










Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations

Labor Market Analysis: San Diego County

November 2023

Summary

NEW PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION?	EVIDENCE OF A SUPPLY GAP?	AT OR ABOVE THE LIVING WAGE?	EXPECTED EDUCATION FOR MAJORITY OF OCCUPATIONS ANALYZED
 Proceed with Caution	 	 	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship <input type="checkbox"/> Associate Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Some College or Certificate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Diploma or Equivalent <input type="checkbox"/> Less Than a HS Diploma
SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM MODIFICATION?	NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS THAT PROVIDE TRAINING	NUMBER OF ANNUAL JOB OPENINGS	
 	<p>LOW</p> 	<p>LOW</p> 	

This brief provides labor market information about *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* to assist the San Diego & Imperial Counties Community Colleges with program development and strategic planning. *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* include Ophthalmic Medical Technicians and Ophthalmic Laboratory Technicians. According to available labor market information, *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* in San Diego County have a labor market demand of 69 annual job openings (while average demand for a single occupation in San Diego County is 289 annual job openings), and no institutions supply awards for these occupations, suggesting that there is a supply gap in the labor market. On average, entry-level wages are above the living wage. The COE recommends proceeding with caution when developing a new program because 1) a small number of annual job openings exist and 2) a supply gap exists for these occupations. **Colleges should note that employers typically require a high school diploma or equivalent as the minimum educational requirement.**

Introduction

This report provides labor market information in San Diego County for the following occupational codes in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)¹ system:

- **Ophthalmic Medical Technicians (SOC 29-2057):** Assist ophthalmologists by performing ophthalmic clinical functions. May administer eye exams, administer eye medications, and instruct the patient in care and use of corrective lenses.
- **Ophthalmic Laboratory Technicians (SOC 51-9083):** Cut, grind, and polish eyeglasses, contact lenses, or other precision optical elements. Assemble and mount lenses into frames or process other optical elements. Includes precision lens polishers or grinders, centerer-edgers, and lens mounters.

Sample reported job titles include:

- Edger Technician
- Finishing Lab Technician
- Lens Grinder and Polisher
- Line Operator
- Optical Lab Technician
- Certified Ophthalmic Medical Technician
- Certified Ophthalmic Surgical Assistant
- Certified Ophthalmic Technician
- Health Technician
- Ophthalmic Diagnostic Sonographer

For the purpose of this report, these occupations are referred to as *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations*.

¹ The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is used by federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, or disseminating data. [bls.gov/soc/](https://www.bls.gov/soc/).

Projected Occupational Demand

Between 2022 and 2027, employers in San Diego County will need to hire 69 workers annually to fill new jobs and backfill jobs in *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* due to attrition caused by turnover and retirement, for example (Exhibit 1). “Ophthalmic Medical Technicians” are projected to have the most labor market demand between 2022 and 2027, with 47 annual job openings.

Exhibit 1: Number of Jobs for Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations in San Diego County (2022-2027)²

Occupational Title	2022 Jobs	2027 Jobs	2022 - 2027 Net Jobs Change	2022-2027 % Net Jobs Change	Annual Job Openings (Demand)
Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	313	367	54	17%	47
Ophthalmic Laboratory Technicians	168	167	-1	-1%	22
Total	481	534	53	11%	69

Earnings

The entry-level hourly earnings for *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* range from \$17.51 to \$19.57 (Exhibit 2a).

Exhibit 2a: Hourly Earnings for Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations in San Diego County³

