

MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTION

an

IDEAL CAREER

for

MILITARY SPOUSES

“Strengthening our nation’s workforce with demand-driven solutions”





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WHAT IS A MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTIONIST?

➤ What does a medical transcriptionist do?

In the broadest sense, medical transcription is the act of translating from oral to written form (on paper or electronically) the record of a person's encounter with a healthcare professional. Medical transcriptionists (MTs) are specialists in medical language and healthcare documentation. They interpret and transcribe dictation by physicians and other healthcare professionals regarding patient assessment, workup, therapeutic procedures, clinical course, diagnosis, prognosis, etc., editing dictated material for grammar and clarity as necessary and appropriate.

Physicians and other healthcare providers employ state-of-the-art electronic technology to dictate and transmit highly technical and confidential information about their patients. These medical professionals rely on skilled medical transcriptionists to transform spoken words into comprehensive records that accurately communicate medical information.

Speech recognition systems also may be used as an intermediary to translate the medical professional's dictation into rough draft. The medical transcriptionist is on the frontline to implement risk management by further refining the draft into a finished document. This requires listening to dictation while reading the draft created via speech recognition technology and editing the text on a computer screen. This editing may range from minimal to extensive, depending on the capabilities of the speech recognition software and the dictating habits of the originator, and may include correction of content as well as punctuation, grammar, and style.

The electronic health record (EHR) facilitates storage of an individual's health history so that it may be accessed by physicians and other healthcare providers anywhere. The military implements the electronic health record. Primary care managers (PCMs) are able to view onscreen previous visit history and order meds and diagnostic studies in the patient's presence. In this setting, the MT and EHR play a blended role.

Secretarial keyboarding and *technical language editing/transcription* should not be confused. The primary skills necessary for performance of quality medical transcription are extensive medical knowledge and understanding, sound judgment, deductive reasoning, and the ability to detect medical inconsistencies in dictation. For example, a diagnosis inconsistent with the patient's history and symptoms may be mistakenly dictated. As a foremost partner in risk management, the medical transcriptionist questions, seeks clarification, verifies the information, and enters the correct information into the report.



Generally speaking, medical transcription can be performed by anyone with access to a high-speed internet connection regardless of geographic boundaries.

➤ **What personal characteristics do I need in order to become a medical transcriptionist?**

You need excellent English grammar skills, as well as a compelling interest in and knowledge of continuous new medical equipment and procedures, scientific updates, federally approved pharmaceutical products, etc., which are reflected in medical language. You need superior resource skills. You need hand-eye coordination and keen listening skills. You need reasonable computer keyboarding skills and sit for long hours, often in a high-pressure environment. Medical documents often are requested to be expedited copy. A high level of concentration for extended periods of time is also important.

Medical transcription requires a practical knowledge of medical language relating to anatomy, physiology, disease processes, pharmacology, laboratory medicine, and the internal organization of medical reports. A transcriptionist is a medical language specialist who must be aware of standards and requirements that apply to the health record, as well as the legal significance of medical transcripts.

Traditional reports of patient care take many forms including histories and physical examinations, progress reports, emergency room notes, specialty consultations, operative reports, diagnostic and laboratory findings, discharge summaries, clinic notes, referral letters, and an array of documentation spanning more than 60 medical specialties. They are frequently dictated by healthcare providers for whom English is a 2nd (3rd, or greater) language.

➤ **Where do medical transcriptionists work?**

Medical transcriptionists use their talents in a variety of healthcare settings, including doctors' offices, public and private hospitals, teaching hospitals, medical schools, medical transcription businesses, clinics, laboratories, pathology and radiology departments, insurance companies, medical libraries, government medical facilities, rehabilitation centers, legal offices, research centers, veterinary medical facilities, and associations representing the healthcare industry—wherever dictation for the purpose of healthcare documentation requires transcription. Many MTs work from their homes as independent contractors, subcontractors, or home-based employees.



➤ **Who do medical transcriptionists work for?**

Medical transcriptionists work with physicians and surgeons in multiple specialties. They work with pharmacists, therapists, technicians, nurses, dietitians, social workers, psychologists, and other medical personnel. All of these healthcare providers rely on information that is received, accurately documented, and disseminated by the medical transcriptionist.

Qualified medical transcriptionists who wish to expand their professional responsibilities may become quality assurance specialists, editors, supervisors. Experienced medical transcriptionists may become teachers, working in schools and colleges to educate future medical transcription professionals as managers, department heads, or owners of medical transcription businesses.

➤ **Where can I learn more about medical transcription?**

Go to the AAMT website, <http://www.aamt.org>. Click on the Visitor Center > About Medical Transcription. Follow the related links of information.



