nha

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Industry
Outlook

2020 Industry Outlook

Understanding the journey to career success

Pathways to professional success are not always straightforward. Circumstances—including access to education, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geography among other factors—can create twists and turns that shape each path. It can be long and winding, but with training, education, and commitment to themselves and from others, individuals can navigate to success.

National certification is a starting point, like the red star on a map that shows "you are here." It designates readiness for the career journey ahead because it demonstrates a standardized measure of knowledge and skills. Once you've earned it, you're ready to traverse a journey to career success. Again, the pathway is unique to the individual.

Educators see certification as a milestone for students. Passing a nationally accredited exam means a student is more likely to be work-ready. Employers value the standardization national certification provides and use it to screen job applicants. By using certification as a start, healthcare professionals can carve their paths by honing soft skills, seeking additional clinical training, taking on more responsibilities, and developing advanced skills to continue moving upward.

Because no pathway to professional success looks the same, NHA sought to uncover what factors impact the journey. The 2020 Industry Outlook collected insights and data from employers of allied health professionals, digging deeper to understand what they seek in candidates, what these professionals' daily work looks like, and what traits and skills make them most successful in their roles.

As an advocate for allied health professionals, we hope you can use this data to help your students and employees navigate their own path to achieve their career dreams.

Which of the following best describes the current professional certification requirements at your institution?
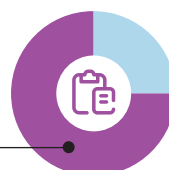
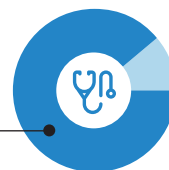**83%** encourage or require certification for billing & coding specialists (n=203)
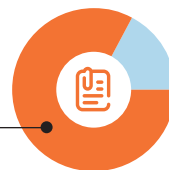
87% encourage or require certification for EKG technicians (n=120)
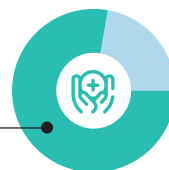
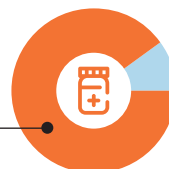**75%** encourage or require certification for medical administrative assistants (n=171)

89% encourage or require certification for medical assistants (n=197)
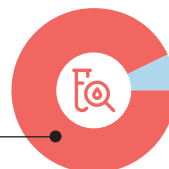
78% encourage or require certification for patient care technicians (n=162)
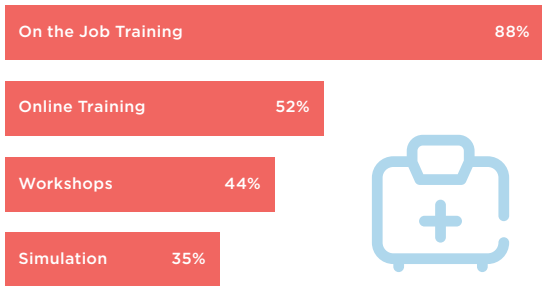
90% encourage or require certification for pharmacy technicians (n=159)

93% encourage or require certification for phlebotomy technicians (n=152)

Training methods used to develop employees' clinical skills (n=277)

On the Job Training	88%
Online Training	52%
Workshops	44%
Simulation	35%

Employers were asked to select all methods that apply. These are the top four responses.

Training methods used to develop employees' soft skills (n=277)

