

How health care wages in Alaska rank

Alaska's pay first in U.S. overall, high for most occupations

By AIKO ZAGUIRRE

Health care practitioners and technicians make an average of \$98,020 a year in Alaska, making Alaska the highest-paying state for these jobs overall. (See Exhibit 1.) The national average is \$80,760.

Hawaii and California rank second and third at \$96,670 and \$96,130, and Mississippi is last at \$64,620.

By occupation, Alaska ranks in the top 10 for most of the 44 on the list in Exhibit 2 and pays the highest average wage in the U.S. for optometrists, pharmacists, dental hygienists, and general health technologists and technicians.

Alaska's highest paying health care occupations overall

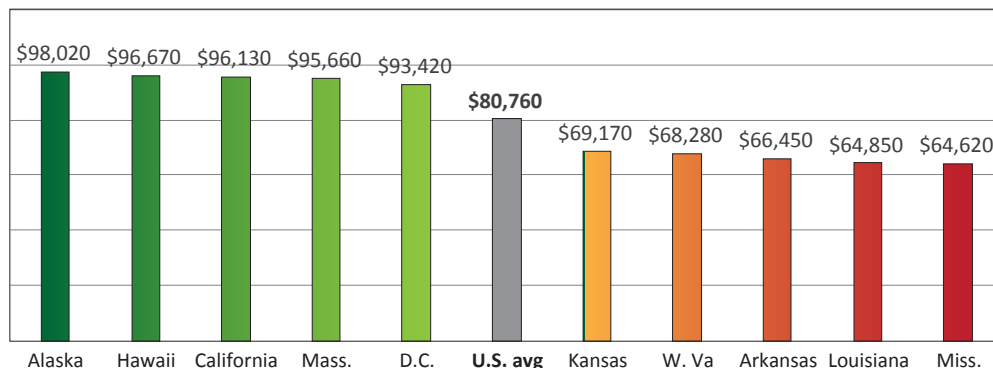
In Alaska, the occupation with the highest average wages among those studied is pediatricians at \$265,750, followed by obstetricians and gynecologists at \$261,680. The other positions that make more than \$200,000 a year are general physicians and surgeons, psychiatrists, dentists, internists, and family and general practitioners.

Earnings may be considerably higher for specialists who are considered self-employed, including partners in a medical practice who don't receive a wage or salary, and they are not included here.

Text continues on page 6

1 Overall Highest and Lowest Paying States

AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGES FOR HEALTH CARE OCCUPATIONS, MAY 2017



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section: Occupational Employment Statistics