HOW DO I TRAIN FOR MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTION?

➤ **What is the initial point of contact to begin MT education?**

<http://www.aamt.org>

The American Association for Medical Transcription (AAMT) is the recognized leader in establishing medical transcription styles, forms, and practices. It is the organization that represents MTs globally to direct the evolution of the medical transcription profession, to advance and represent the profession of medical transcription through the promotion of quality healthcare documentation. Its purpose is to set and uphold standards for education and practice in the field of medical transcription that ensure the highest level of accuracy, privacy, and security of healthcare documentation for the U.S. healthcare system in order to protect public health, increase patient safety, and improve quality of care for healthcare consumers. AAMT provides medical transcriptionists with tools to improve patient safety and quality of care.

➤ **Which schools are approved?**

<http://www.aamt.org/scriptcontent/mtapproved.cfm>

There are many training programs that make big promises about their ability to prepare you for job readiness so that you can work from home and make a lot of money. The reality is that very few of those programs have done their homework about the kind of curriculum it takes to ensure the level of job readiness that the industry demands from a graduate. Despite the fact that AAMT has provided standards for MT education, there are still many MT programs online and at the community college level that are operating below those standards.

Go to the online AAMT Home Page > Visitor Center > Choosing an MT School. This outlines the criteria AAMT considers essential to an effective educational program. You can use this information as a checklist to evaluate any of the ACCP-approved schools you may consider.

As you will note in "Choosing an MT School," it is recommended that prospective students look for schools whose advertising emphasizes excellence in medical transcription, rather than focusing on the ideas of working at home or completing a program rapidly. It is also recommended that prospective students look for programs that focus solely on medical transcription, rather than offering courses for a number of different professions.

For that reason, AAMT recently established an education program approval process to evaluate programs that teach medical transcription. These programs satisfy all the requirements AAMT has established and have demonstrated a meritorious record of job placement for their graduates. These programs are highly regarded by MT employers who seek out these graduates because of their



job readiness. Detailed information about approved schools is found on the AAMT website <http://www.aamt.org/scriptcontent/mtapproved.cfm>

A joint committee, the Approval Committee for Certificate Programs, (ACCP) was established by AAMT and AHIMA for certifying and approving medical transcription education programs. The ACCP education approval committee approved the first school in 2005. **The ACCP education approval program is ongoing. Visit the website frequently to note newly approved schools.**

Employers in today's production-focused environment do not have the resources to hand-hold substandard graduates through a long acclimation period of on-the-job training. It is costly and time-consuming, and many employers no longer take a risk on graduates from programs that do not have a good track record of graduating job-ready MTs. Employers are now turning to the ACCP education approval process to set the standard for entry to practice. Graduates from the approved programs continue to be highly sought after by industry employers for that reason.

➤ **What should I ask when I contact a school?**

Use the "Choosing an MT School" tip sheet as a checklist. Add your own questions and use the sheet to answer every question for every school you consider.

Ask about the amount of authentic physician dictation which is used for practice and then make appropriate use of every opportunity to practice. If the dictation is not there, the best student is unlikely to succeed. "Authentic dictation" is actually dictated by real clinicians under real circumstances; regardless how hard anyone tries to duplicate authenticity, there is something about reading that gives it a rhythm and flow that you will not encounter in real life.

Ask whether there are real transcriptionists (preferably CMTs) teaching the transcription practice portion of the program or mentoring students through transcription practice. Real MTs bring on-the-job experience to your academic studies and to transcription practice.

Interview the instructors and directors of the programs, the people with whom you will be interacting. Talk with them by phone and see with whom you have the best rapport. All things being equal (including the authentic dictation advice above), choose the school with whom you feel you can establish the best relationship. It's difficult to learn medical transcription under the best of conditions; it won't help at all if you find yourself in a situation where you just don't "click" with an instructor.



➤ **Is distance-learning a good idea?**

Ask yourself questions: Am I able to work independently? If I work elsewhere and/or have children, am I able to find the necessary time and privacy for uninterrupted study? Am I self-directed? Are my computer skills such that I need only minimal support? Can I establish a schedule and stick to it? Am I a critical thinker to reason through some problems on my own? (You may not always have access to immediate feedback, even in the best of schools.)

➤ **Why are some schools more expensive than others?**

Only a detailed comparison of education program benefits and resources can help you reasonably determine why one school may charge more than another. Again, use the "Choosing an MT School" document from the AAMT website. Go item-by-item down the list and evaluate the school you've chosen. If you have more than one possible school in mind, you may want to make a spreadsheet or table and compare the responses you get from the 2 schools in question.