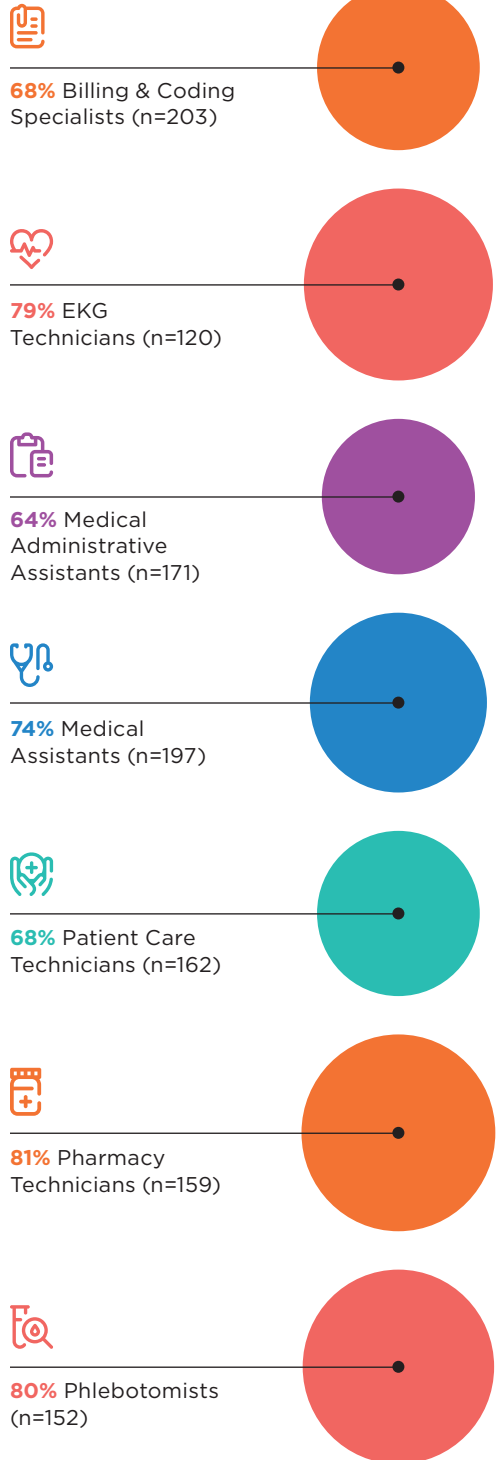|	
In-Person Training	72%
Mentoring	46%
Online Training	40%
Videos	33%
Role Playing	33%
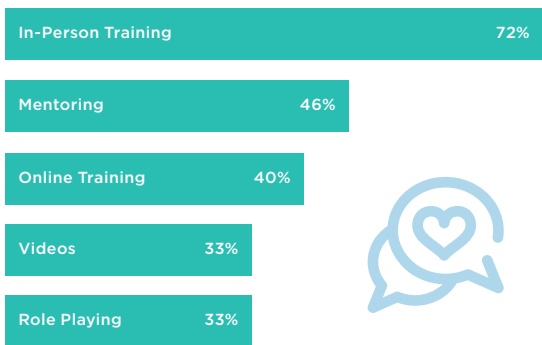
Employers were asked to select all methods that apply. These are the top five responses.

63%

63% of institutions increase pay when an employee earns professional certification. (n=277)

Approximately what percent of the following professions are certified within your organization?

68% Billing & Coding Specialists (n=203)
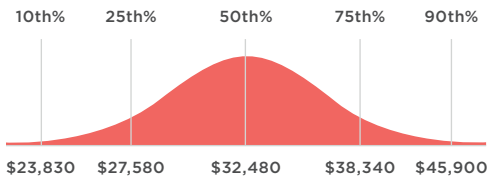
79% EKG Technicians (n=120)

64% Medical Administrative Assistants (n=171)

74% Medical Assistants (n=197)

68% Patient Care Technicians (n=162)

81% Pharmacy Technicians (n=159)

80% Phlebotomists (n=152)

Medical assistant salary range

10th%	25th%	50th%	75th%	90th%

$23,830	$27,580	$32,480	$38,340	$45,900

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

1. Professionalism
2. Verbal Communication
3. Critical Thinking

Most lacking soft skills
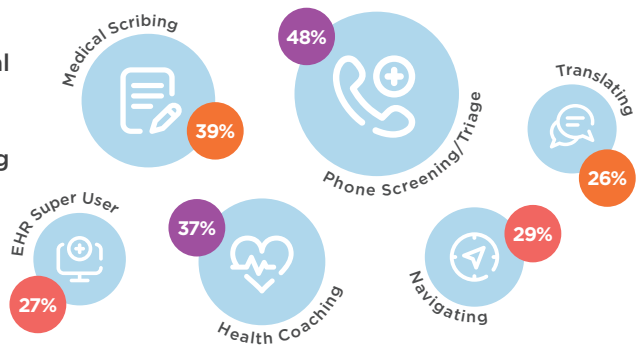
1. Critical Thinking
2. Professionalism
3. Self-Awareness

24%
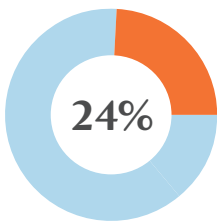
24% of employers said it's difficult to find qualified medical assistants.

