

## Department of State Hospitals-Atascadero/Cuesta College

### PSYCHIATRIC TECHNICIAN PROGRAM

#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

##### 1. What is a Psychiatric Technician?

Psychiatric Technicians work as an integral member of an interdisciplinary team with other health professionals, such as physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, registered nurses, dieticians, music and rehabilitation therapists. They provide care and treatment to patients with mental and/or intellectual disabilities. Their primary goal is to support each individual in achieving their highest level of independence and functioning. In forensic settings, Psychiatric Technicians are also responsible for maintaining the safety and security of the patients they serve.

##### 2. Why should I become a Psychiatric Technician?

As a Psychiatric Technician, you have many career opportunities, both full and part-time on the Central Coast, as well as state-wide. Opportunities for upward mobility and advancement within the profession are available.

##### 3. How often are the Psychiatric Technician Training classes offered?

The Psychiatric Technician Program is a one-year program and new classes start three times per year (January, May, and September).

##### 4. What are the prerequisites?

You must complete all prerequisites to enter the Psychiatric Technician Program. They include the following:

- Must be 18 years of age or older
- Submit official proof of graduation from high school or equivalent
- Pass a background check, fingerprints, reference checks, drug screening, and physical exam
- Must meet an English and math requirement

##### 5. How many students are accepted into each class?

The Psychiatric Technician Program currently admits 30 qualified applicants to each class.

##### 6. May I work while going to school?

During the school year if our hospital budget permits, you may work at the Department of State Hospitals-Atascadero half-time (20 hours per week) as a Psychiatric Technician Trainee and earn approximately \$1300/month. You will be assigned to a specific unit. Your working hours will depend on the needs of your unit, but will generally be in the evenings a few days per week and usually at least one weekend day.

##### 7. What are the duties of a Psychiatric Technician Trainee?

- Take and document vital signs
- Assist patients with self-care skills, such as dining, hygiene, and grooming
- Inspect patient areas for cleanliness and safety
- Deliver charts to scheduled appointments
- Provide social interaction to patients by playing cards, games, etc.
- Perform CPR, Heimlich maneuver
- Assist in conducting therapeutic groups and activities
- With licensed staff, you may escort patients to dining room, supervise patients in courtyards and the dayroom, and attend patient activity groups

**8. Do I qualify for health, dental and vision benefits while attending the program?**

If you choose to work while going to school, you are eligible for insurance benefits effective on the date appointed to half-time employment. Eligibility to enroll is within 60 days from appointment.

**9. What are the duties of a Licensed Psychiatric Technician?**

- Maintain order and supervise the conduct of patients
- Administer medications and provide routine and emergency nursing care
- Perform nursing procedures as ordered by the physician
- Assist patients with personal cleanliness and activities of daily living
- Assist patients to develop work skills and to participate in recreational activities
- Teach, counsel, and write reports describing physical and emotional symptoms
- Assist in the management of aggressive/assaultive patients
- Provide individual and group therapy
- Develop clear and concise reports of incidents and provide documentation on patients with special precautions, such as suicide or self-harm
- Work with the treatment team to provide occupational, recreational, vocational, and educational therapy for patients

**10. Approximately how much will I be paid once I complete the program?**

Salaries for Psychiatric Technicians vary greatly depending on the employing agency. Psychiatric Technicians working for state hospitals, developmental centers and prisons have a starting salary of approximately \$50,000.00 annually. County and private and/or non-profit agencies may provide lower salaries, but a greater variety of employment opportunities.

**11. Where may I use my training?**

Psychiatric Technicians are recognized throughout the state of California. Most use their training in state hospitals, developmental centers and/or prisons. Many others work in county facilities, private institutions, special education programs and community psychiatric and substance abuse treatment facilities.

**12. How do I apply for the Psychiatric Technician Training Program?**

Applications are accepted year-round. Three times each year informational meetings are held at the Department of State Hospitals-Atascadero for the public to provide the public with information about the program and provide opportunity for individuals to ask questions.

Please call the Department of State Hospitals-Atascadero/Cuesta College Psychiatric Technician Program Office at (805) 468-3175 or e-mail [ashptprogram@dsh.ca.gov](mailto:ashptprogram@dsh.ca.gov) for more information or to obtain an application packet. Applications and additional information may also be found on the Cuesta College Nursing & Allied Health Department website at: <http://academic.cuesta.edu/nursing/>.