C·O·E CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR LABOR MARKET RESEARCH

Sterile Processing Technician

Inland Empire/Desert Region (Riverside and San Bernardino counties)

Summary

Hospital Central Service Technician
Community College Program
(TOP 1209.00)

Provides training for
Medical Equipment Preparers
(SOC 31-9093)
Occupation

Over the next five years (2021-2026), employment for medical equipment preparers is projected to

Increase Employment by
8%

148
Annual Job Openings

Median Hourly Earnings
$18.50
Below the $21.82 Hourly Living Wage Standard

0 Total Annual Awards
In Hospital Central Service Technician Programs

0
Program Awards from Community College Programs

0
Program Awards from Other Postsecondary Education Providers

The Inland Empire/Desert Centers of Excellence
Recommends
Hospital Central Service Technician Program Development to meet the need for more workers in the region

Introduction

This report provides labor market occupational demand and wage research and postsecondary program outcomes related to sterile processing technicians. The California Community College program most likely to train students for employment as sterile processing technicians is the hospital central service technician (TOP 1209.00) program. Hospital central service technician programs prepare students for employment through instruction related to the services and techniques used in the support of patient care, such as receipt, evaluation, storage, and distribution of supplies, equipment, and instruments, including sterile processing (Taxonomy of Programs, 2012). The knowledge, skills, and abilities trained by hospital central service technician programs lead to employment as a medical equipment preparer.

Medical Equipment Preparers (31-9093)

Prepare, sterilize, install, or clean laboratory or healthcare equipment. May perform routine laboratory tasks and operate or inspect equipment.

Sample job titles: Sterile Processing Technician, Central Processing Technician (CPT), Central Service Technician (CST), Central Sterile Supply Technician (CSS Technician), Certified Registered Central Service Technician (CRCST), Instrument Technician, Sterile Preparation Technician, Sterile Processing and Distribution Technician (SPD Tech), Sterile Processing Technician (Sterile Processing Tech), Sterile Technician, Sterilization Technician

Entry-Level Educational Requirement: High school diploma or equivalent

Training Requirement: Between one and twelve months on-the-job training

Work Experience: None

Incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework: 42%

Job Counts and Projections

In 2021, there were 912 medical equipment preparer jobs in the region. Regional employment for medical equipment preparers is projected to increase by 8% through 2026; 148 job openings are projected annually. Exhibit 1 displays the job counts, five-year projected job growth, job openings, and the share of incumbent workers aged 55 years and greater in the region.

Exhibit 1. Five-year projections for medical equipment preparers, Inland Empire/Desert Region, 2021-2026

Occupation	2021 Jobs	2026 Jobs	5-Yr % Change	5-Yr Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	% of workers age 55+
Medical Equipment Preparers	912	989	8%	740	148	20%

Source: Lightcast 2023.1

An online job ad search for medical equipment preparer jobs was conducted to reveal the employers seeking these workers, including the time it takes to fill positions, earnings information, and in-demand skills. Exhibit 2 shows the number of job ads posted over the last 12 months, February 2022 through January 2023.

On average, regional employers kept online job ads for medical equipment preparers open for 32 days. The average regional online job is open for 28 days, indicating that it is more challenging for employers to fill medical equipment preparer jobs than other jobs.

Exhibit 2. Job ads and posting duration, Inland Empire/Desert Region, February 2022 through January 2023

Occupation	Job Ads	Median Posting Duration (Days)
Medical Equipment Preparers	160	32