Institutions report medical assistants are responsible for performing advanced skills

Medical Scribing 39%

Phone Screening/Triage 48%

Translating 26%
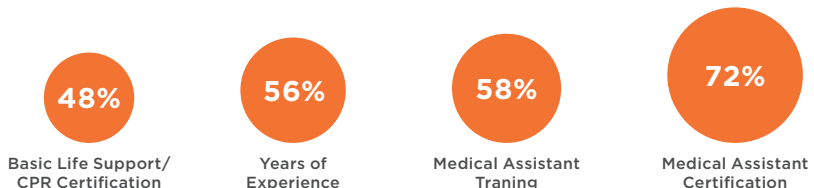
EHR Super User 27%

Health Coaching 37%

Navigating 29%

- Institutions that encourage or require certification
- Employers that report newly certified medical assistants are prepared for their job duties

	2018	2019	2020
90%			89%
80%			
70%			
60%			60%
50%			
0%			

35%
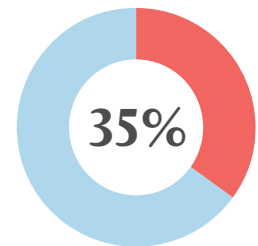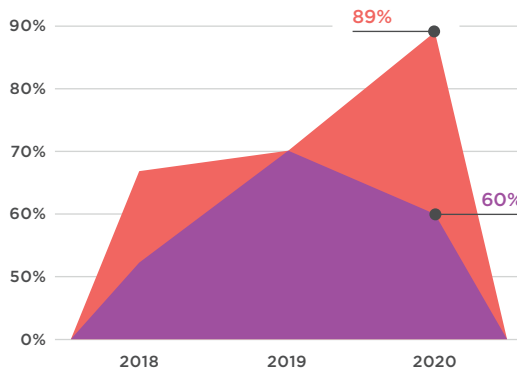
35% of employers believe that MAs have more responsibility this year compared to last.
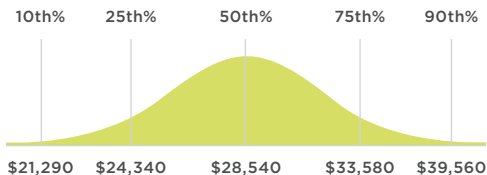
Screening criteria for medical assistant applications

48%
Basic Life Support/ CPR Certification

56%
Years of Experience

58%
Medical Assistant Traning

72%
Medical Assistant Certification

Patient care technician salary range

10th%	25th%	50th%	75th%	90th%

$21,290	$24,340	$28,540	$33,580	$39,560

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

1 Professionalism

2 Verbal Communication

3 Critical Thinking

Most lacking soft skills

1 Critical Thinking

2 Professionalism

3 Dependability

Patient care technicians main job responsibilities include:

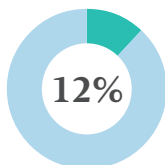**76%** Provide Basic Patient Care

58% Perform Safety Checks

56% Acquire/Administer Patient Care Supplies

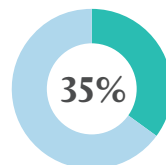**55%** Ensure Cleanliness of Patient Rooms

52% Monitor Vital Signs

12%

12% of employers say it's difficult to find qualified patient care technicians.

The average patient to patient care technician ratio is **6.5 : 1**

35%

35% of employers believe that patient care technicians have more responsibility this year compared to last.

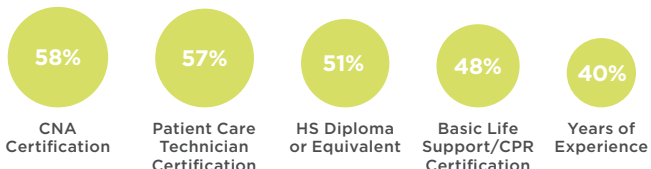## Institutions with formal training programs for patient care technicians

46%

Types of institutional training programs

29%	24%	39%	8%
Apprenticeship Programs	Partnerships with Schools	Internal Training Programs	Fellowship Programs

78% of institutions encourage/require certification.