➤ **How long does it take to become a medical transcriptionist?**

Generally speaking, MT courses take 12-18 months to complete. This varies with each approved school and can be best determined by reviewing the websites and curricula and interviewing the administration of each school you consider. Another subjective factor depends on how quickly you grasp the information and how many hours per day you spend pursuing your goal.



HOW DOES APPRENTICESHIP WORK?

➤ **What is an apprenticeable occupation?**

An apprenticeable occupation is a skilled trade which possesses all of the following characteristics.

It is customarily learned in a practical way through a structured, systematic program of on-the-job supervised training. It is clearly identified and commonly recognized throughout an industry. It involves manual, mechanical and technical skills and knowledge which require a minimum of 2,000 hours of on-the job work experience. It requires related instruction to supplement the on-the-job training.

Specifically, the MT Registered Apprenticeship candidate is a graduate from an ACCP-approved school recognized by MTIA who has earned the RMT credential from AAMT. This makes the MT eligible to apply to MTIA for the Registered Apprenticeship Program and be placed with an employer as a 2-year apprentice in the area of acute care.

➤ **What role does government play in MT apprenticeship?**

The National Apprenticeship Act of 1937 authorizes the federal government, in cooperation with the states, to oversee the nation's apprenticeship system. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, in conjunction with state apprenticeship agencies, is responsible for registering apprenticeship programs that meet federal and state standards, issuing Certificates of Completion to apprentices, encouraging the development of new programs through marketing and technical assistance, protecting the safety of and welfare of apprentices, and assuring that all programs provide high quality training to their apprentices.

The Registered Apprenticeship Program, sponsored by the Medical Transcription Industry Association (MTIA), offers structured, on-the-job learning, and related technical instruction for qualified medical transcriptionists entering the profession.



Why does the Department of Defense consider this career appropriate for apprenticeship for military spouses?

According to Department of Defense research, there are 700,000 military spouses. As of March 2006, graduates of selected medical transcription training programs will now have access to registered apprenticeship programs, as the U.S. Department of Labor has now declared medical transcription to be an apprenticeable profession – the first step in establishing a national apprenticeship program. The Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services approved the application for apprenticeability determination submitted by the Medical Transcription Industry Association (MTIA).

Under standards established by this apprenticeship program, the graduate MT will be facilitated to transition from student to an employable, productive, and viable career for which there is currently a shortage of professionals. Based on the availability of approved training programs and hiring practices along with the projected future growth of the industry, the Department of Defense and Department of Labor together with AAMT, support medical transcription courses for assisting military spouse employability.

➤ How does Registered Apprenticeship work?

Apprenticeship programs are operated by both the public and private sectors. Apprenticeship sponsors, who are employers, employer associations, and labor-management organizations, register their programs with federal and state government agencies. Sponsors provide on-the-job learning and academic instruction to apprentices according to their industry standards and licensing requirements.

Through the [Apprenticeship Agreement](#), an apprentice as an employee receives supervised, structured on-the-job training combined with related technical instruction. Related instruction is a required component of an apprenticeship program which supplements the on-the-job training. A minimum of 144 hours per year is required for each occupation. The related instruction may be given in a classroom through trade, industrial or correspondence courses of equivalent value, or other forms of self study approved by the registration/approval agency.

Upon completing an apprenticeship of 1-5 years (2,000 hours to 10,000 hours), the worker receives an Apprenticeship Completion Certificate and is recognized as a qualified worker nationwide. This certificate is one of the oldest, most basic, and most highly portable industry credentials in use today. The certificate is issued by a federally approved State Apprenticeship Council or Agency or, in



those states not having such an agency, by the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training.

➤ **Are apprentices paid?**

Yes, apprentices in Registered Apprenticeship programs earn while they learn, because they are full-time employees during their apprenticeship. A progressively increasing schedule of wages is based on the experienced worker's hourly wage of the apprentice's occupation. These wages increase upon demonstration of satisfactory progress in both related instruction and on-the-job training until wages reach 85% to 90% of the rate paid the experienced worker in the occupation. Generally, apprentices start at 50% of the wage an employer pays an experienced worker in that occupation (but the apprentice cannot receive less than the state minimum wage). The apprentices' wages are increased periodically throughout the apprenticeship to reflect their mastery of the occupational skills and their ability to work independently. In developing and implementing a wage schedule, the sponsor agrees to grant periodic wage increments when the apprentice is performing satisfactorily.

A successful Registered Apprenticeship program can

- Attract highly qualified applicants.
- Reduce turnover.
- Value the employee commitment to training.
- Improve employee morale.
- Reduce absenteeism.
- Increase productivity.
- Reduce the cost of training.
- Improve community relations.
- Improve employee relations.
- Ensure availability of related technical instruction.
- Enhance problem-solving ability of workers.
- Ensure versatility of workers.
- Address the industry's need to remain competitive by investing in the development and continuous upgrade of the skills of its workforce.



