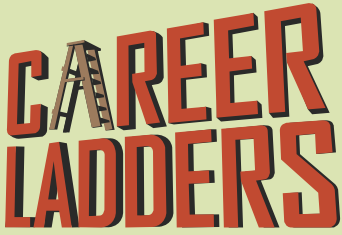


# PHARMACY TECHNICIAN

Pharmacy technicians are responsible for performing technical support tasks to assist staff pharmacists in the preparation, dispensing, and delivery of medications and pharmaceutical supplies.



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

#### Registered Nurse

\$19.30-\$27.64/hour

#### Pharmacists

\$31.83-\$41.95/hour

### MID LEVEL

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

#### Licensed Practical Nurse

\$12.71-\$17.81/hour

#### Paramedic

\$10.30-\$18.04/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

#### Nursing Aide, Orderly, and Attendant

\$8.06-\$11.39/hour

#### Emergency Medical Technician

\$7.73-\$10.30/hour

#### Pharmacy Technician

\$8.74-\$13.19/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 PHARMACY TECHNICIAN MUST BE ABLE TO:

- Document information on patient profiles
- Maintain stock levels of medications and pharmaceutical supplies
- Type labels and fill prescriptions
- Answer the phone and assist the pharmacist
- Type and use the computer as well as prepackaging equipment
- Demonstrate knowledge of pharmaceuticals by generic and trade names
- Know the metric and apothecary systems and convert from one system to the other
- Be very proficient in math
- Know the general classes of medications and what drugs belong to these classes

## 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

\$8.74-\$13.19/hour

## WORKING CONDITIONS

Work may be performed individually or as a member of a team. The job requires strict adherence to guidelines and protocols. A pharmacy technician must be able to follow directions expertly. Work environment is clean and usually pleasant.

## 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
- Career studies, such as the medical careers program at the Saginaw Career Complex or health technology/medical science or 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: associate's degree in applied science – pharmacy technician program

### UNIVERSITY

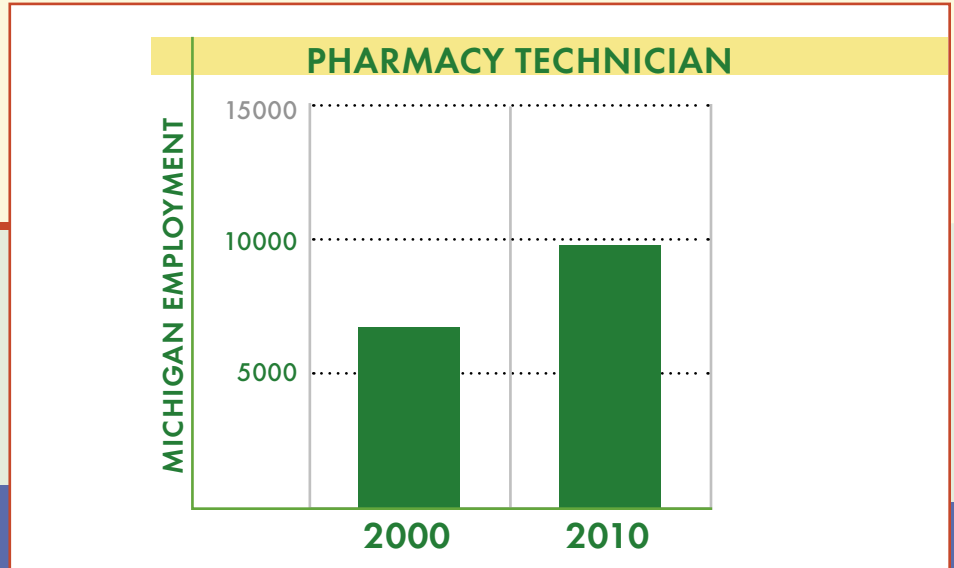
- Saginaw Valley State University: pharmacy tech certification exam training

### LOCAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

- Local school districts
- Bay-Arenac ISD Career Center
- Saginaw Career Complex
- Delta College
- Saginaw Valley State University's 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

Opportunities for advancement come with experience. A pharmacy technician can advance to a staff pharmacist role and into pharmacy administration with the appropriate college education. Some pharmacy technicians can move into pharmaceutical sales positions.

## WHAT THE EMPLOYER SAID



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

"The pharmacy technician role is a vital one – both in the hospital and in the retail environment. The best and most proficient pharmacists that I know began their careers as pharmacy technicians. In the pharmacy technician position, we look for those individuals who possess excellent technical skills, as well as the clinical knowledge to make a difference in the health of their patients."

Terry Wernette, pharmacist  
Covenant HealthCare

# STAR PROFILE

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



**EMPLOYEE:**  
**JEFFREY JOHNSON**

**OCCUPATION:**  
**PHARMACY  
TECHNICIAN**

**COMPANY:**  
**COVENANT  
HEALTHCARE**

## TELL US HOW YOU ATTAINED YOUR CURRENT POSITION.

I was trained at the Pharmacy Technician School, Naval School of Health Sciences, Portsmouth, Virginia, in 1983. After retiring from the U.S. Navy in 2001, I began pre-pharmacy courses at Delta College and wanted to get back into pharmacy so I could keep up my knowledge of pharmaceuticals. I sent a resume to Covenant and accepted a position as a technician at the inpatient pharmacy at Covenant Cooper.

## DESCRIBE YOUR TYPICAL DAY.

I work the night shift, preparing IVs and medications for hundreds of patients. My shift begins by making the medications that need to be prepared immediately. I then prepare other medications along with any IVs that are needed throughout the shift, as well as make the labels for them. I restock medications when time and workload permits.

As the frontline technician I fill medication requests, update patient profiles for allergies, file medication orders, answer phone calls and questions, and return to stock unused medications from discharged patients. Twice daily I check the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) room to restock EMT drug boxes for the ambulance service. Later in the shift, I check and repack anesthesia bags so they are ready for the next day.

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

Either a certified training program for pharmacy technicians or 2,000 hours of on-the-job training needs to be performed and certified by a pharmacist. You must then pass the National Certification for Pharmacy Technicians examination and become certified to enter this position.

The most valuable part of the training is the hands-on experience. This prepares you for what it is like to work in a pharmacy and in a professional environment.

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

The qualities that make someone a star in this occupation are: 1) knowing a lot about pharmaceuticals and knowing when to ask questions or look something up when unsure; 2) taking pride in the job; 3) seeing the "big picture," not just what is right in front; and 4) thinking of others, not just personal goals and gains.

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

The thing I like most about my job is the interaction with the pharmacists. I have the ability to work with the pharmacists and tap into their knowledge and thoughts about pharmacy and pharmaceuticals.

The thing I like least is the way some people do not take my, or their own, job seriously – both pharmacy staff and hospital staff. As a nationally certified pharmacy technician, we have the responsibility to use our knowledge and skills to help the pharmacist, nursing, and other health care workers provide patient care. The questions we ask or the services we perform are all vital to assuring that our patients receive the highest quality care possible.

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

Don't be afraid to start small, but you need to think big! Start as a cart filler or supply technician/assistant and learn about pharmaceuticals. Don't be afraid to ask questions. No one knows everything. Work your way to being a certified technician, but don't stop there! Go to school. Work on your pre-pharmacy curriculum. Apply to pharmacy school and someday become a pharmacist. Always strive to know more. Pharmacy knowledge is a never-ending process.

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

For pharmacy technicians, there is the National Certification for Pharmacy Technicians, with recertification every two years. Certification for pharmacy technicians can take anywhere from eight weeks to a year. Saginaw Valley State University offers classes to prepare you for national certification.

## 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.