62% of employers report newly certified patient care technicians are prepared for their job duties.

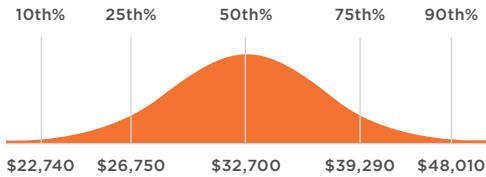## Screening criteria for patient care technician applications

58%	57%	51%	48%	40%
CNA Certification	Patient Care Technician Certification	HS Diploma or Equivalent	Basic Life Support/CPR Certification	Years of Experience

Pharmacy Technician

n=159

Pharmacy technician salary range

10th%	25th%	50th%	75th%	90th%
$22,740	$26,750	$32,700	$39,290	$48,010

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

1. Critical Thinking
2. Professionalism
3. Verbal Communication

Most lacking soft skills

1. Critical Thinking
2. Professionalism
3. Verbal Communication

Screening criteria for pharmacy technician applications

- **55%** State Licensure
- **81%** Certification (CPhT)
- **40%** HS Diploma or GED
- **43%** Years of Experience
- **50%** Completed Program
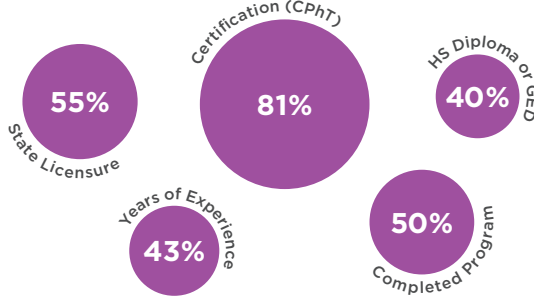
Pharmacy technicians have a number of responsibilities, often requiring advanced skills.

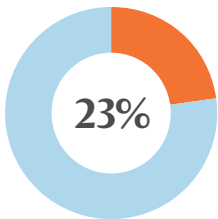- **70%** Management of Inventory
- **69%** Prescription Processing
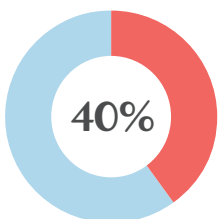- **63%** Prescription Dispensing
- **59%** Technician Product Verification
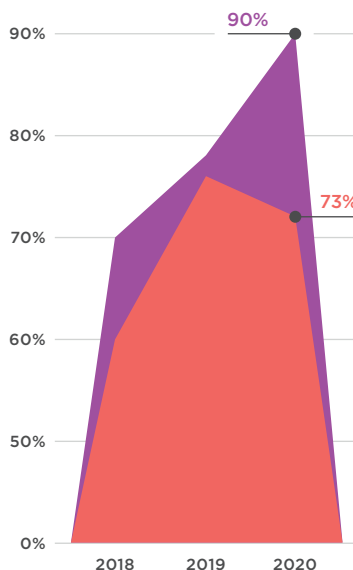- **56%** Calculation & Measurement of Medication

23%

23% of employers said it's difficult to find qualified pharmacy technicians.

40%

40% of employers report that pharmacy technicians have more responsibility this year compared to last.

- Institutions that encourage or require certification
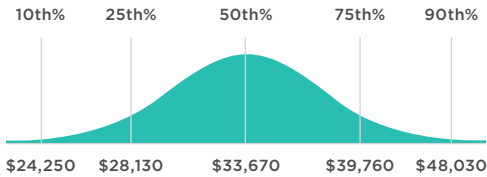- Employers that report newly certified medical assistants are prepared for their job duties

	2018	2019	2020
90%			90%
80%			
70%			73%
60%			
50%			
0%			

Phlebotomy Technician

Phlebotomy technician salary range

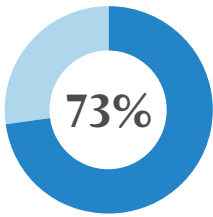| 10th%	25th%	50th%	75th%	90th%
$24,250	$28,130	$33,670	$39,760	$48,030

