# Who are Paraoptometrics?

Paraoptometrics are allied health personnel who extend the optometrist's capabilities by assuming routine and technical aspects of vision care services. Paraoptometrics are to optometrists what paralegals are to lawyers. A majority of optometrists utilize at least three paraoptometrics in the office. Well-trained personnel build an office-patient relationship which is not only invaluable to the optometrist, but also provides great satisfaction to both patients and staff. As a part of the vision care team, they help build patient confidence and satisfaction.

Depending upon experience, paraoptometrics perform a variety of duties such as front desk procedures, billing and coding of insurance claims, and patient scheduling. Under the supervision of their employing optometrist, paraoptometrics may also perform more clinical duties such as pre-testing patients, contact lens procedures, and ophthalmic optics and dispensing of eyewear.

#### **EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION**

There are many opportunities for qualified individuals that can provide valuable service for the increasing population. The Department of Labor indicates that the employment of health care assistants is expected to increase by 27% or more between 2004 and 2014. This is due to the increased aging population and the demand for skilled personnel to meet the needs of technological advancements. Additionally, this growth is driven by the increase in the number of practices, clinics, and other health care facilities. The Department of Labor also states that "those with formal training or experience, particularly for those with certification, will be the preference of those health care employers hiring."

Demand for well-trained paraoptometrics is extremely high. Formal training programs regularly boast three or four job openings per graduate. In addition, many optometrists are willing to offer on the job training to those individuals who are highly motivated and health career oriented. For information pertaining to job opportunities, please visit Optometry's Career Center at <a href="www.optometryscareercenter.org">www.optometryscareercenter.org</a>, contact your state optometric society, or check with the optometrists in your area.

#### **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Paraoptometric training is available through formal education programs or training on the job. Some formal programs offer a two-year program providing education for students to earn an Associate of Science degree (A.S.) while other programs offer a one-year technical diploma course that can be completed in nine months of full-time study.

Many paraoptometrics, regardless of their level of training, often attend continuing education seminars to keep their skills current and to maintain a certification designation.

In addition to having a minimum of a high school diploma, individuals considering a career as a paraoptometric should consider these guidelines:

#### SUGGESTED HIGH SCHOOL COURSES/ COLLEGE COURSES:

Algebra, Biology, Anatomy, English, Communication, Psychology, and be computer literate.

#### **ATTITUDES AND**

INTERESTS: Interest in health care, possess maturity, interpersonal skills, and have an ability to follow procedures.



**INCOME:** Annual income will vary greatly depending on the size, type and location of the practice in which you are employed. The average paraoptometric works 25-40 hours per week and earns more than \$20,000+ annually with health benefits coverage.

### PERSONAL ADVANCEMENT, RECOGNITION AND AFFILIATION

Paraoptometrics interested in career advancement and affiliation can join the Paraoptometric Section of the American Optometric Association. This national association is organized to promote, advance and enhance the identity of both paraoptometrics and their optometrists. The group also encourages and provides quality continuing education for paraoptometric personnel.

The American Optometric Association Commission on Paraoptometric Certification offers paraoptometrics the opportunity to be recognized for their level of career knowledge and skill by way of voluntary certification. Nationally accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the CPC offers three progressive levels of testing that enhances career growth opportunities and future advancements.

Becoming affiliated with the Paraoptometric Section shows your employer, patients, the public and members of other health professions that you have made the commitment to enhance your skills and advance your career.



## Let the American Optometric Association be the Key to Expanding Your Career Goals

For more information regarding AOA Paraoptometric Certifications or Paraoptometric Section membership , please contact: Certification- Darlene Leuschke 800-365-2219 ext. 4135 Membership – Joan Murphy ext. 4222 or visit www.aoa.org.