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Health Care Wages by State

RANKINGS BY HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONER OR TECHNICAL OCCUPATION,* MAY 2017

Occupation	Alaska Avg Wage	AK Rank	Highest Paying State	Lowest Paying State	U.S. Avg
Optometrists	\$161,620	1st	AK	DC (\$89,640)	\$119,100
Pharmacists	\$138,020	1st	AK	UT (\$111,110)	\$121,710
Dental Hygienists	\$107,190	1st	AK	AL (\$46,290)	\$74,680
Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	\$62,200	1st	AK	LA (\$36,010)	\$46,690
Pediatricians, General	\$265,750	2nd	MS (\$274,470)	KS (\$117,840)	\$187,540
Nurse Practitioners	\$125,140	2nd	CA (\$126,770)	TN (\$93,970)	\$107,480
Respiratory Therapists	\$73,740	2nd	CA (\$79,680)	MS (\$48,810)	\$61,810
Dietitians and Nutritionists	\$68,310	2nd	CA (\$72,130)	MS (\$49,110)	\$60,150
Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	\$66,070	2nd	RI (\$68,290)	AR (\$42,800)	\$53,230
Surgical Technologists	\$60,180	2nd	CA (\$61,240)	AL (\$36,320)	\$48,060
Medical Records and Health Information Technicians	\$54,170	2nd	NJ (\$58,080)	MS (\$33,320)	\$42,820
Physicians and Surgeons, All Other	\$256,630	3rd	NH (\$275,050)	NE (\$167,230)	\$211,390
Psychiatrists	\$248,440	3rd	CA (\$259,570)	ID (\$137,280)	\$216,090
Dentists, General	\$237,140	3rd	DE (\$257,290)	LA (\$115,050)	\$174,110
Physical Therapists	\$97,150	3rd	NV (\$102,860)	SD (\$75,850)	\$88,080
Speech-Language Pathologists	\$91,710	3rd	CT (\$93,340)	SD (\$60,030)	\$79,770
Occupational Health and Safety Specialists	\$86,080	3rd	RI (\$92,600)	SC (\$60,370)	\$73,600
Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	\$48,420	3rd	WA (\$68,970)	WV (\$28,320)	\$36,700
Chiropractors	\$106,600	4th	RI (\$147,900)	UT (\$51,030)	\$83,350
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	\$56,580	4th	RI & MA (\$57,800)	WV (\$36,190)	\$45,710
Dietetic Technicians	\$39,790	4th	OR (\$43,790)	MO (\$22,400)	\$29,610
Pharmacy Technicians	\$39,640	4th	WA (\$42,440)	WV (\$27,900)	\$33,060
Physician Assistants	\$116,460	6th	WA (\$120,200)	MS (\$70,190)	\$104,760
Registered Nurses	\$87,510	6th	CA (\$102,700)	SD (\$57,010)	\$73,550
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	\$82,710	6th	CA (\$91,700)	AL (\$55,750)	\$73,200
Radiologic Technologists	\$70,960	6th	CA (\$77,650)	AL (\$47,670)	\$60,320
Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	\$42,030	7th	MN (\$48,770)	AR (\$30,310)	\$37,500
Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	\$79,790	9th	CA (\$87,520)	LA (\$55,610)	\$70,490
Occupational Health and Safety Technicians	\$49,150	9th	DC (\$78,460)	IN (\$39,050)	\$53,930
Opticians, Dispensing	\$43,140	10th	MA (\$62,540)	KS (\$29,840)	\$39,070
Family and General Practitioners	\$223,090	11th	NH (\$258,670)	NM (\$160,780)	\$208,560
Obstetricians and Gynecologists	\$261,680	12th	ID (\$281,710)	MI (\$184,240)	\$235,240
Health Care Practitioners and Tech Workers, All Other	\$65,560	13th	MD (\$88,360)	AL (\$36,380)	\$60,600
Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	\$63,780	13th	D.C. (\$79,960)	WV (\$35,440)	\$57,250
Radiation Therapists	\$87,680	14th	CA (\$113,640)	WV (\$61,440)	\$85,190
Therapists, All Other	\$61,790	14th	NV (\$87,800)	WI (\$41,100)	\$58,290
Hearing Aid Specialists	\$56,300	15th	HI (\$79,900)	AR (\$34,610)	\$57,030
Psychiatric Technicians	\$37,260	16th	CA (\$57,080)	WV (\$23,040)	\$36,070
Nurse Anesthetists	\$184,040	18th	MT (\$252,460)	AZ (\$139,500)	\$169,450
Internists, General	\$229,820	20th	SD (\$282,980)	DC (\$122,790)	\$198,370
Health Diagnosing/Treating Practitioners, All Other	\$76,630	23rd	MD (\$123,350)	NE (\$43,620)	\$84,210
Occupational Therapists	\$82,810	24th	NV (\$103,280)	SD (\$66,990)	\$84,640
Athletic Trainers	\$46,240	27th	DC (\$67,190)	AR (\$39,040)	\$48,630
Nurse Midwives	\$83,580	34th	CA (\$132,480)	MO (\$69,450)	\$103,640

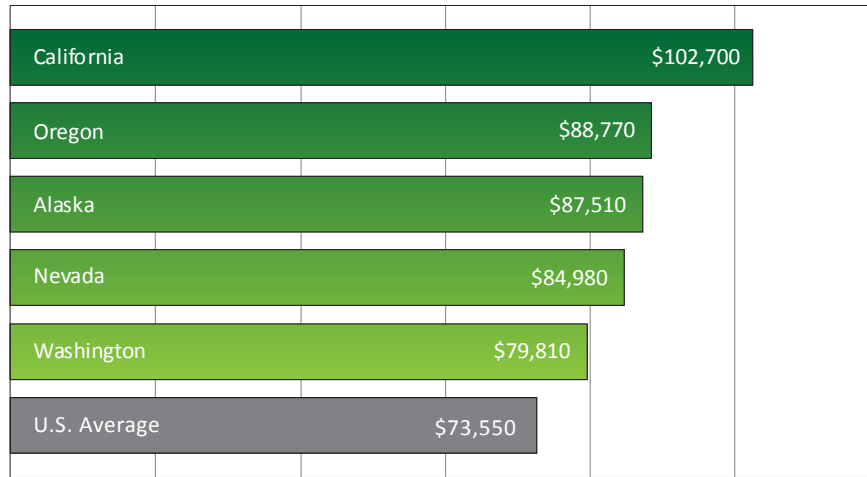
*Excludes health care support occupations and those with fewer than 30 workers in Alaska.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section: Occupational Employment Statistics

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Western States Pay High Nursing Wages

REGISTERED NURSES, AVERAGE, MAY 2017



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section: Occupational Employment Statistics

Nationally, just four occupations' average yearly wages top \$200,000. These four, in order, are obstetricians and gynecologists, psychiatrists, general physicians and surgeons, and family and general practitioners.