Benefits to the employer

- Develops a reservoir of skilled workers, many of whom are potential supervisors.
- Lowers costs by increasing productivity as employees become more skilled.
- Reduces turnover and absenteeism through employee motivation to learn new job skills.
- Supports State and National recognition for efforts to train people in skills necessary to become contributing members of society.
- Provides a more flexible workforce because of greater employee skills.
- Creates customer satisfaction generated by quality workmanship.

Benefits to the apprentice

- Apprenticeships often serve as an entry point into a career that would otherwise be closed to an individual due to lack of experience.
- Apprentices earn while they learn. They learn a skilled trade while earning increasing wages and have a sense of job security.
- The skills apprentices learn are portable, flexible, and transferable from one employer to another and generally from one area of the country to another.
- Serving an apprenticeship provides a person with a lifetime skill and a comprehensive knowledge of the trade which enables the apprentice to compete more effectively in the labor market.

➤ **Whom does Registered Apprenticeship serve?**

In the United States today, some 40,000 program sponsors offer Registered Apprenticeship training to approximately 325,000 apprentices. These training programs serve a diverse population including minorities, women, youth and dislocated workers as well as disabled workers who qualify otherwise.

Currently, at least two-thirds of all apprenticeship training positions are in the construction and manufacturing industries. Experts agree that apprenticeship has the potential to benefit numerous other industries as well (e.g., service, retail, healthcare, public sector). Thus, the possibilities for expanding the apprenticeship model are virtually unlimited, thereby meeting the needs of many more American companies and citizens in search of high quality training opportunities - are virtually unlimited.



- **What is the point of contact for federally approved MT Registered Apprenticeship Program?** <http://www.mtia.com>

P.J. Posey, CMT, Chair, MTIA Workforce Development Committee

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214-929-7577



CAN I FIND EMPLOYMENT?

➤ How do I find employment once I complete school?

Medical transcription should not be viewed as a part-time job for those entering the profession for the first time. Those who commit themselves to working full time in order to build up their level of productivity are considered to be a good investment for the employer. It may be possible for an individual to scale back to part-time work after having mastered the medical language and become proficient in medical transcription technology, but it is unwise to look upon medical transcription as a part-time opportunity when first entering the profession.

Two best sources for a job lie within yourself coupled with your school. Graduates from approved schools who demonstrate 98% accuracy in transcription are the most sought after by employers. Push yourself to excel, and work with the contacts your school has to place you. Employers are aware of the reputations the schools have and often have standing requests for their graduates, and best students often have choices where to work.

In addition to traditional employability which abounds, the MT skill set is applicable to support alternative health practitioners, insurance companies, scientific research facilities, medical malpractice attorneys, medical society offices, private detectives, academia with science or medicine departments, biotechnology companies (research and manufacturing), forensic psychiatry, pharmaceutical industry (research, development, sales, support), medical software development, veterinary offices, managed care organizations, medical and allied health publishing entities, and many more.

➤ Can I work at home?

While many medical transcriptionists do work from their homes, the opportunity to work from home is not sufficient reason to enter this challenging profession. Medical transcriptionists must be intensely focused on medical language and the importance of documenting highly sensitive patient healthcare documents and must be dedicated to quality, privacy, and accuracy in all of their efforts. Medical transcription is not "just a typing job," but rather a professional field where only the most dedicated practitioners will be successful.

More and more employers are allowing their experienced MTs to work from home. However, many will require you to work at their facility or in their office before sending you home to work on your own. The home transcriptionist needs an excellent knowledge of the medical language, as well as the English language, and may have to make a substantial investment in reference materials and equipment. Those who provide the highest quality transcription are most



likely to be successful. However, there are medical transcription service owners (MTSOs) who hire MTs and train them, providing mentors and entry-level transcription initially.

➤ **Can I be self-employed or own my own MT business?**

The independent medical transcriptionist (IC) or medical transcription service owner (MTSO) should have an excellent knowledge of not only the medical language and the English language, but the language of business as well. You should be willing to make a substantial investment in medical reference materials and equipment. The successful independent MT will maintain a high level of quality. Federal regulations call for special security precautions when dealing with protected patient information; this may involve some expense on your part. You are cautioned that the IRS has specific regulations about home businesses and independent contractors. Be sure to seek the advice of a qualified attorney and/or tax advisor.

Also see the AAMT publication, “Tip Sheet for Becoming a Self-Employed Medical Transcriptionist,” which is available on the AAMT website.

