

## Introduction to Health Careers

### I. Education

A. Educational requirements for health careers can vary from

State to state

B. Types of education:

1. Secondary - high school health occupations

2. Post-secondary (after H.S.) options:

a) Vocational health occupations education program (HOE) - may be on the job training or a short course

b) associates degree - 2 year community college degree

c) bachelor's degree - a degree earned at a college or university after completing a program which usually lasts 4+ years

d) master's degree - a degree earned at a college or university after completion of a program which usually lasts 1-2 years (must have a bachelor's degree to qualify for a master's degree)

e) doctorate degree - a degree awarded by a college or university after completion of 2 or more years of work beyond a bachelor's or master's degree. Some doctoral degrees require four to six years of additional study.

### II. Skill and Competency Requirements

A. For most health careers a person must obtain

certification or licensure in order to work or be hired. In order to be qualified to work, a professional must do more than simply complete the training program. Often the person has to pass state boards and apply for (and pay for) a license.

- B. Certification: a person has fulfilled the requirements of education and performance and meets the standard and qualifications established by the professional association or government agency that regulates the given career.  
Examples: dental assistant laboratory technician, CNA
- C. Licensure: a process by which a government agency authorizes individuals to work in a given occupation. In order to get and keep a license, a person usually must complete an approved educational program, pass a state board exam, and maintain certain standards.  
Examples: physician, dentist, physical therapist, registered nurse
- D. Registration: performed by a regulatory group that gives exams and maintains a current list ("registry") of qualifies personnel in a given health care area. This is required in some health occupations.  
Examples: registered dietician, registered respiratory therapist, registered animal health technician
- E. Continuing education units (CEUs): required to renew licenses or maintain certification/registration in many states. A health professional must take additional hours of education in the specific health career area during a certain period of time. This ensures that the individual is staying current with new information in the field and has up-to-date skills and knowledge.  
Example: many states require registered nurses to earn 24 to 48 CEUs every 1-2 years in order to renew licensure.