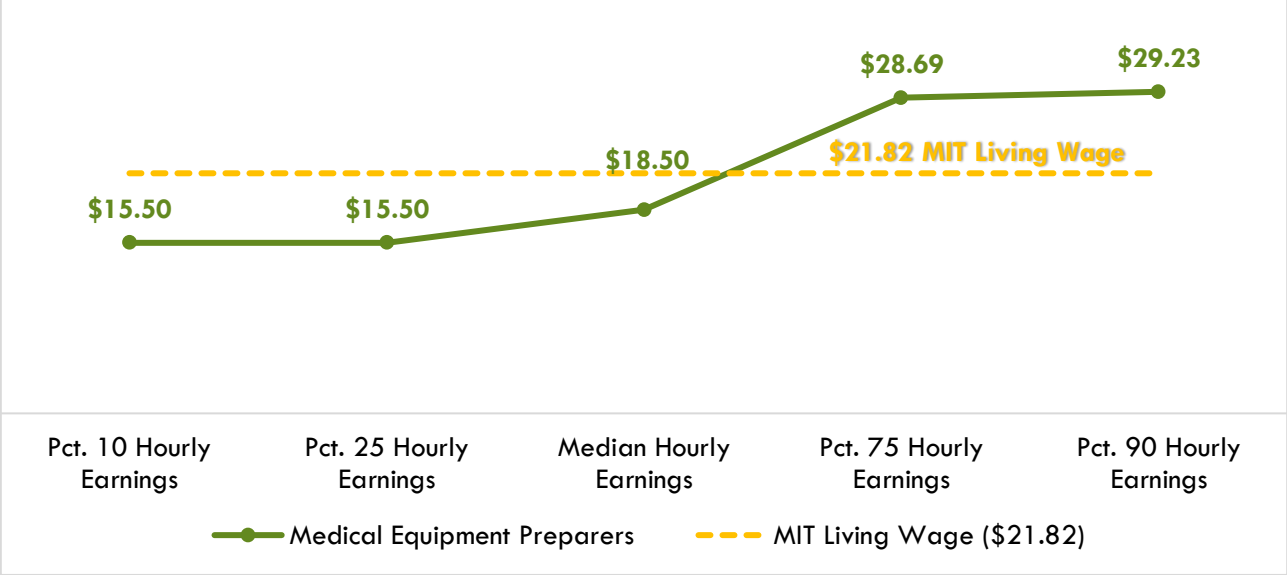
Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Earnings and Benefits

Community colleges should ensure their training programs lead to employment opportunities that provide a living wage. The MIT living wage calculator estimates that an individual must earn $21.82 per hour or $45,386 annually to be self-sufficient in California (Glasmeier, 2022).

Exhibit 3 displays the hourly earnings for medical equipment preparers. The 75th percentile hourly earnings for medical equipment preparers are above the living wage standard, indicating that at least the top 25% of workers earn a living wage.

Exhibit 3. Hourly earnings by percentile for medical equipment preparers, Inland Empire/Desert Region, 2021

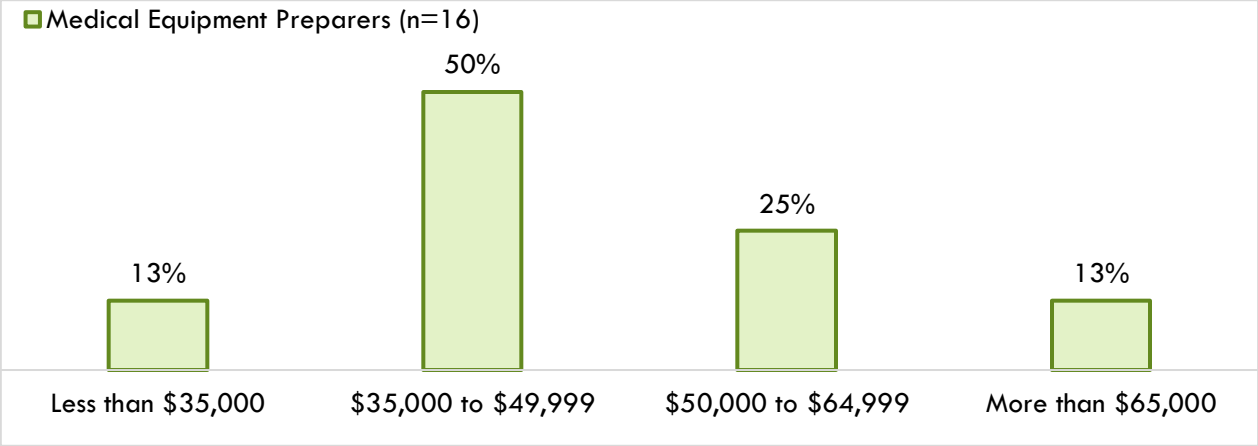


Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Advertised Salary from Online Job Ads

Exhibit 4 displays the regional online advertised salaries for medical equipment preparers over the last 12 months. Online job ad salary information reveals that employers are willing to pay medical equipment preparers an annual salary of $42,619 or $20.49 per hour, below the region's $21.82 hourly living wage standard. Consider the salary information with caution since only 10% (16 of 160) of online job ads for this occupation provided salary information.

Exhibit 4. Online advertised salaries for medical equipment preparers, Inland Empire/Desert Region, February 2022 through January 2023



Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Job Titles, Employers, Skills, Education, and Work Experience

Exhibit 5 displays the job titles most frequently used in job ads for medical equipment preparers during the last 12 months. Displaying advertised job titles may provide insight into the types of positions sought by employers posting ads. The most frequently requested job title in the region was sterile processing technician.