➤ **What can I expect to be paid once educated and having fulfilled MT apprenticeship?**

Medical transcriptionists may be paid in any of a variety of ways, but chiefly by the hour, by production, or by a combination of hourly pay plus incentive pay for production.

You can find employment statistics, wage ranges, and expected growth of employment for medical transcription on multiple BLS websites. The Bureau of Labor Statistics classification code for medical transcriptionist is 319094.

Helpful websites for learning MT earnings are provided by the BLS.

www.bls.gov/oco/oco20024.htm

www.data.bls.gov/oes/areatype.do

www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes319094.htm

www.bls.gov/oco/ocos271.htm.

Earnings vary considerably. The Bureau of Labor Statistics at the Department of Labor (<http://www.bls.gov>) shows Wages by Area and Occupation. Choose 31-0000 Healthcare Support Occupations, then 31-9094 Medical Transcriptionists. This will allow you to search for MT salaries in your own state and possibly even your own city.



An annual survey is reported by *Advance Magazine for Health Information Professionals* which notes that certified medical transcriptionists earn as much as 1/3 more than their noncertified counterparts. <http://health-information.advanceweb.com/Main.aspx>.

➤ **What happens when my family has a permanent change of duty station (PCS)?**

This is perhaps the best characteristic of medical transcription. The job is portable, flexible, and employability remains much the same.



WHO PROMOTES MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTION?

➤ **What professional organizations serve the needs of medical transcription?**

AAMT: American Association for Medical Transcription. To advance and represent the profession of medical transcription through the promotion of quality healthcare documentation. Participate in the development of healthcare documentation standards to protect consumer privacy and security of medical information. <http://aamt.org>

AHIMA: American Health Information Management Association. AHIMA is the premier association of health information management (HIM) professionals. AHIMA's 50,000 members are dedicated to the effective management of personal health information needed to deliver quality healthcare to the public. Founded in 1928 to improve the quality of medical records, AHIMA is committed to advancing the HIM profession in an increasingly electronic and global environment through leadership in advocacy, education, certification, and lifelong learning. <http://www.ahima.org>

MTIA: Medical Transcription Industry Association. A not-for-profit trade association serving the needs of medical transcription companies, vendors, and health information management professionals. <http://www.mtia.com/index.cfm>

➤ **What credentials and designations are recognized by employers and peers?** <http://www.aamt.org/scriptcontent/creddesig.cfm>

To ensure that medical transcriptionists meet professional standards of excellence, AAMT issues 2 credentials and 1 designation.

Registered Medical Transcriptionist (RMT): AAMT offers a voluntary credentialing exam to individuals who wish to become Registered Medical Transcriptionists (RMTs). This exam is applicable for recent graduates of medical transcription education programs or MTs with fewer than 2 years' experience in acute care. This exam is considered a level 1 exam. Individuals interested in this exam may not hold a CMT credential.

Certified Medical Transcriptionist (CMT): AAMT offers a voluntary certification exam to individuals who wish to become Certified Medical Transcriptionists (CMTs). Individuals interested in this exam should have 2 years of acute care (or equivalent) transcription experience. This exam is considered a level 2 exam.



Fellow of AAMT (FAAMT): A Fellow of AAMT signifies that you have achieved a balance of successful activities in your profession that goes beyond regular transcription practice.

No educational program can offer “certification.” While a program may provide its graduates with a certificate of completion, this is not the same as either the RMT (Registered Medical Transcriptionist) or the CMT (Certified Medical Transcriptionist) credentials that are recognized in the industry and achieved only through successful completion of examinations administered by Prometric for AAMT in electronic testing centers throughout the world. The RMT exam for level 1 transcriptionists is available for new graduates and single-specialty transcriptionists. At the present time, a medical transcriptionist must have at least 2 years of acute-care (hospital reports) or multispecialty transcription experience to be eligible to take the CMT examination for level 2 transcriptionists. The CMT credential should be the eventual goal for every working medical transcriptionist.

➤ **Why are certificates, credentials, designations desirable?**

A growing number of companies in the US are recognizing the link between certified professionals and quality documentation outcomes. Many are now seeking, reimbursing, and compensating the credential in the marketplace.

➤ **Where can I find other military spouse MTs to talk to?**

AAMT has formed a Special Interest Group for military spouses. This is a group of MTs, specifically created for those who support each other in the military, and their AAMT-MTIA liaisons. It is a resource to help with MT-related issues that are unique to military spouses and a place to come with questions. You can find someone to refer you to additional information, when necessary.

