



Job Roles and Responsibilities in Canada

Medical
Administrative
Assistants



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Introduction

Medical Administrative assistants or office assistants are uniquely trained to work in any health facility where and administrative assistant is needed. They are trained in medical terminology, conditions, tests and practices. This booklet will introduce the basic roles and responsibilities of the medical administrative assistant as well as information about employment in this field in Manitoba

Description

Medical administrative assistants perform a variety of secretarial and administrative duties. Medical administrative assistants are employed in doctors' offices, hospitals, medical clinics and other medical settings. Medical administrative assistants are classified under the National Occupation Classification (NOC) # 1243.

Possible Job Titles

- Medical secretary
- Ward secretary

Classified Elsewhere

- Medical records clerks
- Medical transcriptionists

Work Environment¹

Medical administrative assistants commonly work in an office environment, usually within doctors' offices, medical clinics and hospitals. Most health offices are open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., but some clinics and offices have evening and occasionally weekend hours. In a hospital client-care unit, shifts may be eight to twelve hours long. Twelve hour shifts may be from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. In some hospital departments, however, there is no clinical secretary on overnight shifts. Most health offices close for an hour for lunch. Coffee breaks average 20 minutes.

¹ Retrieved Nov. 30, 2007 from, www.mb.jobfutures.org



Where They Find Work²:

Office and Community

- Doctor's office
- Walk-in clinic
- Dental offices
- Canadian Red Cross
- Canadian Cancer Society

Clinics

- Diabetic
- Mental Health
- Prenatal/Postpartum
- Laser Surgery Clinics

Alternative/Allied Health-Care Facilities

- Acupuncture
- Reflexology
- Massage Therapy
- Chiropractor

Hospital Departments

- Admitting/Patient (Client Registration)
- Medical Records

² Adapted from: Thompson, D.V. (2005). Administrative and Clinical Procedures for the Health Office Professional. (p.14-15) Toronto, Ontario: Pearson Prentice Hall.



- Emergency Room
- Laboratory
- Pediatrics
- Surgery
- Social Services

Health Care Facilities

- Long-Term Care Facilities (Nursing Homes)
- Seniors' Residence
- Rehabilitative Centres

Language Requirements

Medical administrative assistants should be able to communicate clearly in English to do their job well. It is very important to employers that you have excellent communication skills so you can communicate with them, with your co-workers and with the clients whom you may assist. A high level of writing is also required, along with grammar and editing skills.

It is important to note that language entrance requirements and test requirements vary in different colleges. Contact the colleges to see what is required.

Recommended Canadian Language Benchmark Levels for Medical Administrative Assistants³

Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
7	7	7	8

³ Note: This occupation/training has not been formally benchmarked.



Recommended TOEFL scores⁴

Paper Based	Computer Based	Internet Based
550	213	80

For those individuals where English is an Additional Language (EAL), it is recommended that you take a Canadian Language Benchmark Placement Test to determine your level of English, and to see which English classes are available to you. Contact the Winnipeg English Language Assessment and Referral Centre for an appointment:

Winnipeg English Language Assessment and Referral Centre

400 - 275 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2B3
Phone: 204-943-5387

Skills⁵

Medical administrative assistants need the following skills and abilities:

- An interest in health care
- Able to talk to patients in an understanding way
- Knowledge of medical terminology
- Good organizational and time management skills
- Excellent English communication skills: good spelling, punctuation, grammar as well as spoken English (See language recommendations in the “Job Roles and Responsibilities” package.)
- Able to keep patients’ information confidential

⁴ These are the current TOEFL entrance requirements at some colleges.

⁵ Retrieved Nov. 30, 2007, from www.mb.jobfutures.org



- Able to work together with people
- Able to use office equipment including computers, and able to learn new software
- Able to be flexible and adapt to new or changing requirements



Do you have many of these skills?

Main Duties⁶

Medical administrative assistants perform some or all of the following duties:

Administrative Responsibilities:

- Greet clients (patients)
- Receive and make phone calls, fax and e-mails
- Schedule and confirm medical appointments and receive and communicate messages for medical staff and patients
- Keep the appointment book organized
- Review and validate health cards
- Coordinate consultations, lab and diagnostic tests, and OR bookings
- Decide which patients should see the doctor first (when needed)
- Start client charts, and keep their records current.
- Bill the provincial system
- Provide accounting and bookkeeping, e.g., payroll and managing cash
- Organize business trips/meetings for the physician

⁶ Adapted from: Thompson, D.V. (2005). Administrative and Clinical Procedures for the Health Office Professional. (p.14-15) Toronto, Ontario: Pearson Prentice Hall.



