



# HEALTHCARE CAREER PATHS



# INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Ready Healthcare Career Pathways Book aims to inform, educate, and motivate aspiring scholars who are looking to pursue a career in the healthcare industry using their credentials. It is a comprehensive guide that highlights the various pathways available in the field.

This book is tailored to help scholars understand the educational requirements, skills, and traits necessary to thrive in various healthcare roles - including Certified Medical Assistant, Emergency Medical Technician, Pharmacy Technician, and more. Whether you are a seasoned healthcare professional seeking career advancement or a newcomer looking to enter the industry, our careers pathway book offers a clear path to professional goals.

Overall, the Virginia Ready Healthcare Career Pathways Book is an invaluable resource for scholars who have earned or will earn their healthcare credential.

**“Healthcare is not a profession; it’s a calling to make a positive impact on others’ lives.”**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CERTIFIED MEDICAL ASSISTANT	1
CERTIFIED NURSE AIDE	2
EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN	3
PATIENT CARE TECHNICIAN	4
PHARMACY TECHNICIAN	5
<b>ADVANCED HEALTHCARE CAREER PATHS</b>	<b>6</b>
LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE	7
REGISTERED NURSE	8
PARAMEDIC	9
PHARMACIST	10

# CERTIFIED MEDICAL ASSISTANT

## CAREER PATHWAY

Certified medical assistants play an essential role in the healthcare industry by working alongside doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. Their duties range from clinical responsibilities to administrative tasks and differ based on the workplace setting. These tasks include taking patient medical histories and records, measuring vital signs (including blood pressure, temperature, and weight), aiding doctors during patient exams, scheduling patient appointments, and preparing laboratory samples for testing.

**Skillset for Certified Medical Assistant:** Communication, time management, flexibility, ethical and responsible nature, and strong interpersonal skills.



### Earn a High School Diploma or Equivalent

The minimum requirement to become a certified medical assistant is to receive a diploma or equivalent and be 18 years of age.



### Gain Relevant Experience

Many medical assistant training programs require a certain amount of clinical experience to be completed as part of your training program.



### Seek Employment or Further Education

Pursue an education to become an LPN or find job opportunities near you.



### Enroll in a Medical Assistant Program

Most employers prefer certified medical assistant applicants who have completed a formal training program. To be certified, candidates need to have completed post-secondary education in a medical assistant training program.



### Pass the Exam & Get Certified

There are several options available for obtaining certification as a medical assistant. One of the most popular medical assistant certifications is the Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) designation offered by the National Healthcareer Association (NHA).



# CERTIFIED NURSE AIDE

## CAREER PATHWAY

A Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) or nurse aide provides basic care to patients under the supervision of licensed nursing staff. Among their various roles, they monitor patients' health status, and aid in feeding, bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting, and administering necessary treatments while working in a healthcare or nursing facility. In Virginia, there are also Certified Nursing Aids (ACNAs) who have received additional training to perform complex patient care skills such as phlebotomy, point-of-care testing, scans, EKGs, and catheter removal.

*Tip: A Certified Nurse Aide role is very similar to a Patient Care Technician and differs slightly in responsibilities depending on the employer. Make sure to check out the Certified Nurse Aide pathway to compare your options!*

**Skillset for Certified Nurses Aide:** Strong written and verbal skills, consistency, record-keeping, knowledge of medical terms, and interpersonal skills.



### ● Earn a High School Diploma or Equivalent

The minimum requirement to become a certified nurse aide is to receive your diploma or equivalent and be 18 years of age.



### ● Pass the Virginia-state competency exam

To ensure that you will be eligible for certification, students must make sure they enroll in a Virginia-approved CNA training program. Approved programs consist of the minimum required training hours for students to take the certification examination and be placed on the state's CNA registry.



### ● Seek Employment or Further Education

Pursue an education to become a licensed practical nurse or find job opportunities near you.



### ● Maintain CNA Certification

A certified nursing assistant (CNA) license lasts for two years in most states. During this time, a certain number of continuing education must be completed in order to renew the certification. In Virginia, to keep the certification active, completion of at least 3 hours of continuing education is required.



### ● Complete a Virginia-approved CNA Program

Depending on the student's schedule, there are CNA programs that are longer, more flexible to accommodate your schedule. The advantage of CNA programs is that they generally take just 4-12 weeks to finish.

# EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN

## CAREER PATHWAY

Emergency Medical Technicians are professionals trained to handle medical and trauma-related emergencies. They operate ambulances to transport patients to medical facilities, evaluate and treat life-threatening conditions, control bleeding, and monitor vital signs. Advanced Emergency Medical Technicians (AEMTs) have advanced training and schooling and can administer limited pharmacological interventions.