Exhibit 5. Job titles most frequently used in medical equipment preparer job ads, Inland Empire/Desert Region, February 2022 through January 2023

Job Titles	Unique Job Ads
Sterile Processing Technicians	60
Central Service Technicians	23
Sterile Processing Managers	11
Sterile Processing Supervisors	9
Central Sterile Technicians	7
Sterilization Technicians	5

Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Exhibit 6 displays the employers posting the most job ads for medical equipment preparers during the last 12 months. Showing employer names provides insight into where students may find employment after completing a program. Loma Linda University Medical Center posted the most job ads for medical equipment preparers in the region.

Exhibit 6. Employers posting the most job ads for medical equipment preparers, Inland Empire/Desert Region, February 2022 through January 2023

Top Employer	Unique Job Ads
Loma Linda University Medical Center	46
Kaiser Permanente	6
Prime Healthcare Services	5
San Antonio Regional Hospital	5
Riverside Medical Clinic	5

Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Exhibit 7 lists a sample of specialized and employability skills employers seek when seeking workers to fill medical equipment preparer positions. Specialized skills are occupation-specific skills that employers request for industry or job competency. Common skills are foundational skills that transcend industries and occupations; this category is often referred to as "soft skills." The skills requested in job ads may be utilized to guide curriculum development.

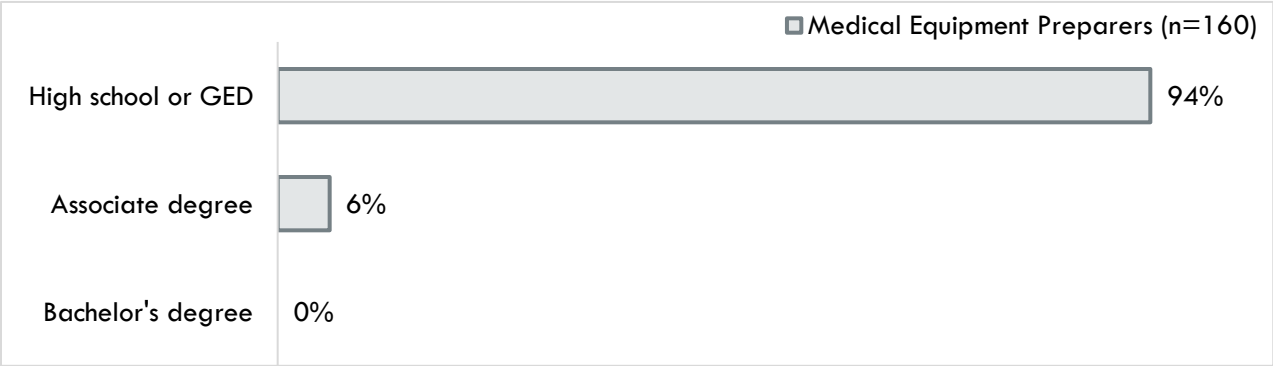
Exhibit 7. Sample of in-demand skills from employer job ads, Inland Empire/Desert Region, February 2022 through January 2023

Specialized skills	Common skills
• Sterilization • Surgical Instruments • Sterile Techniques and Procedures • Infection Control • Decontamination • Surgical Procedures	• Ability to Distinguish Colors • Detail Oriented • Arithmetic • Writing • Customer Service • Troubleshooting (Problem-Solving)

Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Exhibit 8 displays the minimum advertised education requirements for medical equipment preparers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 42% of incumbent workers in this field hold a community college-level of educational attainment; "some college, no degree," and an "associate degree." Most employers listing a minimum education level requested a candidate with at least a high school diploma or a GED.

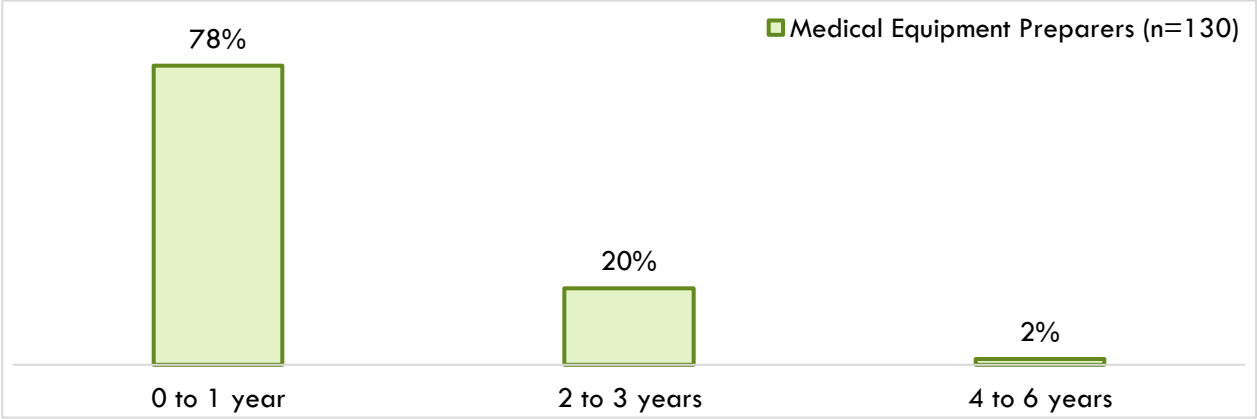
Exhibit 8. Minimum advertised education requirements, Inland Empire/Desert Region, February 2022 through January 2023



Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Exhibit 9 displays the work experience typically required from employer job ads for medical equipment preparers. Approximately 78% of job ads with experience requirements sought a candidate with zero to one year of previous work experience.

