

Behavioral Health Careers for High School Graduates

Psychiatric Technician



Also known as Mental Health Technician and Mental Health Worker

Job Description

A Psychiatric Technician supports patients with mental health or behavioral conditions under the supervision of a nurse. Their role focuses on safety, daily functioning, and emotional support. Common responsibilities include:

- Monitoring patients' behavior and emotional status.
- Recording observations and reporting changes in behavior to clinical staff.
- Maintaining a safe and structured environment.
- Assisting with daily living activities (e.g., hygiene, meals).
- Monitoring patients' vital signs, such as their blood pressure and body temperature.
- Transporting patients or accompanying them to appointments or activities.
- Supporting therapeutic activities and de-escalation techniques.
- Assisting in crisis interventions as needed, which can include restraining patients who are or may become physically violent.

Work Environment

Psychiatric Technicians work primarily in healthcare settings, such as psychiatric hospitals or residential mental health facilities. Work schedules may include nights, weekends, or holidays in facilities that are open 24 hours.

Qualifications

- High school, GED, or equivalent required.
- Psychology, Nursing, or other healthcare-related courses preferred.
- Prior healthcare experience or Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) preferred.
- American Heart Association Basic Life Support Certification for Healthcare Providers upon hire.

Job Market

Per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 median pay was \$42,200 per year or \$20.29 per hour, and the job outlook is projected to grow by 13% within the next 10 years. Per Indeed.com, Psychiatric Technicians in San Diego, CA typically earn between \$25 and \$29 per hour.

Psychiatric Technicians may continue their education and may, for instance, become a Registered Nurse working in psychiatry, or another mental health or medical profession.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Psychiatric technicians and aides*. Date accessed: April 2025.

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Peer Support Specialist



Job Description

A Peer Support Specialist is someone with lived experience in overcoming mental health or challenges, either as a recipient of services or as a family member or caregiver of someone who has received services. They receive specialized training to offer support and assistance to others facing similar struggles.

Work Environment

Peer Support Specialists work in hospitals, clinics, community organizations and government agencies.

Qualifications

- High school, GED, or equivalent required.
- Identify as having lived experience with recovery from a mental health or substance use condition, either as a person who received services or as a parent, caregiver, or family member of a person who has received services.
- 80-Hour Certified Medi-Cal Peer Support Training.
- California Peer Support Specialist Certification exam.
- Experience in social services preferred.

Job Market

With a shortage of 8,000 workers in San Diego County's behavioral healthcare field, certified peer support specialists are in high demand. Per Indeed.com, Peer Support Specialists in San Diego, CA typically earn between \$25 and \$29 per hour.

Local Programs

San Diego Workforce Partnership Peer Support Training Project offers a training program to become certified as a Peer Support Specialist at no cost to you. **Applications will be open September 15 through October 3.**

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Registered Behavioral Technician



Also known as ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) Therapist

Job Description

A Registered Behavioral Technician works with individuals, typically children, diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or other developmental/behavioral conditions. Using principles of Applied Behavior Analysis, they help clients improve social, communication, and daily living skills. Common responsibilities include:

- Implementing behavior intervention plans created by a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst.
- Teaching skills like communication, play, social interaction, and self-care.
- Collecting data on behavior and progress toward goals.
- Assisting in crisis situations and following behavior management protocols.
- Communicating with supervisors, caregivers, and sometimes schools or other providers.

Work Environment

Registered Behavioral Technicians provide one-on-one therapy in homes, clinics, schools, or community settings. Driving is often required as care is often provided in the client's home.

Qualifications

- High school, GED, or equivalent required.
- Valid Driver's License, car insurance, and reliable form of transportation.
- Experience working with children (Child Development, Camp Counselor, Paraprofessional, Behavioral Interventionist, ABA Therapist, Behavior Technician) preferred.
- Associate or bachelor's degree in ABA, Psychology, Education, or related field is a plus.
- Ability to pass the Registered Behavior Technician Exam. This may be paid for by your employer.

Job Market

Per Indeed.com, Registered Behavior Technicians in San Diego, CA typically earn between \$19 and \$26 per hour. Registered Behavior Technicians may continue their education and may, for instance, become a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), or another psychology or related profession.

Behavior technician salary in San Diego, CA. <https://www.indeed.com/career/behaviortechnician/salaries/SanDiego--CA>. Date accessed: May 2025

Behavioral Health Careers for High School Graduates

Substance Use Counselor



Job Description

Substance use counselors provide professional support to individuals struggling with substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders. Substance use counselors work with clients individually and in group sessions. They teach clients how to cope with stress and life's problems in ways that help them recover, help clients rebuild professional relationships and, if necessary, reestablish their career, and help clients improve their personal relationships.

Work Environment

Substance use counselors work in various settings, including mental health and community health centers, residential treatment centers, hospitals and rehabilitation facilities, prisons and correctional facilities, and private practices.

Qualifications

- High school, GED, or equivalent required.
- Certification from a California State Substance Use Disorders Services certifying agency.
- The Department of Health Care Services recognizes the following accredited organizations to register and certify alcohol and other drug counselors in California:
 - California Association for Alcohol and Drug Educators (CAADE)
 - California Association of DUI Treatment Programs (CADTP)
 - California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals (CCAPP)

Job Market

Per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 median pay was \$59,190 per year or \$28.46 per hour, and the job outlook is projected to grow by 19% between 2023-2033. Per Indeed.com, Substance Use Counselors in San Diego, CA typically earn between \$21 and \$35 per hour.

Local Programs

- San Diego Workforce Partnership
 - **Full Tuition Coverage** at UCSD, Palomar College or City College
- San Diego City College: Alcohol and Other Drug Studies
- Palomar College: Alcohol and Other Drug Studies Certificate and Associate Program
- UC San Diego Extended Studies' Professional Certificate Program in Substance Use Disorder Counseling

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Pharmacy Technician



Job Description

A Pharmacy Technician is a health care provider who performs pharmacy-related functions, generally working under the direct supervision of a licensed pharmacist. A Pharmacy Technician assists the pharmacist with mixing and packaging prescriptions, maintaining client records, and referring clients to the pharmacist for counseling assistance.

Work Environment

Pharmacy Technicians work in retail pharmacies, hospital pharmacies, or mail-order pharmacies.

Qualifications

- High school, GED, or equivalent required.
- California Board of Pharmacy Certification.
- Certification by National Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (CPhT).

Job Market

Per Indeed.com, Pharmacy Technicians in San Diego, CA typically earn between \$18 and \$30 per hour. Employment of pharmacy technicians is projected to grow 7% from 2023 to 2033.

Local Programs

- Escondido Adult School
 - A certificate of completion and a list of competencies is awarded upon successful completion of the requirements for this course.
 - 189 hours/21 weeks. Students can participate in an externship of 120 hours.
- Grossmont Adult Education
 - You will learn how to prepare prescription medications in the classroom, in a pharmacy skills lab and as part of a 160-hour externship placement at a local pharmacy.
 - Students that complete the program will receive certification to work as pharmacy technicians in the state of California.
 - During the program, students will also take the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) CPhT exam to receive national certification.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025, April 18). *Pharmacy technicians*. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/pharmacy-technicians.htm>

Certified Pharmacy Technician salary in San Diego, CA. (n.d.-b). <https://www.indeed.com/career/certified-pharmacy-technician/salaries/San-Diego--CA>

Pharmacy technician. San Diego Workforce Partnership. <https://workforce.org/program/pharmacy-technician/> Date accessed: May 2025.