

Psychiatric Technicians and Aides

Professional Activities

Psychiatric technicians and aides care for people who have mental illness and developmental disabilities. Technicians typically provide therapeutic care. Aides help patients in their daily activities and ensure a safe, clean environment. Others work with patients undergoing rehabilitation for drug and alcohol addiction. The work of psychiatric technicians and aides varies depending on the types of patients they work with.

Psychiatric technicians, sometimes called mental health technicians, typically do the following:

- Observe patients' behavior, listen to their concerns, and record their condition
- Lead patients in therapeutic and recreational activities
- Give medications and other treatments to patients, following instructions from doctors and other medical professionals
- Help with admitting and discharging patients
- Monitor patients' vital signs, such as their blood pressure
- Help patients with activities of daily living, including eating and bathing
- Restrain patients who may become physically violent

Psychiatric aides typically do the following:

- Monitor patients' behavior and location in a mental healthcare facility
- Help patients with their daily living activities, such as bathing or dressing
- Serve meals and help patients eat
- Keep facilities clean by doing tasks such as changing bed linens
- Participate in group activities, such as playing sports or going on field trips
- Help transport patients within a hospital or residential care facility
- Restrain patients who may become physically violent

Psychiatric technicians and aides work as part of a medical team, under the direction of physicians and alongside other healthcare professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, social workers, counselors, and therapists. Because they have such close contact with patients, psychiatric technicians and aides can have a great deal of influence on patients' outlook and treatment. Psychiatric technicians and aides may work full time or part time. Because hospitals and residential facilities are open at all hours, many psychiatric technicians and aides work nights, weekends, and holidays.

Educational Requirements

Psychiatric technicians typically enter the occupation with a postsecondary certificate. Programs in psychiatric or mental health technology are commonly offered by community colleges and technical schools. Psychiatric technician receive on-the-job-training.

Psychiatric technician programs include courses in biology, psychology, and counseling. The programs also may include supervised work experience or cooperative programs, in which students gain academic credit for structured work experience. Programs for psychiatric technicians range in length from 1 semester to 2 years, and they may award a certificate or an associate's degree.

Aides need at least a high school diploma or equivalent. Postsecondary courses in psychology or mental health technology may be helpful. Aides receive on-the-job training as well.

Training

Psychiatric technicians and aides typically participate in a short period of on-the-job training before they can work without direct supervision. Training may include working with patients while under the close supervision of an experienced technician or aide. Technicians and aides may also attend workshops, lectures, or in-service training.

Licenses, Certifications, and Registrations

In 2013, four states Arkansas, California, Colorado, and Kansas required licensure of psychiatric technicians. Although specific requirements vary, states usually require psychiatric technicians to complete an accredited education program, pass an exam, and pay a fee to be licensed. The American Association of Psychiatric Technicians offers four levels of certification for psychiatric technicians. The certifications allow technicians to show a high level of professional competency. Requirements vary by certification. Psychiatric aides are not required to be licensed.

Academic Programs

[Elgin Community College](#)

Employment/Salary Outlook

More psychiatric technicians and aides will be needed in residential treatment facilities and in outpatient care centers for people with developmental disabilities, mental illness, and substance abuse problems. There is a long-term trend toward treating psychiatric patients in community-based settings rather than in hospitals. These settings allow patients greater independence, and they are often more cost-effective. In addition, the aging prison population has increased the need for psychiatric technicians and aides in correctional facilities. Federal health legislation will expand the number of patients who have access to health insurance, increasing patient access to medical care. Federal health insurance reform will expand coverage of mental health disorders to millions of people, and more technicians and aides will be needed to provide mental health services.

State and National Wages (Psychiatric Technicians)

Location	Pay Period	2021		
		Low	Median	High
United States	Hourly	\$12.97	\$17.58	\$27.10
	Annual	\$26,980	\$36,570	\$56,380
Illinois	Hourly	\$14.15	\$18.11	\$23.05
	Annual	\$29,430	\$37,670	\$47,940

State and National Trends (Psychiatric Technicians)

United States	Employment		Percent Change	Projected Annual Job ¹
	2021	2031		
Psychiatric Technicians	98,000	108,600	11%	9,900
Illinois	Employment		Percent Change	Projected Annual Job ¹
	2020	2030		
Psychiatric Technicians	5,340	5,690	7%	420

¹Projected Annual Job Openings refers to the average annual job openings due to growth and net replacement.

State and National Wages (Psychiatric Aides)

Location	Pay Period	2021		
		Low	Median	High
United States	Hourly	\$11.12	\$14.44	\$22.80
	Annual	\$23,120	\$30,260	\$48,140
Illinois	Hourly	13.07	\$14.44	22.80
	Annual	\$27,180	\$30,040	\$47,430

State and National Trends (Psychiatric Aides)

United States	Employment		Percent Change	Projected Annual Job ¹
	2021	2031		
Psychiatric Aides	41,000	42,900	5%	6,700
Illinois	Employment		Percent Change	Projected Annual Job ¹
	2020	2030		
Psychiatric Aides	220	220	0%	30

¹Projected Annual Job Openings refers to the average annual job openings due to growth and net replacement.

Professional Organizations

American Association of Psychiatric Technicians (psychtechs.org)

References

Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
(<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/psychiatric-technicians-and-aides.htm>)

O*NET OnLine (<http://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/29-2053.00> and
<http://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/31-1013.00>)

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