



ALICIA VANDERVELDEN



Medical Assistant Apprentice

Allied Health West JATC

North Bend, Oregon

Originally from Coos Bay, Alicia has always had an interest in working in health care. She majored in Health at Western Oregon University and received her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certification from Lane Community College. After 4 years of working as a CNA, she began to feel burnt out, so she started working at a deli. She tried to go back to school, but her plans changed when she had her daughter. Life got even busier.

“It’s pretty nice to get my foot back in the door for schooling.”

Alicia got connected to work as a receptionist through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF. It was there that she saw a flyer for the Medical Assistant Apprenticeship Program with [Allied Health West](#).

Alicia’s previous work experience put her at the top of the applicant pool for the program, and she was accepted! Her apprenticeship program included two classes that were also required for the state’s Certified Clinical Medical Assistant test and concurrent employment at North Bend Medical Center (NBMC)—her goal. Between her on-the-job time at NBMC, her classes at Allied Health West, and her prior experience, she has nearly completed all her requirements.

At NBMC, Alicia works as a “floater,” doing a bit of everything. A normal day could include giving injections, taking patients’ blood pressure, temperature, heart rate, and pulse, and front office work, such as answering phone calls, ordering labs, and sending patient referrals. She has also gotten to learn new skills, such as giving shots, administering electrocardiograms (EKGs) and pulmonary function tests.

Alicia found a passion for working on EKGs, which measure electrical activity, heart rate, and blood flow from different points. Giving shots was difficult for Alicia at first, but in her apprenticeship program she got to practice on a fake arm called “Bob.” “Bob” helped her build confidence to be able to work with real patients. Having the chance to practice these skills in on-the-job training and in the classroom as an apprentice has been invaluable to her.

“A whole bunch of different providers gave me different ways to do something which was nice because sometimes there are four ways to do something and get the same results.”

Alicia recommends the apprenticeship program, and says it is a great way to learn and get paid at the same time. Her best advice to prospective apprentices is to stay on top of the homework and to avoid procrastinating! Alicia says that even on the most difficult or stressful days she makes sure to smile, both for the patients and for herself.

Q: WHAT DOES A MEDICAL ASSISTANT DO?

A: Medical Assistants perform administrative and certain clinical duties under the direction of a physician. Administrative duties may include scheduling appointments, maintaining medical records, billing, and coding information for insurance purposes. Clinical duties may include taking and recording vital signs and medical histories, preparing patients for examination, drawing blood, and administering medications as directed by physician.