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

1. Professionalism
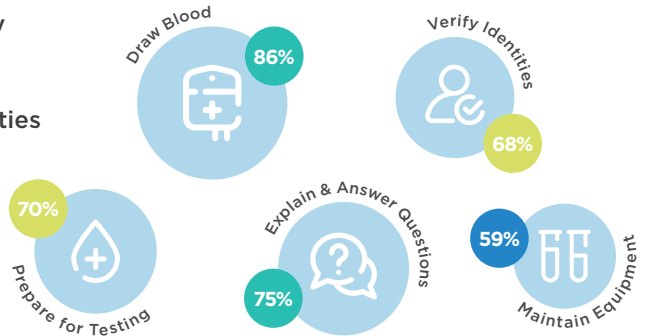2. Dependability
3. Verbal Communication

Most lacking soft skills

1. Verbal Communication
2. Dependability
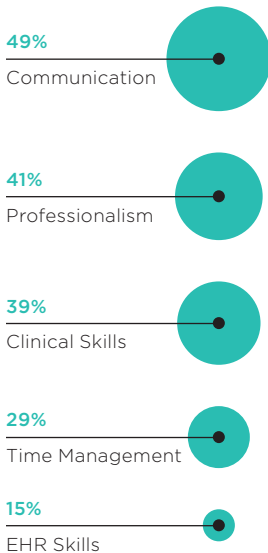3. Critical Thinking

73%

73% of employers report that newly certified phlebotomy technicians are prepared to do their job duties.

Phlebotomy technicians main job responsibilities

- Draw Blood — 86%
- Verify Identities — 68%
- Prepare for Testing — 70%
- Explain & Answer Questions — 75%
- Maintain Equipment — 59%

Skills newly certified phlebotomy techs lack *(n=41)*

- 49% Communication
- 41% Professionalism
- 39% Clinical Skills
- 29% Time Management
- 15% EHR Skills

The average phlebotomist technician performs **28 sticks** a day.

93% of institutions encourage/require certification.

80% of employers report that their phlebotomy techs are certified.

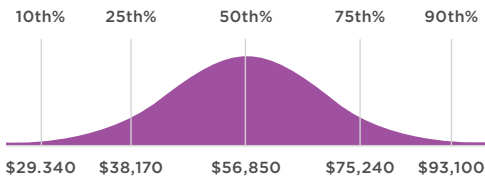## Screening criteria for phlebotomy applications

- 81% Phlebotomy Certification
- 55% Completion of Accredited Phlebotomy Training
- 53% Years of Experience
- 51% HS Diploma or Equivalent

EKG Technician

EKG technician salary range

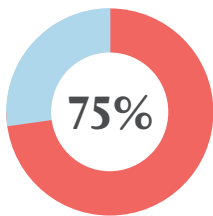| 10th%	25th%	50th%	75th%	90th%
$29.340	$38,170	$56,850	$75,240	$93,100

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

1. Professionalism
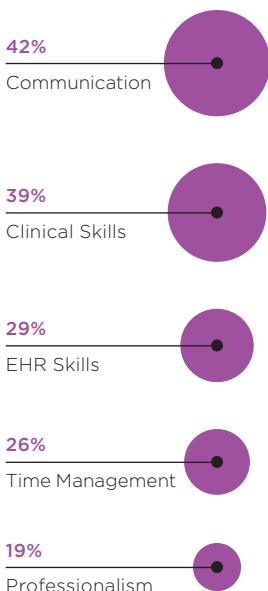2. Dependability
3. Verbal Communication

Most lacking soft skills

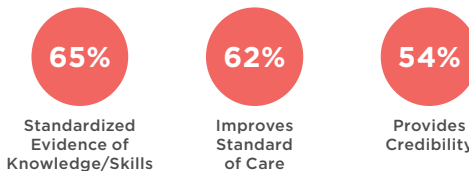1. Critical Thinking
2. Professionalism
3. Verbal Communication

75%

75% of employers report that newly certified EKG technicians are prepared to do their job duties.

87% of institutions encourage or require certification.

79% of employers report that their EKG techs are certified.

Why is professional certification important for EKG technicians?