Student membership in AAMT at both the local and national levels helps you stay informed within the industry and make connections. Benefits of student membership appear here:

http://www.aamt.org/scriptcontent/membership_category.cfm

Student members are automatically members of the Student Alliance. This is an alliance of students and postgraduates who will educate new members on AAMT benefits currently available, as well as assist with the creation and implementation of new benefits tailored to the unique needs of its members. The group's focus is to educate students and postgraduates on the purpose, structure, and goals of AAMT and to bridge the gap between student and practitioner membership. <http://www.aamt.org/ScriptContent/studentalliance.cfm>



Military Spouse Career Center

In addition to E-Mentoring, an online forum is maintained by AAMT where MTs discuss issues surrounding all aspects of medical transcription, the industry, and organization itself, available online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year,



WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTION?

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the projected growth rate of new jobs in the healthcare professions will be 28.8% until 2010. This is twice the rate of job growth in non-healthcare professions. The Bureau of Labor Statistics also predicts a need for 5.3 million healthcare workers to fill job openings created by departures and new positions. Data further indicates increases in some of the allied health professions as follows: Cardiovascular Technology - 34.9%; Clinical Laboratory Technology - 17%; Health Information Technician - 49%; Radiologic Technicians and Technologists - 23.1%; Radiation Therapists - 22.8%; Respiratory Therapy Technicians - 34.6%. The supply of allied health professionals is not keeping up with demand with overall enrollment in allied health educational programs declining over the last ten years. There are not enough graduates to meet the current or future demands.

The MT field is changing and you need to enter it with those expectations. MTs are accustomed to change—from manual to electric typewriters to computers, from handheld microcassettes to digital electronic voice file transmission, from functions of editing voice recognition software to more data capture opportunities than can be imagined.

Whatever you have been exposed to as “medical transcription” will evolve significantly by the time you finish school; however, your MT skill set will be in high demand for a broad range of new roles, provided you have the *core values of excellence, integrity, passion and work ethic* to go along with it. The “cream of the crop,” most capable MTs are on the leading edge to perform as accuracy analysts, auditors, records editors, correctionists, abstractors, and other designations as the market demands.



➤ What do military spouses say about this career?

"Do you get sick of job-hunting every time you move to a new duty station? Do potential employers seem somewhat reluctant to hire you because you move every few years? As an MT, moving to a new duty station does not affect your job or employability – you take your job with you!"

"Aside from the ability to work from home, one of the greatest satisfactions of becoming an MT, for me, is how it fits almost perfectly into the military lifestyle. As an MT, it is easier to be available to share that time together than it is with any other profession I can think of. Have you ever tried to get time off to see your child's school play or take your husband to the staging area to see him off before a deployment, or go see him pin on a new rank? Does your current job give you a 12-hour window to complete your day's work? Medical transcription offers flexibility that a working military spouse needs and appreciates."

"I have really found my place in the world with medical transcription. I have a career ahead of me that I love and is all my own. It will not suffer or be affected by my military lifestyle, and it is sensitive to this unpredictable way of life. I have been able to remain in school and will be able to remain employed no matter where the military sends us or how often they move us. It will only take me about 18 months total to complete the course work and graduate, versus 8 to 10 years or more to complete a 4-year degree, and I will not spend years paying back student loans. When my husband retires, following at least 20 years of service, I will already be set in my career. It is a comfort to know that when we separate from the military and transition back to civilian life, my career will already be established, which is one less thing we have to worry about. Aside from serving the remainder of our active duty years in one place, my husband never being deployed again, or retirement at 20 years as an E9, I can think of nothing that gives me greater happiness, fulfillment, and security than becoming an MT."

Debbie Kean, Military Wife, MT
Okinawa



"I have been a military spouse for 18 years. We decided to have children early on, and I had not finished college before we started our family. Moving every 2 to 3 years certainly did not make it easy to finish—not to say that I couldn't have, we just always put our kids first—and about that, we have no regrets. When we moved to Virginia last year, I thought I would finally get to 'finish' school since my boys were getting older, going to back to public school after having been homeschooled for 5 years. (another decision we made to accommodate our nomadic lifestyle)! I had planned on going to Northern Virginia Community College as part of their Physical Therapy Assistant program, but because of Virginia residency issues, it just wasn't meant to be. I was browsing their catalog and saw classes on medical transcription, and that started the ball rolling. I started researching how I could become trained to work from home in that field and found a school.

"My ACCP-approved school allows me to study at home, and a medical transcription career will allow me to work at home. Transcription also allows portability not enjoyed in many other careers. Military families endure so many upheavals and changes, I have always seen my ability to be a 'constant' for our family as a big plus. Learning medical transcription also will fit very nicely should I decide in the future to go back to school and pursue PTA.

