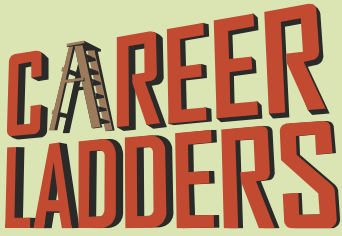


# MEDICAL BILLERS AND CODERS

Medical billers and coders are employees that use the patient diagnosis and procedures and translate them into numeric code. Medical billers use these numeric codes to complete and submit claims to insurance companies for the professional services patients receive from their medical practitioner or medical facility.



Employment opportunities in the health care field are currently at an exceptionally high level. No matter what the state of the economy, the demand for health care professionals will continue to grow. Individuals can start in entry-level occupations and advance their careers while enjoying the stability of employment. Also, individuals can start at the mid or advanced levels, depending on their education, training, and career goals. At each of the levels, there are many opportunities for more challenging and higher paying positions.

## SAGINAW VALLEY

Each ladder depicts a series of work experiences that leads to more challenging and higher paying opportunities. While every level of the ladder can provide a satisfying job, some employees will choose to gain even more skills and responsibilities that will advance them in their careers. To do so, they will need more education, training, and work experiences. Some jobs will require a certificate, a license, or an advanced degree.

CLIMBING THE CAREER LADDER

### ADVANCED LEVEL

Associate's, bachelor's, master's or doctorate degree required; must graduate from an accredited program; must obtain license or certification

**Physical Therapist**  
\$23.31-\$33.68/hour

**Dental Hygienist**  
\$21.96-\$32.48/hour

### MID LEVEL

Associate's degree or graduation from an accredited program required; must obtain a license or certification

**Physical Therapist Assistant**  
\$14.55-\$20.57/hour

**Medical Records Technician**  
\$9.40-\$14.71/hour

**Respiratory Therapist**  
\$16.55-\$22.18/hour

### ENTRY LEVEL

Most occupations require a high school diploma or a graduate equivalency diploma (GED), three to six months training, and knowledge of medical terminology; certification is required in some of the occupations

**Home Health Aide**  
\$6.65-\$9.06/hour

**Medical Billers and Coders**  
\$7.65-\$24.46/hour

**Dental Assistant**  
\$8.35-\$16.20/hour

Wages will vary within this occupation based on the employee's education, training, and years of experience.

## JOB DESCRIPTION

Each occupation is described in terms of specific tasks and typical job duties.

### A MEDICAL BILLER AND CODER MUST BE ABLE TO:

- Concentrate on very detailed work
- Find and match medical services and their codes using billing and coding manuals
- Follow policies, procedures, and guidelines to assure consistent quality billing and coding
- Provide timely and accurate data to ensure reimbursement for patient services
- Maintain highest confidentiality of medical record information
- Communicate with physicians regarding documentation, clarification, and coding concerns
- Maintain credentials and keep updated on coding changes
- Work under stress, limited time constraints, and with frequent interruptions

## WAGES

Wage information was obtained from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth and from local employers to give a general idea of the wages and salaries for this occupation.

## WAGE RANGE

\$7.65-\$24.46/hour

## WORKING CONDITIONS

Medical billers and coders work in pleasant and comfortable offices. This is one of the few health care occupations in which there is little or no direct contact with patients. Medical billers and coders must pay close attention to detail because accuracy is essential in their jobs. They work at computers for prolonged periods of time and usually work a 40-hour week.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Courses, programs, and certificates that are needed for employment are offered by local education and training providers.