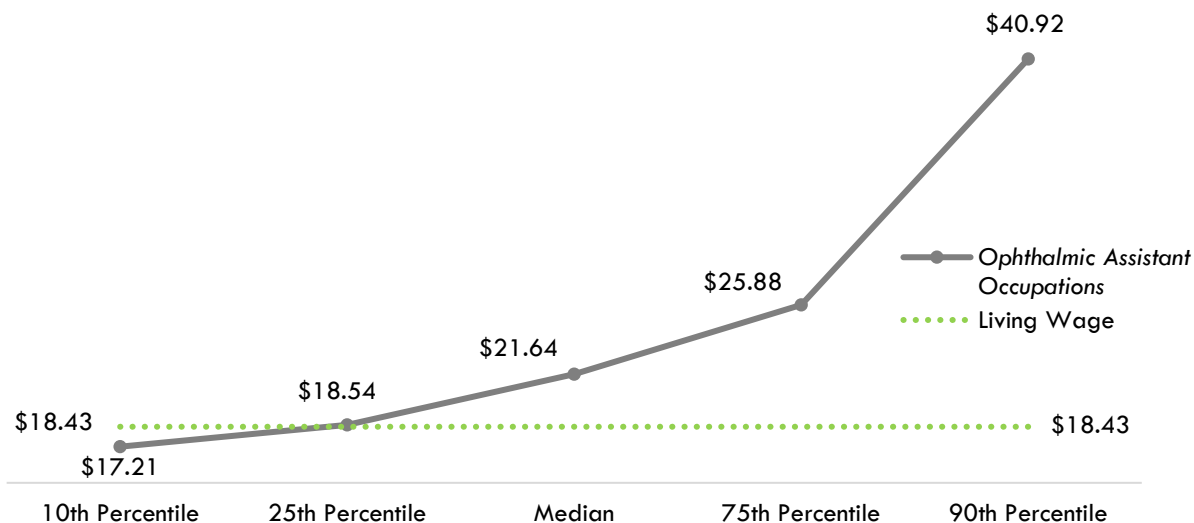
Occupational Title	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25 th Percentile)	Median Hourly Earnings	Experienced Hourly Earnings (75 th Percentile)
Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	\$19.57	\$22.33	\$27.16
Ophthalmic Laboratory Technicians	\$17.51	\$20.95	\$24.61

² Lightcast 2023.03; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

³ Lightcast 2023.03; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

On average, the entry-level hourly earnings for *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* are \$18.54; this is equivalent to the living wage for a single adult in San Diego County, which is \$18.43 per hour (Exhibit 2b).⁴

Exhibit 2b: Average Hourly Earnings⁵ for *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* in San Diego County⁶



Educational Supply

Educational supply for an occupation can be estimated by analyzing the number of awards in related Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) or Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes.⁷ There are **two** TOP codes and **two** CIP codes related to *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3: Related TOP and CIP Codes for *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations*⁸

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title
TOP 0961.00	Optics
TOP 1219.00	Optical Technology
CIP 51.1006	Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology/Technician
CIP 51.1802	Optometric Technician/Assistant

⁴ "Family Needs Calculator (formerly the California Family Needs Calculator)," Insight: Center for Community Economic Development, last updated 2021. insightcced.org/family-needs-calculator.

⁵ 10th and 25th percentiles could be considered entry-level wages, and 75th and 90th percentiles could be considered experienced wages for individuals who may have been in the occupation longer, received more training than others, etc.

⁶ Lightcast 2023.03; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

⁷ TOP data comes from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart (datamart.cccco.edu) and CIP data comes from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data).

⁸ This brief uses a conservative estimate of program supply and only calculates awards from the TOP codes in Exhibit 3.

According to TOP data, no community college or non-community college institution supplies the region with awards for these occupations (Exhibit 4).

**Exhibit 4: Number of Awards (Certificates and Degrees) Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions
(Program Year 2019-20 through Program Year 2020-21 Average)**

TOP6 or CIP Code	TOP6 or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY19-20 to PY21-22)	Other Institutions 2-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY19-20 to PY20-21)	Total Average Supply (PY19-20 to PY21-22)
1219.00	Optical Technology	0	0	0
0961.00	Optics	0	0	0
51.1006	Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology/Technician	0	0	0
51.1802	Optometric Technician/Assistant	0	0	0
			Total	0

Demand vs. Supply

Comparing labor demand (annual openings) with labor supply⁹ suggests that a supply gap exists for these occupations in San Diego County, with 69 annual openings and zero awards. Comparatively, there are 1,094 annual openings in California and 28 awards, suggesting that there is a supply gap across the state¹⁰ (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5: Labor Demand (Annual Openings) Compared with Labor Supply (Average Annual Awards)

	Demand (Annual Openings)	Supply ¹¹ (Annual Awards)	Supply Gap or Oversupply
San Diego	69	0	69
California	1,094	28	1,066

Please note: This is a basic analysis of supply and demand of labor. The data does not include workers currently in the labor force who could fill these positions or workers who are not captured by publicly available data. This data should be used to discuss the potential gaps or oversupply of workers; however, it should not be the only basis for determining whether or not a program should be developed.

⁹ Labor supply can be found from two different sources: Lightcast or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart. Lightcast uses CIP codes while MIS uses TOP codes. Different coding systems result in differences in the supply numbers.