"My boys will be out of high school and probably out of our home in just a few short years, medical transcription will allow me to still be there for them. The investment in their upbringing will have eternal rewards. And I also cherish my role in making our home a peaceful place for my dear hubby to come home to.

"Military spouses are a loyal bunch. We must be, to follow our men all around the world! We know how to take care of things on our own, but we know how to be part of a larger group. These are attributes that will make military spouses stand out in transcription!"

Maria McElroy, Military Spouse, MT



"I married my husband in June 2005. He is currently serving in the Air Force and we are stationed out here at Edwards AFB, CA. I've been working in the construction industry for 6 years now. Knowing that my husband and I would eventually move one day, I started looking at different careers that could and would cater to our lifestyle.

"I came upon MT in January 2006. I found that this career field gave me the flexibility that I need to continue to bring in an income while still following my husband's career through the Air Force. Also, I want to be able to be a stay-at-home mom when my husband and I have children, which is still a few years away. I do not want to look for a new job at every new station we are sent too. I find that being an MT will follow me wherever I go. My husband has been very supportive of my decision to change careers, seeing as how there might not be construction jobs where we will be stationed.

Thanks,
Amanda Griffin, Military Wife



"I may be unique in that my husband and I were married before he entered the military. I had almost finished my associates' degree in Science when I was offered to run my own new store, and much to my parent's dismay, I took the job and quit school. That is where I met my husband. I don't think I realized the sacrifice or what it meant to be a military wife when 'we' decided to go into the military. We had our first child and then my husband went away for basic training, advanced training, several duty stations, and now a year in Iraq.

"I worked several years again for the state of Texas. Oh, the sacrifices that I made, working for the state—it was over 75 miles from home (one-way), my school-age children were now latch-key kids, and my husband was being shipped off to Iraq for a year. This was really a strain on us both financially and mentally.

"I briefly recall an advertisement for medical transcription. I thought it was a scam because it sounded 'too good to be true.' I found MT again about 6-8 months before I enrolled. I researched the top schools and scoured any and all of the online forums about medical transcription. I knew the funding was going to be the main issue. Even though we fair pretty well and have some savings, the \$3,000+ seemed out of reach.

"I may be unique in the loyalty and support I give to my husband and family. Many women would never dream of discarding their career goals, let alone put them on the back burner. Just as soldiers have their mission, military wives have their mission to keep the home front running smoothly. Since I have started MT school, I have an achievable goal and a bright future. I have hope where normally there would be a sense of impending doom. I will never have to quit my job again because of a military move. I am learning skills that are important and valued in the job market. As I begin my journey as a MT, I will have the best of both worlds. I will be able to run my home and work from home.

"Until the end of 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' is completed, soldiers will leave their families every 12 months. For some military spouses this means that they move back home to be closer to family, thus leaving their jobs. With medical transcription those military spouses would not have to stop working if they have to leave their duty station. My husband and I have had so many conversations over these past years (14 in the military and close to 16 married) about my sacrifices. He is beyond excited and proud of me and my election to become a medical transcriptionist. Although he is leaving this weekend for Iraq, he knows when he returns that I will be a working MT, not a student!

I used to be a job coach and even spoke to the state legislators on the welfare-to-work projects in Washington State. I plan on being in Florida this April!"

Susan Ramis, Military Spouse, MT



“Emergency! Emergency! Emergency!” And, then, “We need a MedEvac!” This is what I heard April 25, 2004, at FOB Summerall in Bayji, Iraq.

You may be asking at this point, “What on earth was a medical transcriptionist doing in Iraq?”

In March 2003, my husband went to Iraq to work for a civilian company. While he was there, he stayed at a military base in Kuwait and traveled into the southern portion of Iraq to go to work every day, then back to Kuwait at night. On his days off, he was able to travel into Kuwait City and go to the movies, to the mall, etc., kind of like being at home in the United States. However, I was not able to go with him.

By the time he returned in July 2003, I had taken Part II of my test to become a Certified Medical Transcriptionist (CMT). In August 2003, my results came back that said I had passed! YAY!! About the same time, my husband got a call from the company he had worked for earlier in Iraq, asking him to return for a year-long contract. He initially turned them down, because he was not going to go back unless I could go with him. Then, a week later they called and said they had a job for me, also, as a Field Office Administrator. We would be assigned to the same location and be able to be together while we were there. We jumped at the chance, since we would both be making a lot more money than we were able to in the United States and, if we stayed for a year, a lot of it would be tax free.

In September 2003, we went to Ft. Bliss in El Paso, Texas, to “prepare” for our “tour of duty.” After going through the training and receiving our equipment, we ended up getting delayed for 3 weeks, as they were not allowing any more civilians to go to Iraq without flak vests. Finally, the time came for us to depart the US, October 9, 2003.

