

PSYCHIATRIC/MENTAL HEALTH TECH (MHT)

Psychiatric Technicians are mental health employees who provide hands-on care to people with varying degrees of mental illnesses and/or developmental disabilities. They perform a vital, front-line function in all healthcare settings as they observe, treat and interact with patients -- often more than any other staff.

They carry out doctors' orders, serving as the eyes, ears and hands of the diagnosing professional. They report back on how the treatment is working or any unusual symptoms that need professional attention.

At the entry level, they help patients with personal grooming and other activities of daily living. They also help conduct educational, recreational and therapeutic activities. Often the level is called Psychiatric Aide.

At a higher level, Psychiatric Technicians have more formal training than aides. They take part in both the planning and implementing of patient treatment plans. They may be responsible for admitting and interviewing patients, record-keeping, administering medications or assisting in it, and conducting therapy sessions.

At all levels, Psychiatric Technicians need good observation skills. Important personal characteristics include a stable personality, ability to work well with people and a true motivation to help others.

Median wages(2022) \$17.97 hourly, \$37,380 annual

SKILLS AND DUTIES

Depending on the needs and preferences of the employer, Psychiatric Technicians perform duties -- or assist in their performance -- in one or more of the following areas:

- Basic nursing
- Medication administration
- Documentation
- Patient assessment
- Therapeutic activities

- Treatment plan development
- Addictive disorders
- Treatment plan implementation
- Group process
- Treatment evaluation
- Patient / family education
- Geriatric care

FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL DESCRIPTION

Following is the way the job of Psychiatric Technician is described in the federal government's Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system. This system replaces the federal Dictionary of Occupational Titles. SOC data is available through the user-friendly Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at <http://online.onetcenter.org>

Psychiatric Technician---SOC Code Number 29.2053

- Cares for mentally impaired or emotionally disturbed individuals, following physician instructions and hospital procedures. Monitors patients' physical and emotional well-being and report to medical staff. May participate in rehabilitation and treatment programs, help with personal hygiene and administer oral medications and hypodermic injections.
- Helps patients with their personal hygiene, such as bathing and keeping beds, clothing and living areas clean.
- Administers oral medications and hypodermic injections, following physician's prescriptions and hospital procedures.
- Takes and records measures of patient's general physical condition, such as pulse, temperature, and respiration, to provide daily information.
- Observes patients to detect behavior patterns and reports observations to medical staff.
- Issues medications from dispensary and maintains records in accordance with specified procedures.
- Leads prescribed individual or group therapy sessions as part of specific therapeutic procedures.

- Intervenes to restrain violent or potentially violent or suicidal patients by verbal or physical means as required.
- Completes initial admittance inventory forms for new patients

PRACTICE SETTINGS

Psychiatric Technicians work in a wide variety of environments, including the following:

- Residential treatment programs
- Psychiatric treatment facilities
- General hospital acute psych units
- Institutes for mental disease
- Psychiatric emergency teams
- State developmental centers
- Long-term care facilities
- Substance abuse programs
- Home health care
- State hospitals
- State prisons
- Intermediate care facilities
- Armed forces psychiatric facilities
- Psychiatric health facilities
- County jails
- Social rehabilitation facilities
- Adult residential facilities
- Secured geriatric facilities
- Day treatment programs
- Outpatient mental health clinics
- Psychiatric assessment centers
- Psychiatric crisis units
- Child/Youth psychiatric programs
- Mobile psychiatric emergency teams
- Special school programs
- Residential care homes
- Partial hospitalization programs

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM STATUS

The more highly trained Psychiatric Technicians are often considered “paraprofessionals” while others are described by such terms as “entry-level” staff. Both descriptions contrast with the “professional” status of other interdisciplinary team members such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and registered nurses -- as well as licensed Psychiatric Technicians in those states that license them. But regardless of status, Psychiatric Technicians work side-by-side with professionals as recognized, valuable members of the ID team.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Psychiatric Technicians generally work a 40-hour week. Because patients/clients need care 24 hours a day, scheduled work hours may include nights, weekends and holidays. They spend most of their time on their feet. They are sometimes confronted with violent patients who must be restrained. This may be emotionally draining, but they may also gain satisfaction from assisting those in need.

ADVANCEMENT

Additional training is required for significant advancement. Some become licensed Psychiatric Technicians in states that license them. Others become practical nurses or registered nurses. And many pursue college degrees in nursing, special education, social work, psychology, sociology or related fields.

Certification Exam Information

- Abbreviation: MHTC
- Total Number of questions on exam: 100
- Allotted time for exam: 2 hours
- Modality available: Online, Paper/Pencil
- Live Remote Proctoring Available: Yes

Competencies

- Process & Procedure (13%)

- Psychological Development (56%)
- Pharmacology (17%)
- Medical Office/Patient Care Skills (12%)
- Practice Settings (2%)

Eligibility Requirements

The population eligible to hold an active AMCA certification:

- A. Must be at least 17 years of age.
- B. Must possess a high school diploma (or equivalent) or be in pursuit of a high school diploma (or equivalent).
- C. Agree and adhere to the AMCA Code of Ethic.
- D. Must meet ONE of the following three requirements:

Option 1: Graduate from a training program, related to the exam you are applying for, taken at an AMCA Approved Test Site. Proof of course completion is required, and applicants must pass the exam within one year from the date of training completion.

- **What's Required:** Name of Exam, Test Site Name/School attended, Name of Course Completed, Course Completion Date
- **Fee:** No additional fee required.
- **Options for Testing:** Computer Based with In-person proctor, Paper-based with in-person proctor, Computer based with Live Remote Proctor

Option 2: Graduate from a training program, related to the exam you are applying for, taken at an institution other than an AMCA Approved Test Site. Proof of course completion is required, and applicants must pass the exam within one year from the date of training completion.

- **What's Required:** Institute Name, Name of Course Completed, Course completion date, Proof of Course Completion
- **Fee: \$25.00** Non-Refundable Application Fee
- **Options for Testing:** Computer based with Live Remote Proctor

Option 3: Have a minimum of one-year full-time work experience directly related to the credential. Work experience must be immediately preceding the date of application. Documentation with employer verification is required and will be verified by the AMCA.

- **What's Required:** Employer's Company Name, Employers Address, Employers Contact Information, Proof of Employment; Verification Letter on company letter head signed by employer. The Verification

Letter must include the following information; job title, date of hire, and a description of your daily job duties.

- **Fee:** \$25.00 Non-Refundable Application Fee
- **Options for Testing:** Computer based with Live Remote Proctor

C. Agree and adhere to the Code of Ethics

- **Code of Ethics**
- The AMCA believes in a high code of moral ethics. Should you become certified by the AMCA, you must agree to abide by the following code of ethics:
 - **1.** Be dedicated to your profession. Participate actively in continuing education to enhance your knowledge of your profession.
 - **2.** Practice good judgment and be honest in all professional interactions.
 - **3.** Respect the rights of your clients and be consistently aware of HIPAA laws and how they apply to both you and your client.
 - **4.** Practice empathy towards your clients.
 - **5.** Support and respect state and federal mandates as they apply to your profession.
 - **6.** Report any wrongdoings to the appropriate personnel.

State Regulation

The laws and regulations pertaining to minimum requirements and the allied health industry vary by state. It is highly recommended that test candidates familiarize themselves with their particular state's rules and regulations regarding certification requirements.