65% Standardized Evidence of Knowledge/Skills

62% Improves Standard of Care

54% Provides Credibility

The average EKG technician runs **13 tests** a day.
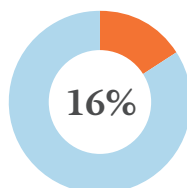
Top 3 tasks EKG technicians are responsible for:

Set Up & Administer EKGs
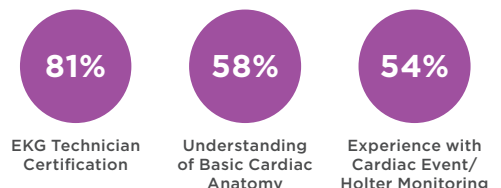
Prepare Patients for Holter or Ambulatory Monitoring

Set Up & Administer Stress Tests

Skills newly certified EKG techs lack *(n=31)*

42% Communication

39% Clinical Skills

29% EHR Skills

26% Time Management

19% Professionalism

16%

16% of employers said it's difficult to find qualified EKG technicians.

Screening criteria for EKG technician applications

81% EKG Technician Certification
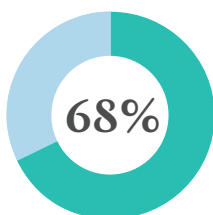
58% Understanding of Basic Cardiac Anatomy

54% Experience with Cardiac Event/ Holter Monitoring

Billing & Coding Specialist n=203

Billing & coding specialist salary range
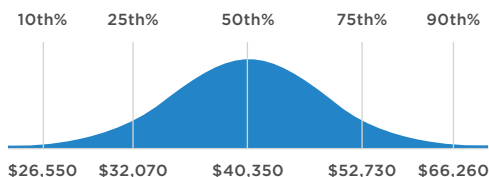
10th%	25th%	50th%	75th%	90th%
$26,550	$32,070	$40,350	$52,730	$66,260

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

1. Professionalism
2. Dependability
3. Critical Thinking

Most lacking soft skills

1. Critical Thinking
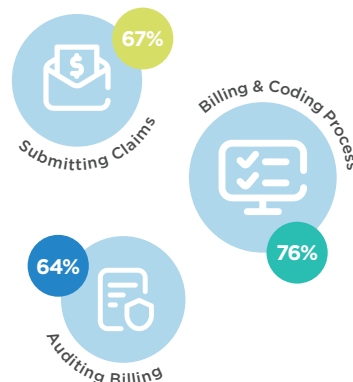2. Professionalism
3. Dependability

68%

68% of employers report that newly certified billing & coding specialists are prepared to do their jobs.
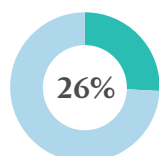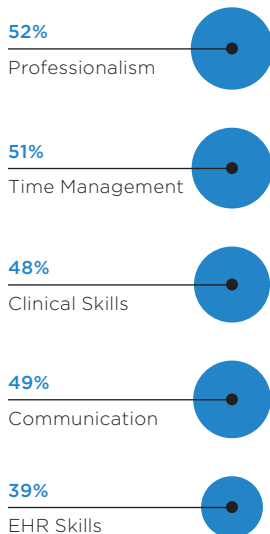
Institutions that require or encourage certification

90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
0%

2018 2019 2020

83%
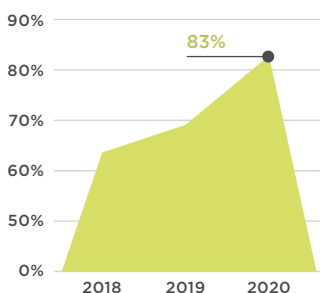
68% of employers report that their billing & coding specialists are certified.

Top 3 tasks billing & coding specialists are responsible for:

67% Submitting Claims

**76%** Billing & Coding Process

64% Auditing Billing

Skills newly certified billing & coding specialist lack *(n=67)*

52% Professionalism

51% Time Management

48% Clinical Skills

49% Communication

39% EHR Skills

26%

26% of employers said it's difficult to find qualified billing & coding specialists.

64%
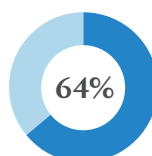
64% of billing & coding specialists are able to reduce payment delays & obtain maximum reimbursement from insurers

31%
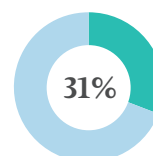
31% of employers report that billing & coding specialists have more responsibility this year over last.