**Skillset for Emergency Medical Technician:** Level-headed in stressful situations, critical-thinking skills, compassionate, and strong interpersonal skills.



### Earn a High School Diploma or Equivalent

Many employers require aspiring EMTs to have at least a high school diploma or a GED certificate.



### Complete an EMT Program

Pursuing an EMT certification program is a crucial step in advancing emergency medical knowledge and skills, and it's important to complete an accredited program after obtaining the CPR certification.



### [Level Up to AEMT](#) or Seek Employment

[Pursue additional training to become an AEMT](#) or find job opportunities near you.



### Become CPR Certified

EMT training programs often require a CPR certification. The American Red Cross and the American Heart Association offer in-person and online CPR courses covering one-person and two-person team CPR, hands-only CPR, rescue breaths, and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED).



### Get a EMT state License

Once a student has passed both tests, they must apply for a state license to work, undergo a background check, and verify their certification from the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT).

# PATIENT CARE TECHNICIAN

## CAREER PATHWAY

Patient Care Technicians are essential in providing care to patients in medical facilities. Their duties and responsibilities include:

- monitoring patients' health,
- administering medication,
- offering emotional support,
- providing guidance to patients and their families,
- checking patients' blood pressure, heartbeat, and pulse regularly,

*Tip: A Certified Nurse Aide role is very similar to a Patient Care Technician and differs slightly in responsibilities depending on the employer. Make sure to check out the Certified Nurse Aide pathway to compare your options!*

**Skillset for Patient Care Technician:** Excellent communication skills, empathy, attention to detail, physical dexterity, stress management, and strong work ethic.



### ● Earn a High School Diploma or Equivalent

The minimum requirement to become a patient care technician is to receive your diploma or equivalent and be 18 years of age.



### ● Take Required Courses

The training program will include courses that teach you all about the skills you will need to work as a PCT. The courses may cover topics such as phlebotomy, first aid, wound care, CPR, catheterization, ECG administration, and dialysis equipment.



### ● Obtain a Patient Care Technician Certification

Upon completing the program, the student will need to pass the Certified Patient Care Technician/Assistant (CPCT/A) certification exam.



### ● Complete a PTC/A Training Program

One can complete a patient care technician training program at a community college, vocational school, or technical school. During the program, one will learn medical terminology, anatomy and physiology, pharmacology, and more.

# PHARMACY TECHNICIAN

## CAREER PATHWAY

Pharmacy technicians are responsible for carrying out various operations within the pharmacy including:

- receiving and verifying prescription orders
- filling orders by measuring, compounding (mixing), counting, and labeling medications,
- preparing intravenous solutions,
- managing the inventory of medication by ordering, stocking, and packaging

**Skillset for Pharmacy Technician:** Computer knowledge, strong mathematical and science skills, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, organizational skills, and customer service skills.



### Earn a High School Diploma or Equivalent

The minimum requirement to become a pharmacy technician is to receive your diploma or equivalent and be 18 years of age.



### Complete Required Courses

Pharmacy technician programs provide a greater depth of study in the pharmaceutical sciences and management and customer service, as well as pharmaceutical math, drug law, and drug classification.



### Seek Employment or Further Education

Pursue an education to become a pharmacist or find job opportunities near you.



### Pass Exam & Get Certified

Prepare for the Pharmacy Technician Certification Exam (PTCE) or the National Healthcareer Association (NHA) Exam and meet Virginia's license standards for pharmacy technicians.



### Attend an Accredited Pharmacy Technician Training Program

Attend an accredited school that supports a pharmacy technician program. Depending on the route you choose, it can take up to two years to complete the program.





# ADVANCED HEALTHCARE CAREER PATHS

# LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE

## CAREER PATHWAY

Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) work in collaboration with physicians or registered nurses to provide essential nursing care. Some of their duties may include collecting specimens for laboratory tests, evaluating patients' needs, implementing care plans, and changing dressings. In addition to monitoring vital signs, LPNs may also administer prescribed injections, medications, and IVs in certain situations. In addition to their nursing duties, experienced LPNs may supervise nursing assistants.

**Skillset for Licensed Practical Nurse:** Communication skills, problem-solving skills, critical observation, resilience, and stress management.



