

Career Investigation Project: Part II

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Introduction: Nursing Assistant

This report is set up to assess a client that is categorized as social, conventional, and realistic, also known as an SCR Holland Code. A career that is suitable for an SCR client would be a certified nursing assistant (CNA) which is defined as code 31-1131.00 by O*NET (2025) and code 355.674-014 by the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (1991). According to the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (1991) a nursing assistant's job is to perform a combination of duties including: hygiene tasks, response calls, food service, transportation accommodations, bedside duties, cleaning, errands, and administering medical and first aid services under the direction of medical staff in a variety of home and clinical settings. This paper will go through the exercise of assessing the prerequisites the client would need to obtain a nursing assistant position, as well as the education required, in order to achieve the predicted income and prospects of that position.

Training & Prerequisite Skills

Technical Skills

The first form of prerequisite skills CNAs must have are classified as technical skills. Technical skills are often thought of as job-specific skill sets that are performed in alignment with the job's specific tasks. As noted in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (1991) CNA job description above, CNAs are required to perform job-specific tasks such as bathing, cleaning, and administering first aid. According to the American Red Cross Training Services (2023) first aid certifications, although not required, can be a valuable addition to a CNA's skill sets and increase their odds of being hired for the position. Documentation and record keeping is also a technical skill set that CNAs are expected to be able to perform. Overall, CNAs are required to have technical competencies in physical tasks, medical applications, and record keeping.

Soft Skills

The second form of prerequisite skills for a CNA are soft skills. Soft skills are often thought of as subjective skills that relate to personality and social interactions. Examples of soft skills that would be beneficial for a CNA to have include communication skills, attention to detail, empathy, and patience. Practicing these skills will help CNAs better serve their patients and work effectively as a team with their surrounding staff.

Education & Entry into Field

Certification Requirements

There are three main educational standards individuals must hit in the State of Utah before becoming a CNA. The first requirement is that potential candidates be at least 16 years of age. This includes being the age of 16 when enrolling in the certification curriculum. This leads us to the second qualification which is all CNAs must complete a state-approved training program. Training programs usually require a minimum of 100 hours in a combined classroom and clinical setting. The last prerequisite is passing state-specific written and skills exams after completing the training program. In the State of Utah a minimum score of 75% is required on both written and skills exams.

Educational Requirements

In many States in order to enroll in a CNA training program individuals must have a High School diploma or GED equivalent. The first reason this is required is that many job positions themselves require the individual to have their diploma or GED. The second reason is that CNA training programs are considered continued education, which means that they will be building on knowledge and skills that were acquired earlier in one's education. Without a foundational

understanding of topics learned pre-graduation, individuals may not understand or be ready to explore areas covered in the CNA program.

Additional Education

As mentioned above, additional certifications like first aid can enhance a person's chances of being hired as a CNA. Basic Life Support (BLS) certifications including CPR and AED training can also be a major asset when being considered for CNA positions. Pursuing these certifications can also be acquired before individuals turn 16, so they can be beneficial first steps to supplement knowledge before beginning a CNA specific training program.

An area of education that may be overlooked is the importance of understanding body mechanics. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022) in the year 2020 over 9,000 back injuries were reported amongst CNAs, the majority of these injuries stemmed from moving and transporting patients. This highlights the potential need for better training in body mechanics in relation to manual labor and lifting. Going to a local gym may help supplement the lack of training in this area and protect CNAs from becoming injured in the field.

Income

In the State of Utah CAN's starting pay is typically around \$15-\$18 per hour. Pay variations can fluctuate due to patient needs, the time of day CNAs are required to work, and credentials. Once a CNA has worked in the field for a couple years their hourly pay usually increases by a couple of dollars. For CNAs who have worked in the field for over five years, their expected hourly wage is estimated to be between \$21-\$24 (Randazzo, 2025).

In addition to pay, CNAs typically have access to benefits packages. The basic packages usually include medical, dental, and vision insurance. Add on benefits also include paid time off, retirement plan matching, and paid trainings. Additionally, becoming a CNA is often considered

an intermediate step in the process of becoming a medical professional, so it is common to see paid tuition offered as another company benefit.

If a CNA enjoys their position and does not feel the need to advance their career in the medical field there are certain actions they can take to increase their pay. A main way to get a raise is by increasing your value as an employee. A classic way to increase value is to obtain additional trainings or specialize in an area of the field. Common examples of specializations in the CNA field are pursuing further education in pediatrics, phlebotomy, Alzheimer's or dementia care. Another avenue for increasing pay is switching up the work environment. Settings like the ICU and ER often offer higher paying positions for CNAs. CNAs can also take travel positions which typically offer higher paying positions. Lastly, CNAs can typically receive higher pay for working less desirable hours; examples being weekends and night shifts.

Prospects for Employment

Currently in Utah there is a high demand for CNAs. Employment of CNAs in Utah is projected to grow by 27% between 2022 and 2032, which is significantly faster than the national average (Supplemental Health Care, 2025). The national average predicts around 216,200 openings for nursing assistants and orderlies each year, on average, over the decade (Nursing assistants and orderlies, 2025). Universal reasons why CNA positions are projected to grow include factors like longer life expectancy, an expanding medical field, and high turnover rates. That being said, multiple sources reported CNAs having a low placement rate in Utah. Furthermore, CNA positions are considered highly competitive and typically fill quickly. That being said, a career as a CNA is still a promising career in Utah that can provide many opportunities.

Although becoming a CNA may provide various opportunities, it is worth mentioning some of the drawbacks that have been reported from individuals who have worked in that role. As mentioned above, CNA positions typically have a high turn over rate. Part of this turnover is due to the position being a stepping stone position for career advancement, the other part is attributed to workplace conditions. CNAs face physically and mentally demanding working conditions when providing patient care. High patient load is often considered a point of burnout for people working in this position. Many CNAs also report inflexible schedules and considerably low compensation compared to their performance in the field. Shortages in healthcare workers can exacerbate these grievances in certain settings across the US.

Conclusion

Counselors working with a client with the Holland Code of SCR may support them in the process of pursuing a career as a CNA. This paper began by discussing the skills needed to become a CNA, breaking them down into the categories of technical skills and soft skills. Next the educational requirements to become a CNA were defined, and the benefits of additional education like BLS certifications and physical training were discussed. Lastly, prospective income and job opportunities were investigated along with factors that may result in additional pay increases. Overall being a CNA is considered a stable, albeit taxing, career that can also be a steppingstone on the path to a more advanced career.

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