

Behavioral Health Technician: Job Description, Duties and Requirements

Learn about the education and preparation needed to become a behavioral health technician. Get a quick view of the requirements as well as details about the job duties and certification options to find out if this is the career for you.

Behavioral health technicians work alongside other medical professionals providing care for patients who suffer from a variety of behavioral problems. A certificate is the most common academic credential held by these technicians, and in some cases, certification or licensure may be necessary.

Essential Information

Behavioral health technicians or psychiatric technicians help doctors and nurses by carrying out treatment plans for people with behavioral problems. These professionals usually hold either a certificate or an associate's degree in mental health technology or psychiatric technology. Licensure or certification is sometimes required.

Required Education	Certificate or associate's degree in psychiatric or mental health technology, in addition to on-the-job training
Additional Requirements	Licensure is occasionally required; certification is voluntary but preferred by some employers
Projected Job Growth (2014-2024)	5% for psychiatric technicians*
Median Annual Salary (May 2015)	\$31,140 for psychiatric technicians*

Source: *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Job Description

A behavioral health technician helps doctors and nurses with the treatment of patients who have various behavioral problems, such as substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, mental instability and physical and emotional abuse. These professionals often work in hospitals, shelters and mental health facilities. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), behavioral health technicians, also called psychiatric technicians, earned a median annual salary of \$31,140 as of May 2015. Job growth for these technicians is expected to be about average, with a projected increase of 5% from 2014 to 2024, according to the BLS.

Duties

A behavioral health technician is expected to understand and implement individual treatment plans, record patient behavior and provide a safe, supportive environment for the patients. Technicians may provide and record patient medications and assisting in daily activities.

Requirements

Education

Behavioral health technicians typically hold a certificate, though associate's degrees are also available in the field. Students can also often find internships while in the university to help gain experience. All degree ranges will receive extensive on-the-job training.

Certification

The most prominent organization offering certification in this field is the American Association of Psychiatric Technicians. There are four levels of certification that can be attained based on education and experience, and all levels require successful completion of an exam and/or an essay test. Level 1 certification entails completion of only a high school-level education, while Level 2 requires completion of 30 semester credit-hours and one year of professional experience.

There are a number of educational routes that one can take to become a behavioral health technician, though most of these professionals hold a certificate or an associate's degree. Those interested in this career field may also need to secure certification, depending on the employer and state where they work.