### LPN Schooling and Training Requirements

Requirements to becoming a Licensed Practical Nurse include:

- Earning a high school diploma or GED
- Completing a vocational training course
- Passing the National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurses (NCLEX-PN)



### Take One Year of Coursework & Practical Application

LPN programs generally include one year of coursework and practical application at a hospital, vocational technical school or community college. Standard coursework in an LPN program—in addition to supervised clinical practice in patient care—covers the following studies: biology, chemistry, psychology, food and nutrition, physical education, first aid and more.



### Seeking Employment

Before beginning your studies or employment, you may need to pass a background check or basic skills test. LPN education covers theoretical training and various practical skills for nurses.



### Acquire the LPN License

To earn an LPN license, you must pass a state administered nursing examination, called the NCLEX-PN. To qualify to sit for the NCLEX-PN exam, you must first complete a LPN/LVN education program that is approved by your state's Board of Nursing.



### LPN-Accredited School

To become an LPN, you must earn a diploma in practical nursing. Community colleges usually offer these programs, which usually take one year to complete. To find an accredited program, search the National League of Nursing Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation.



# REGISTERED NURSE

## CAREER PATHWAY

Registered Nurses (RNs) work alongside physicians and other healthcare professionals to provide comprehensive care to patients. RNs utilize their extensive knowledge to evaluate and comprehend medical problems, deliver treatments, and make informed decisions regarding patient care. They analyze and respond to patient symptoms, reactions, and progress. In addition, RNs educate patients and their families about health promotion and provide vital emotional and physical support to ensure the patient's overall well-being.

**Skillset for Registered Nurse:** Leadership, compassion, excellent communication, broad knowledge of medical terms, and interpersonal skills.



### Complete Prerequisites for an ADN or a BSN

Whether you choose an associate degree in nursing (ADN) or a bachelor's degree (BSN), you must complete a list of prerequisites. Common prerequisites for nursing school include basic anatomy, physiology, biology, and psychology.



### Pass the NCLEX Exam

You can apply for licensure six weeks before graduating and then register for the NCLEX-RN. This computerized test includes a minimum of 75 questions. You have up to six hours to finish the exam.



### Seek Employment or Further Education

No matter your degree path, be proactive in your nursing career search.



### Find Your Speciality

Consider getting certified in the specialty of your choice or getting additional certifications that might make you more marketable to a prospective employer.



### Earn a BSN or an ADN Degree

A four-year BSN degree offers in-depth education and training in leadership, interpersonal communication, and clinical nursing. A two-year ADN degree covers nursing fundamentals and offers the fastest track to becoming a registered nurse. If you start your nursing career with an ADN, you can earn a BSN later in your career with a RN-to-BSN program.

# PARAMEDIC

## CAREER PATHWAY

Paramedics work with emergency response teams to provide immediate care to patients at the scene, collaborating with medical personnel, law enforcement officers, and firefighters. Their duties range from setting broken limbs to administering IVs, taking vital signs, providing emergency medical assistance such as CPR or bandaging a wound, transporting patients safely in an ambulance, and providing doctors and nurses with a brief overview of the patient's condition when they arrive at the hospital.

**Skillset for Paramedic:** Communication skills, stress management, problem-solving, decision-making, and triage skills.



### Gain Experience as an EMT

Complete EMT training and gain professional experience working as an EMT.



### Complete Paramedic Program as an EMT

Becoming a paramedic requires completing a 1-2 year program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) or a paramedic program or one that complies with the National Emergency Medical Services Education Standards for paramedics. You must have completed the course within the past two years of your test.



### Work as a Paramedic

Skilled paramedics and EMTs are in great demand across the country. The job outlook for paramedics could increase by 11% between 2020 and 2030. To stay active as a paramedic, one must renew their license every two years.



### Apply for NREMT Paramedic Certification and State Licensure

Completion of a state-approved paramedic course and the NREMT exam is needed to become certified. The certification guidelines, such as how many hours one has for paramedic training, depend on your state of residency.



### Enroll in a Paramedic Training Program

Select a paramedic training program to advance your medical knowledge and emergency care skill set. Paramedic training programs may last an additional one or two years and often include clinical fieldwork.



# PHARMACIST

## CAREER PATHWAY

Pharmacists are essential members of patient care teams, providing valuable insights to ensure optimal health outcomes from drug therapy. By working closely with physicians, pharmacists help patients manage chronic illnesses, provide immunizations, and even initiate treatment for certain conditions. In addition, pharmacists educate and counsel patients on various aspects of their disease or condition, including the medications used to treat it. Many pharmacists own or manage pharmacies, which may include responsibilities such as supervising staff and purchasing health-related supplies.

**Skillset for Pharmacist:** Computer knowledge, managerial skills, math and science skills, analytical skills, and customer service skills.

