



Understanding the Local Labor Market

Promising Career Pathways In North Carolina's High Country*

Focus: Health Care



Understanding the Local Labor Market: Promising Career Pathways In North Carolina's High Country is intended as a useful resource for workforce professionals who help jobseekers make informed decisions about careers and training opportunities. Featured industries are selected on the basis of industry growth, wages and benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

*The High Country workforce region includes Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey Counties.

What do workers in the health care field do? Jobs in the health care field run the gamut from ambulance driver to nuclear medicine technician to veterinarian.

What they all have in common is responsibility; ability to relate to others; good communication skills, especially listening. Most health care jobs require scientific knowledge.

What are wages, benefits, and work conditions? In general, health care positions are indoors, with good working conditions and benefits. A few jobs, such as rescue, may be out of doors. Pay can be excellent depending on skills and experience. Registered nurses are in great demand with starting wages in the High Country region in the \$37,000 range. Physical Therapists begin at about \$55,000; Nursing Assistants and Home Health Aides start at about \$16,000.

What do people in this field like about their jobs? People who work in the health care field generally value relationships and the sense of achievement they get from their work. In some specialties, people enjoy using their investigative skills.

What are related jobs and advancement opportunities? Advancement opportunities are huge: it's possible to start out in one job and train for another or move into other positions through on-the-job training and experience.

Related fields are as varied as those in the direct health care field: health education, making and preparing medical equipment, medical clerk, animal breeding.

How many health care openings are there? According to the NC Employment Security Commission's Labor Market Information Division, positions for Registered Nurses are expected to increase by 35% by 2012; for nursing assistants by 32% and for home health aides by 51%. Almost 500 RN positions are expected to open up by 2012.

How do I find out about health care jobs?

- Go to your local **JobLink Career Center** (see next page or www.ncjoblink.com).
- Many employers use the want ads in **local newspapers**.
- You may find job opportunities at area **job fairs** throughout the year.

How can I become a health care worker? Most health care jobs require training, including certification or licensing,

ranging from six weeks to years. Training is available through occupational degree programs or continuing education courses at community colleges as well as through universities. All three community colleges in our region (Caldwell, Mayland, and Wilkes) offer training programs in the health care field.

What skills and knowledge do I need to work in the health care field?

Skills and knowledge vary. A good source of information about skills, knowledge, task requirements is O*Net OnLine (<http://online.onetcenter.org>). A sampling follows.

For **Certified Nursing Assistants**, key skills include:

- Active Listening** - Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- Critical Thinking** - Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
- Reading Comprehension** - Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
- Service Orientation** - Actively looking for ways to help people.

For **Registered Nurses**: All of the above skills, plus these:

- Time Management** - Managing one's own time and the time of others.
- Writing** - Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
- Instructing** - Teaching others how to do something.
- Monitoring** - Monitoring/assessing performance of yourself and others to make improvements or take corrective action.
- Social Perceptiveness** - Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
- Communication** - Communicating effectively through writing and speaking to convey information effectively.

For **Pharmacy Technicians**: From the above lists: Active Listening, Speaking, Active Learning, Instructing, Reading Comprehension, Time Management, Service Orientation, Writing. In addition, the following skills are needed:

- Mathematics** - Using mathematics to solve problems.
- Learning Strategies** - Selecting and using training/instructional methods appropriate for the situation when learning or teaching new things.

According to CareerBuilder.com, these careers in the health care field are among the top twenty-five jobs for 2006:

Profession	What it Pays	Minimum Training Required	New Jobs Nationwide by 2014
#2. Registered Nurse	\$55,680	Associate degree	703,000
#8. Home Health Aide	\$19,200	Short-term on-the-job training	350,000
#9. Nursing Aide, Orderly, Attendant	\$21,890	Postsecondary vocational certificate	325,000
#11. Personal/Home Care Aide	\$17,560	Short-term on-the-job training	287,000
#21. Medical Assistant	\$25,860	Moderate-term on-the-job training	202,000



More Health Care Jobs on the Cutting Edge: The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) tells us that 15 of the 30 fastest-growing jobs in the United States are in healthcare and they're growing so rapidly that employers are having a hard time finding qualified workers. Some of the fastest growing jobs--where qualified applicants--not employers--have an edge, include: *Physical Therapist, Medical Records Clerk, Veterinary Technician, Dental Assistant, Environmental Science and Protection Technician, Occupational Therapist.*



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 if there will be too many or too few workers for those jobs. The truth is--employment is never a guarantee, even when you prepare for a career in a high growth field.

High Country JobLink Career Centers

Alleghany	115 Atwood St, Sparta 336-372-WORK	Mitchell	100 Kim Thickets Rd, Spruce Pine 828-765-7758 or 828-765-7376
Ashe	626 Ashe Central School Rd, Ste 3, Jefferson 336-982-JOBS	Watauga	207 Winkler's Creek Rd, Boone 828-265-5385
Avery	175 Linville St, Newland 828-737-7230 or 828-733-3901	Wilkes	312 Midtown Plaza, North Wilkesboro 336-651-2540
	Yancey	24 Highway 19E Bypass, Burnsville 828-682-6618	

The High Country Workforce Development Board (HCWDB) advocates the development of an adaptive workforce system by convening relevant stakeholders to respond to the demands of a globally competitive economy. The Board's responsibilities include promoting a coordinated and accountable workforce system in the seven-county High Country region; chartering JobLink Career Centers; and directing federal Workforce Investment Act programs and services. Board members are appointed by each county's Chair of County Commissioners.