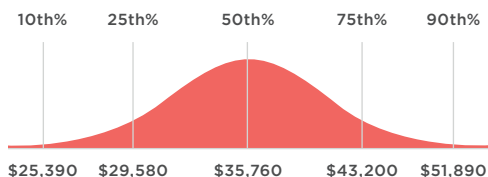## Screening criteria for billing & coding specialist applications

71% Knowledge of Billing Terms

65% Billing & Coding Specialist Certification

60% Years of Experience

Medical Administrative Assistant

Medical administrative assistant technician salary range

10th%	25th%	50th%	75th%	90th%
$25,390	$29,580	$35,760	$43,200	$51,890

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most important soft skills

1. Professionalism
2. Dependability
3. Verbal Communication

Most lacking soft skills

1. Critical Thinking
2. Professionalism
3. Verbal Communication

67%
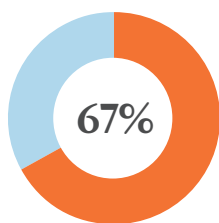
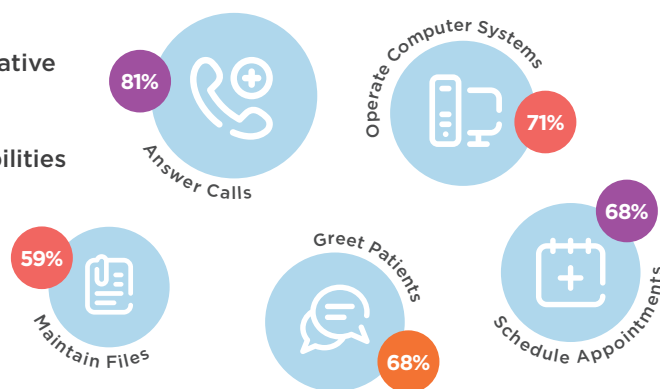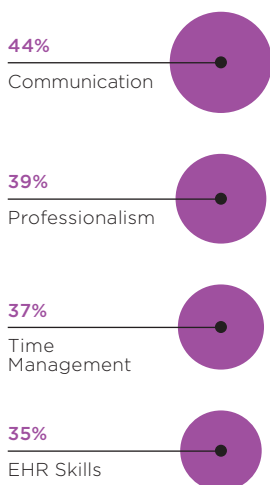**67% of employers** report that newly certified medical administrative assistants are prepared to do their jobs.

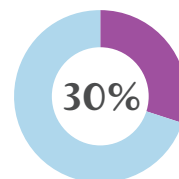## Medical administrative assistant main job responsibilities

- Answer Calls — 81%
- Operate Computer Systems — 71%
- Maintain Files — 59%
- Greet Patients — 68%
- Schedule Appointments — 68%

Skills newly certified medical administrative assistants lack *(n=70)*

- 44% Communication
- 39% Professionalism
- 37% Time Management
- 35% EHR Skills

75% of institutions encourage or require certification.

64% of employers report that their medical administrative assistants are certified.

30%

30% of employers believe that medical administrative assistants have more responsibility this year compared to last.

Screening criteria for medical administrative assistant applications

62%	55%	55%	48%	46%
HS Diploma or Equivalent	MA Assistant Certification	Customer Service Experience	Proficiency in MS Office	Years of Experience

Research Methodology

A third-party research firm conducted the research within the 2020 Industry Outlook. The survey was structured to assess the opinions of employers concerning the professional outlook for billing and coding specialists, EKG technicians, medical administrative assistants, medical assistants, patient care technicians, pharmacy technicians and phlebotomists. This survey was in market December 31, 2019 through January 9, 2020, and evaluated the opinions of 277 employers, of which 12 (1.02%) were current NHA customers.

References

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). Occupational Outlook Handbook. Retrieved on February 12, 2020 from https://www.bls.gov/ooh/.

National Healthcareer Association (2020). 2020 Industry Outlook.

About NHA

Since 1989, NHA has been partnering with allied health education programs, organizations, and employers across the nation to award more than 900,000 allied health certifications. The organization offers eight nationally accredited exams, certification preparation and study materials, two specialty certificate programs, industry-leading outcomes-based data analytics, as well as ongoing professional development and continuing education. For more information, visit www.nhanow.com.

NHA is a division of Assessment Technologies Institute, LLC, a leader in providing technology based educational, assessment, testing and certification solutions for healthcare and other vocational fields.