

Promising Occupations Achievable Through Short-Term Education or Training for Low-Income Families

Promising careers are available to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients and other low-income workers with a relatively short-term investment in education and training. Nearly all states offer estimates (called *projections*) of how occupations will grow over a 10-year period. When paired with data on the education and training required for each occupation, as well as earnings potential and the number of jobs available per year, these data paint a picture of the jobs that will be available in the future, the credentials they will require, and how much workers might expect to earn by pursuing them.

We used data from state occupational employment projections to determine the promising occupations for low-income workers in each state or territory. First, we determined which occupations required more than a high school diploma or general educational development certificate, but less than a bachelor's degree. Next, among those occupations, we focused on those projected to experience positive job growth through 2022. Finally, we limited our list to occupations expected to have at least one job per 1,000 jobs statewide, to make sure there would be enough jobs available relative to the size of the state's labor market.

For each state, we created a table highlighting the promising occupations, listed in order from highest to lowest number of projected annual jobs. The tables show the education and training required (some college, no degree; postsecondary certificate; associate's degree), annual job openings, growth rates, and key wage percentiles for all the occupations that met our criteria.

The annotated table for the United States (on page 2) illustrates how to interpret the tables. Each row in the table presents an occupation that meets the criteria described above for promising occupations. The list of occupations is arranged from the highest to lowest number of projected annual openings. Next to each occupation name, the table presents the education and, if applicable, the on-the-job training (OJT) required for the occupation. Reading down the table, you can compare the projected openings, growth, and wages of occupations with the same amount of required education and training by looking at the rows with the same number of diploma and OJT icons. The far-right column of the table presents the income distributions, anchored at the median reported wage, which is listed in the blue bar. The width of the blue bar indicates the spread from the 25th percentile, through the median, to the 75th percentile. The relative positions of the blue bars show which occupations have higher wages and potential for wage growth: those to the left of the other occupations have low wages and/or low wage growth, and those to the right have higher wages and potential for wage growth.

To find a state's table, click on the state in [this map](#). See the complete introduction and access all the state tables at 1.usa.gov/1RHjJQ1.

PROMISING OCCUPATIONS IN
United States

EDUCATION/
TRAINING
REQUIRED

AVERAGE
ANNUAL
OPENINGS

GROWTH
RATE

2014 ANNUAL WAGE

25th Percentile Median 75th Percentile

Occupation	Education/Training Required	Average Annual Openings	Growth Rate	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile
Registered nurses	🎓🎓🎓	105,260	19.4%	\$54,620	\$66,640	\$81,080
Nursing assistants	🎓🎓	59,360	21.1%	\$21,340	\$25,100	\$30,020
Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers	🎓🎓 + OJT	46,470	11.3%	\$32,000	\$39,520	\$49,410
Teacher assistants	🎓	38,260	8.6%	\$19,610	\$24,430	\$30,670
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	🎓🎓	36,310	24.8%	\$35,780	\$42,490	\$49,450
Medical assistants	🎓🎓	26,990	29.0%	\$25,500	\$29,960	\$36,070
Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists	🎓🎓	22,060	12.7%	\$18,680	\$23,120	\$32,170
Preschool teachers, except special education	🎓🎓🎓	19,940	17.4%	\$22,010	\$28,120	\$37,660
Computer user support specialists	🎓 + OJT	19,690	20.2%	\$36,610	\$47,610	\$62,050
Dental assistants	🎓🎓	13,720	24.5%	\$29,260	\$35,390	\$42,810
Heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers	🎓🎓 + OJT	12,370	20.9%	\$34,610	\$44,630	\$57,500
Emergency medical technicians and paramedics	🎓🎓	12,060	23.1%	\$25,170	\$31,700	\$41,780
Dental hygienists	🎓🎓🎓	11,350	33.3%	\$59,890	\$71,520	\$85,240

Arranged from the **highest** to the **lowest** number of projected annual openings

Income distributions, anchored at the median reported wage

Width of the blue bar indicates the spread from the 25th percentile, through the median, to the 75th percentile

Relative positions of the blue bars show which occupations have higher wages and potential for wage growth.
Left = low wages and/or low wage growth
Right = higher wages and wage growth potential