

Which Healthcare Occupations Have

the Best Employment Outlook?

Untangling the Projections Data



The recent economic downturn proves one very important point. While the healthcare industry may not be recession-proof, it is certainly recession-resistant. It is the one major industry in Utah that continues to create additional job opportunities despite recession. Moreover, healthcare occupations will continue to provide some of the best employment opportunities in the years ahead.

But, how do you sort through our projections data to determine which occupations offer the best employment outlook? You can examine growth rates or projected openings. Keep in mind that openings result both from growth and replacement of individuals who have left the occupation. Both these indicators have their merits. However, we suggest you consider the number of projected openings first, then look at the growth rate.

The Best Figure. . .

Here's why: Our most recent 10-year projections (through 2016) show physician assistants with a high growth rate—more than 5 percent per year. Registered nurses are projected to display an average annual growth rate of 4 percent. But, consider this: projections show almost 1,000 openings for nurses per year compared to only 40 for physician assistants.

Which occupation provides the most opportunity for employment suc-

cess? It's registered nurses. In other words, don't be deceived by a high growth rate. In small occupations, rapid growth may still result in few job openings.

In Utah, the registered nurse occupation is projected to produce (by far) the highest number of openings between 2006 and 2016. The next four occupations with large numbers of openings (nursing aides/orderlies, home health aides, medical assistants, dental assistants) fall in the "healthcare support" category.

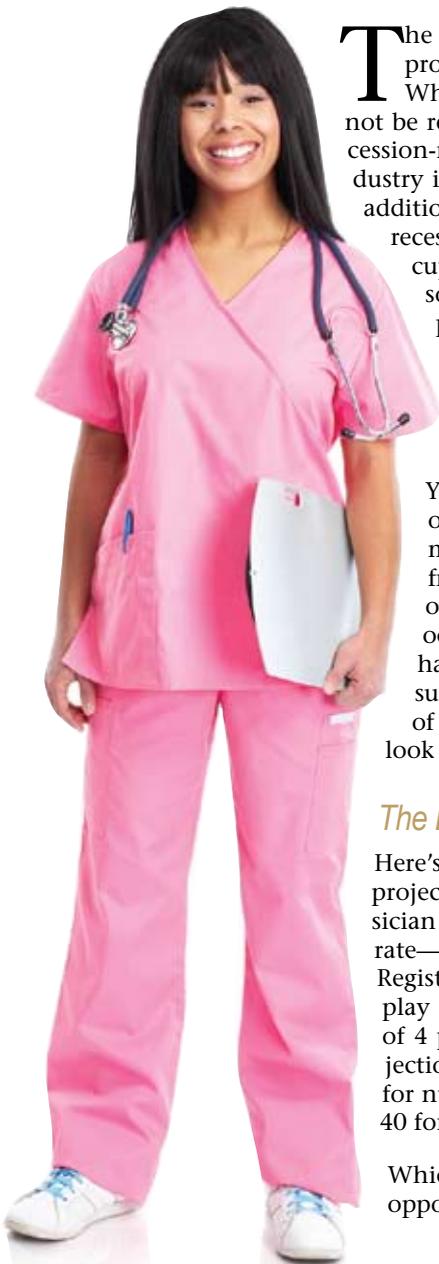
These occupations are the least skilled of the total healthcare group. More technically oriented occupations with large numbers of openings include pharmacy technicians, licensed practical nurses, medical records technicians and dental hygienists. Higher-skilled healthcare occupations in demand include physicians (of all specialties), dentists, and pharmacists (along with registered nurses).

