

Ophthalmic Professions

Includes:

- Ophthalmic assistant
- Ophthalmic medical technician/technologist

The ophthalmic assistant, ophthalmic technician, and ophthalmic medical technologist are skilled professionals, qualified by didactic and clinical ophthalmic training, who perform ophthalmic procedures under the direction or supervision of a licensed ophthalmologist who is responsible for the performance of the ophthalmic assistant, ophthalmic technician, and ophthalmic medical technologist.



Career Description

The functions of the ophthalmic technician and ophthalmic medical technologist are to assist the ophthalmologist by performing delegable tasks, collecting data, administering treatment ordered by an ophthalmologist, and supervising patients.

The following are duties and tasks that may be delegated by an ophthalmologist, as applicable by state law, to ophthalmic assistants, ophthalmic technicians, and ophthalmic medical technologists.

Ophthalmic Assistants, Ophthalmic Technicians, and Ophthalmic Medical Technologists

1. Obtaining a medical history
2. Performing lensometry
3. Obtaining anatomical and functional ocular measurements of the eye, such as axial length
4. Obtaining functional measurements of the eye, such as visual acuity
5. Testing ocular functions, such as visual fields
6. Administering topical ophthalmic and oral medications
7. Instructing the patient (in personal care and the use of contact lenses)
8. Caring for and maintaining ophthalmic instruments
9. Caring for, maintaining, and sterilizing surgical instruments
10. Adjusting and making minor repairs on spectacles
11. Such other tasks as may be delegated consistent with sound medical practice (eg, use of computerized ophthalmic equipment)

Ophthalmic Technicians and Ophthalmic Medical Technologists

The ophthalmic technician and medical technologist will be expected to perform the duties listed above, at a higher level of expertise. The ophthalmic medical technologist will be expected to exercise considerable clinical skill in the performance of those delegated tasks. The ophthalmic technician and medical technologist may be expected to perform the following additional duties:

12. Performing diagnostic tests
13. Maintaining ophthalmic office equipment
14. Assisting in ophthalmic surgery in the office or hospital
15. Obtaining optical measurements including A-scan
16. Assisting in the fitting of contact lenses
17. Refractometry

Ophthalmic Medical Technologists

The ophthalmic medical technologist will be expected to perform the duties listed above at a higher level of expertise and exercise considerable clinical skill in the performance of those delegated tasks. They may be expected to perform the following additional duties:

18. Performing ophthalmic clinical photography and fluorescein angiography of the eye
19. Administering advanced ocular motility and binocular function tests
20. Performing ocular electrophysiological procedures
21. Performing advanced microbiological procedures
22. Providing supervision and instruction of other ophthalmic personnel and patients
23. Demonstrating advanced general medical knowledge



Employment Characteristics

Ophthalmic assistants and ophthalmic medical technicians and technologists are employed primarily by ophthalmologists, medical institutions, clinics, hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers, or physician groups, in which they may be assigned to an ophthalmologist responsible for their supervision and performance. They may be involved with the patients of an ophthalmologist in any setting for which the ophthalmologist is responsible.



Salary

Salaries vary depending on employer and geographic location. Entry-level salaries range from \$21,500 for ophthalmic assistants to \$39,000 for ophthalmic technicians and \$45,000 for ophthalmic medical technologists. Refer to Section IV, Table 5 of this *Directory* for more information, or see www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary.



Educational Programs

Length. Programs are generally less than 1 year for assistants, 1 year for technicians and 2 years for technologists.

Prerequisites. High school diploma or equivalent for assistants and technicians and two years of undergraduate study for technologists.

Curriculum. Instruction should follow a planned outline, which includes courses in human anatomy and physiology, medical terminology, medical laws and ethics, psychology, ocular anatomy and physiology, ophthalmic optics, microbiology, ophthalmic pharmacology and toxicology, ocular motility, and diseases of the eye. The curriculum also includes diagnostic and treatment procedures, including visual field testing, contact lenses, ophthalmic surgery, and the care and maintenance of ophthalmic instruments and equipment. For technicians and medical technologists, students must also have supervised clinical experience, during which they have opportunities to apply theory to practice through correlated and supervised instruction in clinical practice areas.



Inquiries

Careers and Certification

Inquiries regarding careers, continuing education, and certification criteria should be addressed to:

Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology
(JCAHPO)

2025 Woodlane Drive
St Paul, MN 55125-2998
651 731-2944 or 800 284-3937
E-mail: jcahpo@jcahpo.org

Association of Technical Personnel in Ophthalmology (ATPO)

2025 Woodlane Drive
St Paul, MN 55125-2998
651 731-7233 or 800 482-4858
E-mail: ATPOMembership@jcahpo.org

Program Accreditation

Commission on Accreditation of Ophthalmic Medical Programs
(CoA-OMP)

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