- Manage the physician's schedule (on-call time, time at the Emergency Room, walk-in or urgent-care clinic, meetings or speaking engagements)
- Transcribe
- Order supplies (keeping a record of what supplies have been ordered)
- Set up examination rooms

Clinical Responsibilities:

Medical administrative assistants may *sometimes* carry out the following duties:

- Interview clients to complete insurance forms and fill in history forms/charts
- Take the clients to the examination rooms, and ask them for their reason of visit
- Sanitize and disinfect instruments
- Take weight and vital signs (if trained to do so)
- Prepare infants for examinations (weighing and measuring)
- Educate clients; explain test procedures to clients, and direct them to helpful resources



Do you think you would enjoy doing the work described above?

The Importance of Safety in Canada

Safety in the workplace is very important in Canada. Because it is essential for a Medical administrative assistant to be concise and accurate, **it is expected that you ask questions when you don't understand. DO NOT proceed if you are uncertain!** It is always better to ask when you are unsure.

It is important to know the three basic rights ***all Manitobans*** have in the workplace:



1. **The right to know** about what hazards there are in the workplace and what precautions must be taken to prevent injuries from these hazards.
2. **The right to participate** in safety and health activities in the workplace without fear of any form of discriminatory action such as discipline.
3. **The right to refuse** work that one reasonably believes can be dangerous to oneself or others.

For more information: www.safemanitoba.com

Terms & Conditions⁷

High school graduates who have basic office skills may qualify for an entry-level Medical administrative assistant position. Some Medical administrative assistants work irregular hours when their workplace is open to the public on evenings and weekends. Those who work in hospitals as ward secretaries may be on rotational shifts. Most Medical administrative assistants work full-time (72%). All are salaried employees.

In large organizations, experienced Medical administrative assistants may move into supervisory positions.

Earnings⁸

What salary can you expect? It depends on your experience, where you work and the type of job you will be doing. Usually, hospitals and similar places offer slightly higher salaries than health offices. Below is the salary range in Manitoba:

In Manitoba

\$20,800.00 per annum - starting

\$28,000.00 per annum - average

⁷ Retrieved Nov. 30, 2007, from, www.mb.jobfutures.org

⁸ Information as of March 2008.



\$36,700.00 per annum – high

Average in Canada

Hourly wage: \$16.72

Education/Training

Programs in medical office administration are offered at the following training institutions:

Public

- Red River College
- Akonliiwin Training Centre
- Winnipeg Technical College

Private

- Academy of Learning (Brandon, South, Winnipeg North)
- CDI College, Herzing College
- Robertson College

Employment Requirements

In Manitoba, completion of secondary school is required. Most employers prefer to hire individuals with college training in medical office administration and related areas.

Employment Opportunities

Employment prospects for Medical administrative assistants are expected to be good in the period 2007 to 2011. Employment in Manitoba in 2007 is estimated at 1,210.



This is a relatively large occupational group with a number of job opportunities occurring when workers leave or retire. The increasing use of computerized medical records systems and billing systems in medical offices and clinics may reduce the number of medical secretaries required. However, some employment growth should occur as the demand for medical services increases due to an aging population. Medical administrative assistants with good computer skills will have the best employment prospects.

Professional Associations

Membership in a professional association has many benefits. They help members become involved in the profession; keep them informed of trends and changes within the field, and offer resources, learning materials and continuing education.

There are currently no head offices for professional associations in Winnipeg. Below is the contact information for the association in Canada and internationally:

Association of Administrative Assistants (Canada)

Director Vice-President and Member-at Large Liaison

c/o #423, 10407 – 122 Street

Edmonton, AB T5N 4B8

E-mail: membership@aaa.ca

Web site: www.aaa.ca

International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP)

Phone: (816) 891-6600

E-mail: service@iaap-hq.org

Web site: www.iaap-hq.org



References

Retrieved Nov. 30, 2007, from, *Manitoba Job Futures*, www.mb.jobfutures.org

Thompson, D.V. Administrative and Clinical Procedures for the Health Office Professional. Toronto, Ontario: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005.

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