317-JOBS or visit [www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com](http://www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com) to learn more).
- Health care employer websites, local newspapers, and online search engines are used to advertise openings.

### Where can I get training locally?

**Bidwell Training Center Inc.** — 412-323-4000, [www.bidwell-training.org](http://www.bidwell-training.org). Basic diploma training for pharmacy technicians that includes a six week externship. Open to the public; candidates must have a high school diploma or GED.

**Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC)** — 412-469-4301, [www.ccac.edu](http://www.ccac.edu). A five semester Associate in Science pharmacy technician program and a three semester certificate program. Both programs include an externship.

**Duff's Business Institute** — 412-261-4520, <http://duffsinstitute.com>. An eight month diploma program for pharmacy technicians. Open to the public; candidates must be 18 years of age, must have a high school diploma and must pass an entrance exam including basic science and math questions.

**Forbes Road Career and Technology Center (CTC)** — 412-373-8100, [www.forbesroad.com](http://www.forbesroad.com). Health Science Technology program open to 10th, 11th, and 12th graders from sending schools.\* Program gives an overview of all health care occupations including pharmacy technicians.

**Western School of Health and Business** — 412-373-9038, [www.allalliedhealthschools.com](http://www.allalliedhealthschools.com). A 15-month Associate Degree program offering training for pharmacy technicians. Includes a three month externship. Open to the public; candidates must be 18 years of age and must have a high school diploma.

*\*Area high schools served by this vocational school.*

### Can I get help paying for training?

- Training is on the job, but formal training is preferred.
- Limited training funds may be available through **Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink**.
- Financial aid may be available for some local training programs.

### Remember...

Labor markets are affected by economic, social, and institutional factors that are difficult to predict. No one can forecast perfectly how many jobs will be available, or whether there will be too many or too few workers to fill those jobs. The reality is that employment is never a guarantee, even for individuals who pursue training in demand occupations.

The Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board (TRWIB) is charged with promoting a coordinated and accountable employment and training system for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Responsibilities include setting and monitoring local performance standards, chartering CareerLink comprehensive and community centers that provide a range of services to jobseekers and employers, and certifying qualified training providers. Board members are appointed by Mayor Tom Murphy (City of Pittsburgh) and Chief Executive Dan Onorato (Allegheny County).

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