I experienced a life-changing event that happened on April 25, 2004. While in Iraq, we had our own civilian security team who protected our convoys wherever and whenever we had to travel. This particular day, one of the vehicles was attacked by an improvised explosive device (IED) and small arms fire. That’s when the call came over the radio. Our Security Manager called for a MedEvac. He reported one possible KIA and two WIA. Everyone at the base office went into action. Someone manned the radio, someone called for a MedEvac, someone went to the military to alert them of the situation, and I sat at my computer and reported everything through Instant Messaging to the Field Office Administrator who worked in Management in our Baghdad office.



Everything seemed so unreal. It was like I was in a dream. My stomach was in knots, my head was spinning, but as I typed, my nerves calmed down a bit and I felt a little better, in spite of the tragic situation that was unfolding. I owe my ability to communicate during this situation to my medical transcription training: again, being able to type quickly and accurately; being able to work well under pressure, even in the face of emergency; and being able to “detach” from situations but still get the job done. I was able to type what was taking place and being transmitted over the radio almost word for word, therefore keeping everyone in the Baghdad office abreast of what was transpiring. Little did I know, it would be printed out and be part of the files. In cases like these, the military comes in and investigates, and that was part of what they examined.

Even though I was able to keep my wits about me during the emergency situation, as soon as it was all over, I broke down and cried. All three people ended up dying: one immediately, one on the MedEvac flight, and one a few days later on his flight to Landstuhl in Germany.

This, of course, was not the only tragic situation that happened while I was in Iraq, but it was the one where I was directly involved and was able to use my skills to assist in an emergency.

While my husband and I signed on for a year-long contract, we really were not sure how long we would be staying in Iraq. It was possible to stay there for 5 years or more. After working so hard to pass my CMT exam, I did not want to go for too long and lose my certification, so I had our friend who was taking care of our mail forward my JAAMT magazines to me as soon as they arrived. I thought that way I could at least do the quizzes and read the articles to have some way of maintaining certification.

As it happened, though, not only did I get to take the quizzes and read articles in the JAAMT, but online courses began. I took continuing education courses directly from Iraq. Of course, I had no foot pedal, no transcription software, and no reference materials. No problem! I was able to download ExpressScribe off the Internet (for free). It was a little more difficult with no foot pedal, but I was able to manage.

Overall, my experience in Iraq was new and different and scary! As I watch news today, I am continually reminded of my time spent in Iraq. I am proud to live here, and I am proud of our troops that are fighting for the freedom and the blessings that we all have here. It's great to be home!

RuthAnne Darr, CMT
Civilian Contractor Wife
Excerpts from JAAMT, May 2005



SUMMARY

AAMT works together with AHIMA as a joint committee (ACCP) to provide education approval to only those schools which demonstrate the ability to provide excellent job readiness skills and have a reputation for highly sought-after graduates. For students, grads, and individual professionals, AAMT provides events, products, continuing education opportunities, certification, and networking.

MTIA accepts and processes applications from employers who wish to participate in the Registered Apprenticeship Program. MTIA coordinates employers with applicants to enter the 2-year program of apprenticeship in acute care.

The Department of Defense supports the Department of Labor in making the program available in coordination with AAMT and MTIA, particularly to military spouses, because medical transcription is a an ideal, tailor-made fit for the military spouse.



STRATEGIC GOALS

Goals of OATELS (Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services)

- To expand access to the apprenticeship system to employers, particularly those representing new and emerging industries.
- To strengthen system linkages with the workforce investment and educational systems.
- To increase the number and diversity of apprentices.
- To enhance the quality of apprenticeship programs.

Goals of the Registered Apprenticeship Program

1. Develop and implement a targeted, coordinated outreach effort.
2. Promote career lattice as a valuable component of Registered Apprenticeship and explore ways to extend them.
3. Conduct a targeted outreach effort and promote the sharing of recruitment tactics that lead to increased participation of women and minorities.
4. Facilitate the development of partnerships between Registered Apprenticeship programs and the education and workforce investment systems and other training programs.



RESOURCES

Government

<http://www.doleta.gov>

<http://www.doleta.gov/jobseekers/Apprent.cfm/>

<http://www.CareerOneStop.org>

MT Agencies, Schools, Employers

<http://www.aamt.org>

<http://www.aamt.org/scriptcontent/mtapproved.cfm>

<http://www.mtia.com>

<http://www.aamt.org/ScriptContent/whocarescert.cfm>

MT Compensation

<http://www.bls.gov/oco/oco20024.htm>

<http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes319094.htm>

<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos271.htm>

<http://health-information.advanceweb.com/Main.aspx>