### HIGH SCHOOL

- Completion of high school's Health Sciences Career Pathway requirements and/or appropriate career and technical education classes
- Algebra
- Chemistry
- Biology
- Health
- Computer science courses
- Career studies, such as the medical careers program at the Saginaw Career Complex and health technology/medical science and the nursing assistant/health careers program at the Bay-Arenac ISD Career Center
- Co-op experience
- Volunteer experience in a health care environment

### COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- Delta College: health insurance coding and claims specialist certificate

### UNIVERSITY

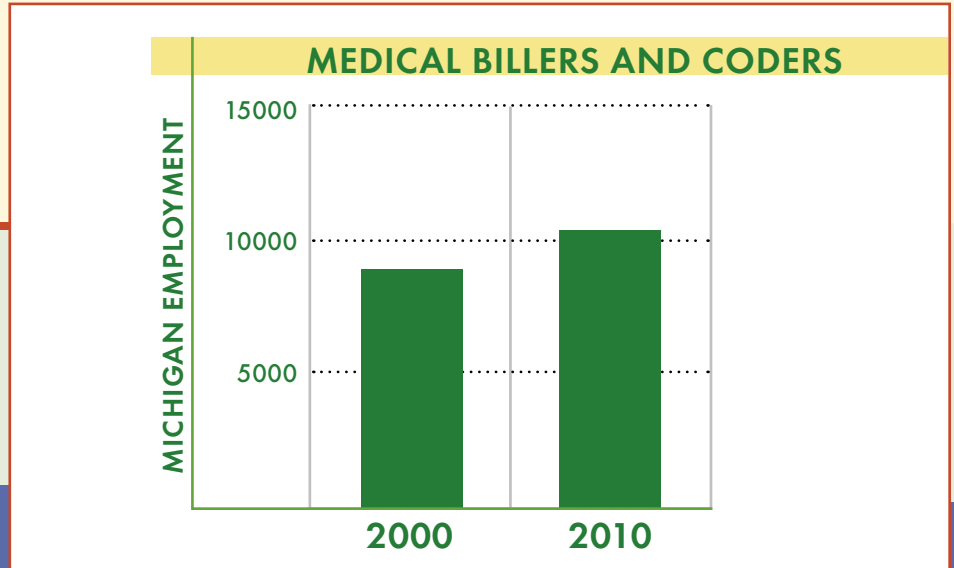
- Saginaw Valley State University Center for Corporate and Professional Development: medical billing and coding certification training

### LOCAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

- Local school districts
- Bay-Arenac ISD Career Center
- Saginaw Career Complex
- Delta College
- Saginaw Valley State University Center for Corporate and Professional Development

# JOB OUTLOOK

The rate of growth within this occupation is projected by data from local employers and the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.



## ADVANCEMENT

Promising medical billers and coders may advance to jobs as medical records and health information technicians, although this practice may be less common in the future. They may also advance by managing other employees or by specializing in such areas as Medicare coding or in cancer registry. Advancement usually requires two to four years of job experience and completion of the employer's in-house training program. Medical billers and coders may also advance with further education such as a two-year applied science degree in health information technology or an associate's degree in business studies in medical office professions.

## WHAT THE EMPLOYER SAID



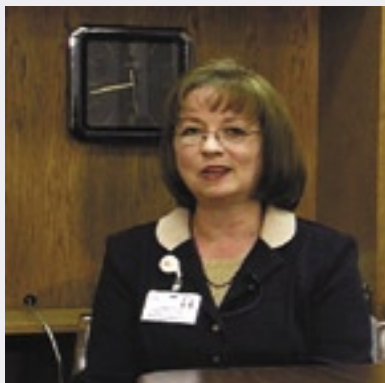
### WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A POTENTIAL EMPLOYEE FOR THIS POSITION?

"There are several personality traits that make a great coder. A person must be self-motivated, be a stickler for detail, have good follow-up, and be able to independently hunt down the little details in a patient's file. They must also be efficient with a computer and be able to consult classification manuals to correctly assign the proper code to each diagnosis and procedure."

Deborah Sanders, business services manager  
Synergy Medical Education Alliance

# STAR PROFILE

This interview is intended to show you what is needed to be a star employee.



