

# CTE: THE KEY TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Health Care:

Accounts for  
**17.7%**  
of U.S. GDP<sup>1</sup>

Employs  
**16 million**  
people<sup>2</sup>

Pays about **\$70K** per year<sup>3</sup>

What is the pathway to these fulfilling and essential careers?

**Career and Technical Education!**



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*Connecting Education and Careers.*

# Health Care

**One of the foremost sectors of the U.S. economy, health care:**

- tops the list of key industries in many states
- includes medical and dental practitioners, EMTs and paramedics, pharmacists, health information technicians and many more occupations
- requires high-skilled workers

## What jobs are available in health care?

The health care sector is a vital part of the U.S. economy that supports Americans' well-being across their lifetimes. The sector fared better than many other industries during the 2020 economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and another 2.4 million jobs are expected in health care from 2019 to 2029.<sup>4</sup> Jobs in health care are projected to grow faster than any other occupational group over this time period as the U.S. population ages.<sup>5</sup> Of the top 10 fastest-growing occupations, six of those occupations are in the health care sector, with nurse practitioner positions expected to grow 52% by 2029, followed by occupational therapy assistants, home health and personal care aides, physical therapist assistants, medical and health services managers, and physician assistants.<sup>6</sup> The Health Resources and Services Administration also projects a 7% increase in demand for dental hygienists.<sup>7</sup> In addition, significant shortages are projected for health educators.<sup>8</sup>

Workers in professional and technical health care fields earn on average about \$70,000 per year, much higher than the national median wage. This includes many occupations that require less education than a bachelor's degree, such as respiratory therapists (\$63,000) and occupational therapy assistants (\$61,000).<sup>9</sup> Those employed in health-care-support occupations make less, but these jobs pay better than other occupations open to those with a high school diploma or less.<sup>10</sup>

Many jobs in health care require some postsecondary education, such as a postsecondary certificate, an associate or bachelor's degree, or a doctoral or professional degree. Licensing and certification through organizations like the National Consortium for Health Science Education and the National Healthcareer Association are also critical to career success in this sector. Health care workers demonstrate a wide range of academic, employability and technical skills, including skills in operating medical equipment, recording and tracking patient progress, and addressing safety concerns and patient needs. In addition, there are many non-technical jobs in health care in marketing, sales, management and education. Just a few of the health care careers available include:

- medical records specialists
- radiation therapists
- dental hygienists
- physical therapist assistants
- sonographers
- hospital administrators
- doctors
- nurse educators



## Endnotes

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## How does CTE prepare the health care workforce?

Career and technical education prepares high school, postsecondary and adult students for careers in health care through:

- the national Career Clusters® Framework—including Career Clusters and pathways in health science, IT, and business management and administration—which outlines course progressions that help students explore career options and prepare for college and career success
- CTE courses in surgical technology, EKG technology, phlebotomy, pharmacy technician, medical and nursing assisting, EMT, LPN and more, all integrated with rigorous academics
- work-based learning experiences, such as hospital-based classrooms and clinical internships
- career and technical student organization experiences, such as HOSA—Future Health Professionals industry-based competitions in CPR/First Aid, medical math, physical therapy, nurse assisting and more<sup>11</sup>
- opportunities to earn stackable postsecondary certificates, degrees and industry-recognized certifications; for instance, the U.S. Department of Labor TAACCCT Health eWorkforce Consortium offers several entry-level technician certifications for the health IT field<sup>12</sup>

## What are promising programs in health care?

The **Henderson County High School** Health Science program in Henderson, Kentucky, is one of the largest CTE programs in the commonwealth. The program offers learners three areas of study to choose from: allied health, pre-nursing and medical administrative assistant. To prepare students for college and careers, the program offers dual credit courses leading to up to 16 college credits, industry-recognized credentials and the opportunity to participate in HOSA. In addition, learners can easily transition from high school to Henderson Community College's nursing program if they meet eligibility requirements. All seniors in the program must complete a work-based learning experience with a local health care facility such as Redbanks Skilled Nursing Center, Deaconess Health System, Methodist Hospital or St. Anthony's Hospice. Henderson health care students are excelling with a 100% graduation rate, while 84% of graduates enrolled in postsecondary education and 95% earned an industry-recognized credential. This program won an Advance CTE Excellence in Action Award in 2019.<sup>13,14</sup>

**San Jacinto College** in Houston, Texas, recently expanded its associate degree nursing program to the north campus of the college to increase access for low-income students and learners of color, many of whom struggle with transportation. Administrators say expanding the program to provide equitable access to lucrative, stable nursing careers was a necessary step. While in the program, learners are offered wraparound supports such as program maps, structured scheduling, faster remediation pathways and mandatory advising touchpoints. As a result, the retention rate of learners of color and low-income students exceeds that of nursing students overall. In addition, the program reports that 93% of graduates are employed within one year after graduation, earning an average salary of about \$63,000. San Jacinto College was recently recognized with the 2021 Excellence and Equity in Community College STEM Award from the Siemens Technical Schools Program, a collaboration of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program and the Siemens Foundation.<sup>15</sup>