Exhibit 9. Real-time work experience requirements, Inland Empire/Desert Region, February 2022 through January 2023



Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Certifications

Exhibit 10 displays the most frequently requested certifications by employers in job ads. Approximately 26% of employer job ads sought candidates with a Basic Life Support (BLS) certification from the American Heart Association (AHA), which prepares individuals to recognize emergencies and respond with the necessary care (AHA, 2023). For more information regarding the BLS certification, please visit the AHA website. The Certified Registered Central Service Technician (CRCST) certification was included in nearly 9% of job ads. The CRCST certification, issued by the Healthcare Sterile Processing Association (HSPA), ensures that sterile processing technicians have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide competent services (HSPA, 2023). For more information regarding the CRCST certification, please visit the HSPA website.

Exhibit 10: Certifications most frequently required by employers, Inland Empire/Desert Region, February 2022 through January 2023

Certification	Jobs Ads
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	42
Certified Registered Central Service Technician (CRCST)	14

Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Student Completions and Programs Outcomes

While the hospital central service technician (TOP 1209.00) program is the community college most likely to prepare students for employment as medical equipment preparers, no community colleges in the state currently offer these programs.

Other postsecondary institutions may utilize the sterile processing technology/technician (CIP 51.1012) program code for sterile processing technician programs. Over the last three academic years, other postsecondary education institutions in the region did not issue awards utilizing this program code. The sterile processing technology/technician definition is provided below as it may assist in program development.

> *A program that prepares individuals to clean, sterilize, and assemble surgical instruments, equipment, and supplies for use in operating rooms and other medical and surgical facilities. Includes instruction in sterilization; infection control; decontamination; and surgical instrumentation processing, distribution, and record-keeping (NCES, 2023).*

Summary of Findings

The knowledge, skills, and abilities trained by hospital central service technician programs (TOP 1209.00) prepare students for employment as medical equipment preparers, also known as sterile processing technicians. Medical equipment preparers are projected to have 148 annual job openings and increase employment by 8% over the next five years in the Inland Empire/Desert Region. The 75th percentile hourly earnings for medical equipment preparers are above the living wage standard, indicating that at least the top 25% of workers earn a living wage. Online job ad salary information reveals that employers are willing to pay medical equipment preparers an annual salary of $42,619 or $20.49 per hour, below the region's $21.82 hourly living wage standard.

Regional community colleges do not currently offer hospital central service technician (TOP 1209.00) programs. Other postsecondary institutions in the region have not issued awards in sterile processing technology/technician (CIP 51.1012) programs over the last three academic years.

The Centers of Excellence recommends developing hospital central service technician programs due to regional demand for medical equipment preparers. Colleges considering this program should partner with

relevant employers and confirm the skills needed for students to obtain a living wage shortly after exiting the program.

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Appendix: Methodology

Job ad data is limited to the information provided by employers and the ability of artificial intelligence search engines to identify this information. Additionally, preliminary calculations by Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce found that "just 30 to 40 percent of openings for candidates with some college or an associate degree, and only 40 to 60 percent of openings for high school diploma holders appear online" (Carnevale et al., 2014). Online job ads often do not reveal employers' hiring intentions; it is unknown if employers plan to hire one or multiple workers from a single online job ad or collect resumes for future hiring needs. A closed job ad may not be the result of a hired worker.

Table 1. 2021 to 2026 job growth, wages, entry-level education, training, and work experience required for medical equipment preparers in the Inland Empire/Desert Region (Riverside and San Bernardino Counties combined)

Occupation	2021 Jobs	5-Year Change	5-Year % Change	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Entry-Experienced Hourly Wage (10th to 90th percentile)	Median Hourly Wage (50th percentile)	Average Annual Earnings	Entry-Level Education & On-The-Job-Training	Work Experience Required
Medical Equipment Preparers (31-9093)	912	77	8%	148	$15.50 to $29.23	$18.50	$44,400	High school diploma or equivalent & One to twelve months	None

Source: Lightcast 2023.1