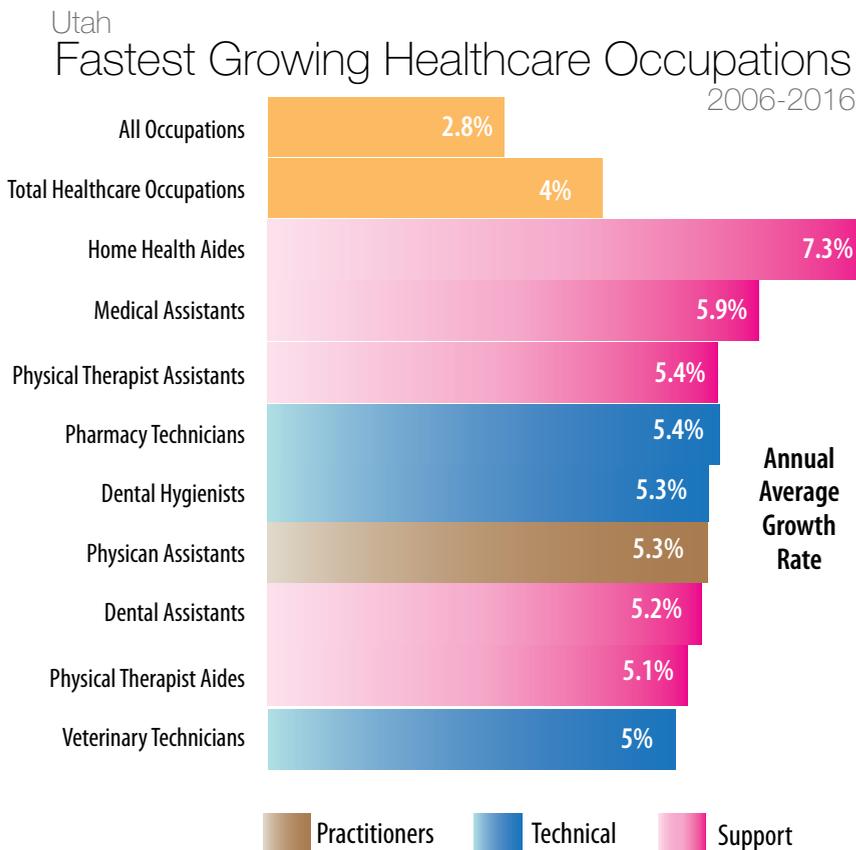
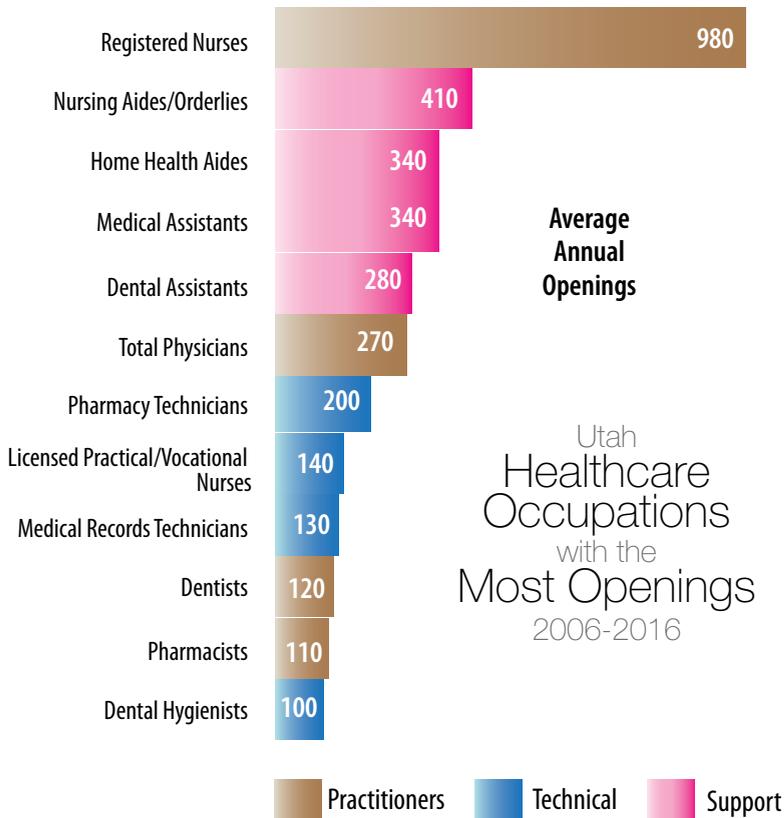
Nice to Know. . .

Of course, growth rates are helpful in knowing which occupations are expanding rapidly. On average, healthcare occupations are expected to expand at a 4 percent annual rate—noticeably higher than the 2.8 percent rate for all occupations. Interestingly enough, of the nine fastest-growing healthcare occupations, five fall in the lower-skilled support category, three are technical occupations, and only one—physician assistant—hails from the highly skilled "practitioner" category.

It's in the Stars

Finally, we have one last way to look at occupations. Star ratings combine employment outlook (based on both openings and growth rate) and wages to rank occupations. Five-star occupations have the best employment outlook and the best wages of occupations in their particular training level. The healthcare occupations at the right received a five-star rating. ●





Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services.

Five-star Healthcare Occupations



- Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians
- Dental Hygienists
- Dentists, General
- Family and General Practitioners
- Occupational Therapist Assistants
- Pharmacists
- Pharmacy Technicians
- Physical Therapists
- Physician Assistants
- Registered Nurses
- Respiratory Therapists

For more information about the employment outlook for various occupations: <http://jobs.utah.gov/opencms/wi/occi.html>