The highest-paying occupations aren't always where Alaska ranks highest. For example, pediatricians in Alaska rank second, and Alaska obstetricians and gynecologists rank 12th. Alaska's physicians and surgeons, psychiatrists, and dentists rank third for earnings, and family and general practitioners rank 11th.

The lowest paying occupations

The state's lower-paying health care occupations are all technicians, jobs that require less education and training than most at the higher end.

Psychiatric technicians are lowest at \$37,260 a year, followed by pharmacy and dietetic technicians at \$39,640 and \$39,790, respectively. These are also the bottom three earners nationally.

Health care is projected to be the fastest-growing industry in Alaska and in the nation over the next decade.

Alaska's wages for dietetic and pharmacy technicians are comparatively high, though, both ranking fourth nationally and paying just under \$40,000. The lowest-ranking states, Missouri and West Virginia, pay these two occupations just \$22,400 and \$27,900.

Another high-paying occupation in Alaska, internists, pays well above the national average at \$229,820, but that ranks 20th. The top ranking state, South Dakota, pays internists an average of \$282,980.

The differences between the top and bottom states can be extreme. For example, dental hygienists in Alaska, ranked first, make more than double Alabama's average wage, and Alaska optometrists make nearly double what they'd earn in bottom-ranked Washington, D.C.

Other positions show far less disparity. A pharmacist in Alaska would earn an average of \$138,020 but even the lowest state, Utah, pays only about \$28,000 less, on average.

Alaska's high rankings and where our highest-paying jobs fall

In addition to ranking first in four health care occupations, Alaska ranks second or third in another 14. (See Exhibit 2.)

Where Alaska ranks lower

Only two occupations in Alaska rank in the bottom half for average wages, and one of those two, athletic trainers, is barely below the middle at 27th. Athletic trainers in Alaska make just under the national average for that occupation, at \$46,240.

Other positions in Alaska that fall around the national average are occupational therapists at 24th, general health diagnosing and treating practitioners at 23rd, and internists at 20th.

Alaska's lowest ranking is for nurse midwives, at 34th. Nurse midwives make \$103,640 on average nationwide and just \$83,580 in Alaska. The highest-paying state is California at \$132,480, and the lowest is Missouri at \$69,450.

Pay for registered nurses, largest group by far, ranks sixth

Registered nurses stand out because of their especially high employment numbers in the state — no other health care occupation comes close. Alaska has 5,570 registered nurses, followed by 680 pharmacy technicians at a distant second.

Alaska has more RNs than workers in the next nine largest health care occupations combined. Registered nurses are also the largest health care occupation nationally.

Alaska's average pay for registered nurses ranks sixth nationally, at \$87,510. The national average is \$73,550, with pay ranging from just \$57,010 in South Dakota to \$102,700 in California.

The western states tend to pay more for nurses in general (see Exhibit 3), with California, Oregon, and Alaska all ranking higher than most central and eastern states. Hawaii's average wage is also relatively high.

Southern states' nursing wages are low, with Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee at the bottom.

These numbers don't include Alaska's additional 520 licensed practical and vocational nurses and 440 nurse

About the data

This article covers select health care occupations in Alaska that have at least 30 workers. It excludes health care support occupations such as home health aides, medical and dental assistants, massage therapists, and phlebotomists as well as loosely related occupations such as veterinarians.

All wages are annual, full-time estimates for May 2017, produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment Statistics program in cooperation with the Research and Analysis Section of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. R&A conducts a semiannual survey of employers for more than 800 occupations to determine the wages.

For detailed occupational wage data, including comparable data for the U.S. and other states, visit: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>.

practitioners, two occupations that are also among the largest on the list.

Nurse practitioners require considerable additional education and they perform many of the same services as doctors. The state's nurse practitioner wages rank second nationally at \$125,140, just behind California's \$126,770. Tennessee ranks last at \$93,970.

LPNs require less education and training than RNs, and their average wage in Alaska is considerably less at \$56,580, which ranks fourth among states. LPN wages range from \$36,190 in West Virginia to \$57,800 in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

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