**EMPLOYEE:**  
**CONNIE KLIEN**

**OCCUPATION:**  
**LEAD CODER**

**COMPANY:**  
**SYNERGY MEDICAL  
EDUCATION ALLIANCE**

## TELL US HOW YOU ATTAINED YOUR CURRENT POSITION.

I previously worked at a company in the office as a customer service specialist for 23 years. The company was bought out and the new owners moved the jobs to Mexico. Under the North American Free Trade agreement, I qualified to receive training in a new career. I had an interest in health care so I went to the library and researched the jobs that would be in demand. I learned that the occupations involved with medical records had a shortage and would be in high demand for quite awhile. I went back to school and earned my associate's degree and was qualified to take the credential examination to be a medical records coder. I passed the exam and then was employed at the Carson City Hospital in the medical records department as a clerk. After two years, I went to Hurley Hospital to expand my skills. I worked there for a while and then I had the opportunity to apply for a position at the Synergy Medical Education Alliance. I was thrilled to get the job because it allows me to work in a teaching facility with a doctor's office setting. I am now the lead coder for this facility.

## DESCRIBE YOUR TYPICAL DAY.

Everyday I analyze medical records for accurate physician documentation of patient care and accurate assignment of diagnostic codes. I also work with the residents, who are doctors that have recently graduated from medical school, to help them learn how to document a patient's visit with the correct codes. I also update the doctors and nurses in our facility on coding changes.

## WHAT QUALITIES MAKE SOMEONE A "STAR" IN THIS OCCUPATION?

A star is someone who sets goals and strives to reach them. Stars always want to learn more. They are willing to try something new and they are willing to compromise to make it work for everyone.

## WHAT TRAINING AND EDUCATION DID YOU NEED TO ENTER THIS POSITION?

I needed an associate's degree and had to successfully pass the Registered Health Information Technologist certification exam. Each year, I attend numerous seminars for continuing education credits to stay credentialed.

## WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST/LEAST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

I love that everyday is different. Each patient's chart that I work on is unique. The chart tells the patient's story about their medical history. At Synergy Medical Education Alliance, we see all age groups from newborns to senior citizens. I love puzzles. My job is like putting a puzzle together. Each patient's case has lots of pieces in their file that I have to assemble to tell their story. I use the information to assign the diagnostic codes and then pass it on to the billing department. I can't think of anything I don't like. My employer is wonderful, the hours are great, and I have lots of flexibility to adjust the hours to work around my family's needs and still be a full-time employee and mother.

## WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU GIVE SOMEONE SEEKING A JOB IN YOUR FIELD?

My advice is to do your research on the interests that you have. Job-shadow someone who has an occupation in your interest area to get a feel for what happens on a day-to-day basis. Be willing to start at entry-level and work your way up to a higher-level job.

## ARE THERE ANY LICENSES OR CERTIFICATIONS NEEDED FOR YOUR POSITION?

A person must have the Registered Health Information Technologies certification and earn the continuing education credits to remain certified.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Career Ladders project began as a Saginaw County Vision 2020 initiative. To date, more than 300 individuals have been involved in the project. It is impossible to list them all, but the Comprehensive Education and Workforce Development Committee appreciates each one and the incredible participation by our major employers and educational institutions, as well as the support from the Arnold and Gertrude Boutell Memorial Fund, The Dow Chemical Company, The Dow Corning Foundation, the Fordney Club, the Hospital Council of East Central Michigan, the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, the National Tooling and Machining Association – Saginaw Valley Chapter, the Saginaw Community Foundation, the Saginaw County Business and Education Partnership, the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Saginaw County's local school districts, Saginaw County's Promise, the Saginaw County Vision 2020, the Saginaw Future Inc., the Saginaw/Midland/Bay Michigan Works!, the Saginaw Township Business Association, the Saginaw Valley Manufacturers' Association, and the Saginaw Valley Tech Prep Partnership. We also want to thank NOVA for their guidance.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER/PROGRAM. AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.