

CALIFORNIA

OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

PSYCHIATRIC AIDES

CALIFORNIA OCCUPATIONAL GUIDE - NUMBER 567
2002

INTEREST AREA
MEDICAL OR HEALTH



Technicians as the job duties and requirements differ. (See Psychiatric Technicians Guide No. 95.)

The following are the most common general tasks a Psychiatric Aide may perform:

- Assist patients with bathing, dressing, and grooming.
- Serve meals and feed patients.
- Assist patients in becoming adjusted to hospital routine.
- Accompany patients to medical and dental treatments and to recreational activities.
- Encourage patients to participate in social, educational, and recreational activities.
- Maintain records of patients' activities, such as vital signs, eating habits, and daily behavior.
- Measure vital signs and collect specimens.
- Monitor patients to ensure patients remain in assigned areas.
- Aid or restrain patients to prevent injuries.

WHAT DOES A PSYCHIATRIC AIDE DO?

PSYCHIATRIC AIDES work under the direction of psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, and social workers to provide routine nursing and personal care to developmentally disabled, mentally ill, or substance abuse patients. Psychiatric Aides also accompany mental health patients to and from wards to attend medical treatment appointments that develop their potential for self-care and independence.

Psychiatric Aides may also be called Psychiatric Technician Assistants. However, the Psychiatric Aide job title should not be confused with Psychiatric

WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

The following skills, knowledge, and abilities are important for Psychiatric Aides:

- Social Perceptiveness – Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react the way they do.
- Judgment and Decision Making – Weighing the relative costs and benefits of a potential action.
- Active Listening – Listening to what other people are saying and asking questions as appropriate.
- Oral Expression – Communicating information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.

- Problem Sensitivity – Recognizing when something is wrong or likely to go wrong.
- Tact – Sensing what to do or say to maintain good relationships or to avoid offending others.
- Social Service Interest – Having the desire to help people.

WHAT’S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Psychiatric Aides generally work in clean, well-lighted, well-ventilated hospitals, nursing and personal care facilities, or outpatient medical clinics. Working with mentally impaired patients is emotionally demanding and may be stressful, as the workload is often heavy, requiring long periods of standing. Psychiatric Aides may also be exposed to potential hazards from:

- Minor infections and illnesses.
- Lifting that may lead to back injuries.
- Violent outbursts from patients.

However, the risks are reduced when proper safety procedures are followed. Most employers offer safety instructions on the proper procedures for patient lifting and responding to combative outbursts. Also, the potential hazards are offset by the satisfaction gained from serving individuals needing medical assistance.

Union Membership

Union membership participation varies widely. Generally, employees in State and local government facilities and large hospitals are represented by unions, while those in smaller residential care facilities are not.

WHAT’S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department’s Labor Market Information Division:

Estimated number of workers in 1998:	3,400
Estimated number of workers in 2008:	3,900
Projected Growth 1998-2008:	14.7%
Est. openings due to separations by 2008:	500

These figures do not include self-employment.

The projected growth rate of 14.7% indicates that the Psychiatric Aide occupations are expected to grow at about slower than average pace.

Trends

Future employment opportunities will increase, driven by growth in two areas:

- An aging population with an increased susceptibility to Alzheimer’s disease and other dementia-related conditions
- Public acceptance of formal treatment for substance abuse

Cost-cutting efforts aimed at reducing hospitalization and inpatient psychiatric treatment will shift the growth for Psychiatric Aides from hospitals to outpatient community treatment centers.

WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

California Earnings

Psychiatric Aides 2001 Wages		
Hourly wages range from	\$9.41	to \$13.04
Average hourly wage	\$11.21	
Average annual wage	\$23,309	

Source: Occupational Employment Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID.

Wages vary widely depending upon experience, ability, type of employer, and geographical location.

The wages for Psychiatric Technician Assistants employed with the State of California in 2001 range from an entry wage of \$2,116 to the highest wage of \$2,476 per month.

Hours

The majority of psychiatric aides work 40 hours per week. However, the need for 24-hour care offers a variety of shifts and flexible work hours such as part-time, evening and weekend hours that are attractive to students and new entrants to the work world.

Benefits

Benefit packages vary widely; however, State government employers and large hospitals offer sick leave, holidays, vacation, health insurance, and retirement plans.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?

Education and Training

Generally, employers require a high school diploma and a valid Certified Nurse Assistant Certificate. (Refer to the Licensing and Certification guidelines below.) Experience is preferred but some employers are willing to train on the job.

Ideally, high school preparation courses should include health, mathematics (fractions and the metric system), grammar, science, biology, and psychology.

Licensing and Certification

Psychiatric Aide positions generally require a valid Certified Nurse Assistant Certificate issued by the California Department of Health Services. Nurse Assistant certification requires successful completion of a state approved program; 100 hours of supervised clinical training; 50 hours of classroom training; a passing score on the written federal exam; and a criminal background check.

Continuing Education

Certified Nurse Assistant Certificate holders are required to complete 48 hours of in-service training or continuing education and work one day with pay providing nursing care at least every two years to renew certification.

HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

The majority of Psychiatric Aides work in State hospitals and developmental centers, while others work at public and private hospitals, or residential care facilities.

For California State employment opportunities for Psychiatric Technician Assistants visit the California State Personnel Board web site at www.spb.ca.gov.

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Private firms are listed in the yellow pages under hospitals and mental health services. California job openings can be found at various online job-listing systems including CalJOBSSM at www.caljobs.ca.gov or at America's Job Bank at www.ajb.dni.us.

For other occupational and wage information and a listing of the largest employers in any county, visit the Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Web page at www.calmis.ca.gov. Find further job search assistance from your nearest Job Service office www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm or the closest One-Stop site listed on the California WorkNet site, www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop.

WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

There are opportunities to advance to Psychiatric Technician or other health-related occupations such as Licensed Vocational Nurse or Medical Assistant, upon completing additional formal training and acquiring the appropriate California State license for the occupation.

Community colleges and local training providers offer accredited training programs for Psychiatric Technicians. Completing a State-approved training program and obtaining the required State license enhance promotional opportunities at this level.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

California Association of Psychiatric Technicians
2000 "O" Street, Suite 250
Sacramento, CA 95814-5286
(916) 329-9140
(800) 677-2278
Fax: (916) 329-9145
www.psych-health.com

Department of Health Services
Licensing and Certification (Certified Nurse Assistant)
1800 Third Street, Suite 200
P.O. Box 942732
Sacramento, CA 94234-7320
(916) 327-2445
www.dhs.ca.gov/Lnc/index.htm

Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric
Technicians

2535 Capital Oaks Drive, Suite 205

Sacramento, CA 95833

(916) 263-7800

www.bvnpt.ca.gov/lic.htm

Employment Projections by Occupation

www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm

Employment and Wages by Occupation

[www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup$/OES$.htm)

RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

Nursing Aides and Orderlies	No. 29
Psychiatric Technicians	No. 95
Licensed Vocational Nurses	No. 313
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	No. 442
Medical Assistants	No. 513
Human Services Workers	No. 564

OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

SOC (*Standard Occupational Classification*)

Psychiatric Aides 31-1013

O*NET (*Occupational Information Network*)

Psychiatric Aides 31-1013.00

OES (*Occupational Employment Statistics*)

Psychiatric Aides 66014

DOT (*Dictionary of Occupational Titles*)

Psychiatric Aide 355.377-014

Mental-Retardation Aide 355.377-018