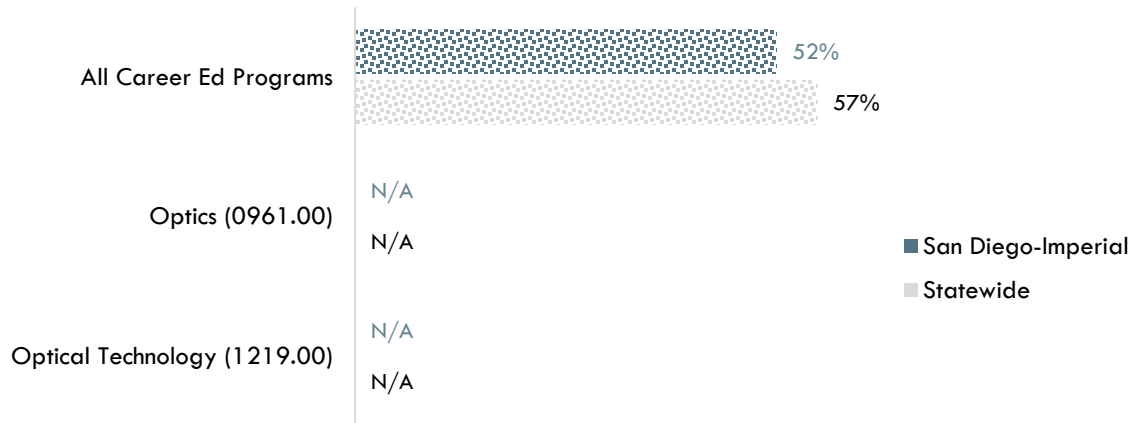
¹⁰ "Supply and Demand," Centers of Excellence Student Outcomes, <https://coecc.net/our-resources/>.

¹¹ Awards included: associate degree; award <1 year; award 1<2 years; and postsecondary awards.

Student Outcomes and Regional Comparisons

According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, there is insufficient data to calculate the percent of students in the San Diego-Imperial region or statewide who earned a living wage after completing a program related to *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* (Exhibit 6a).¹²

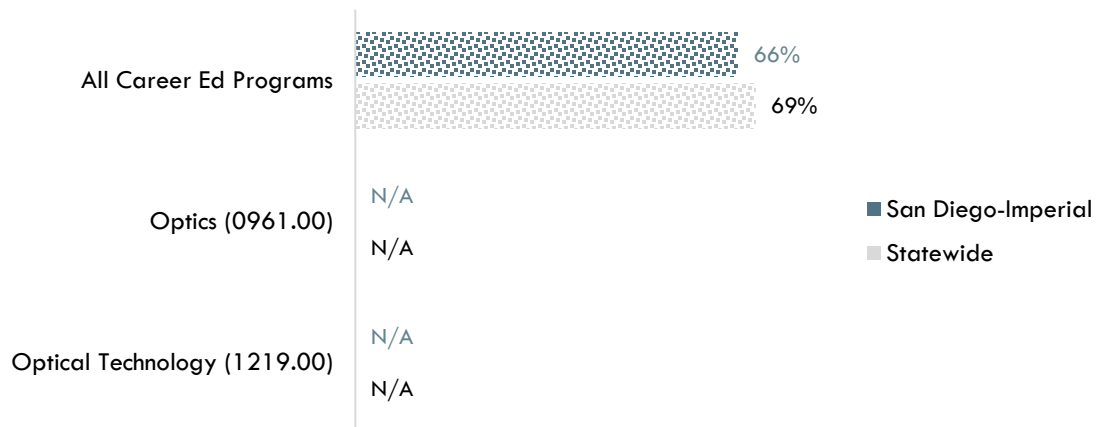
Exhibit 6a: Percentage of Students Who Earned a Living Wage by Program, PY2020-21¹³



"N/A" indicates insufficient data

According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, there is insufficient data to calculate the percent of students in the San Diego-Imperial region or statewide who obtained a job closely related to their field of study after completing a program related to *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* (Exhibit 6b).¹⁴

Exhibit 6b: Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study by Program, PY2019-20¹⁵



"N/A" indicates insufficient data

¹² "California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program," California Community Colleges, calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx.

¹³ Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2020-21. Among completers and skills builders who exited, the percentage of students who attained a living wage.

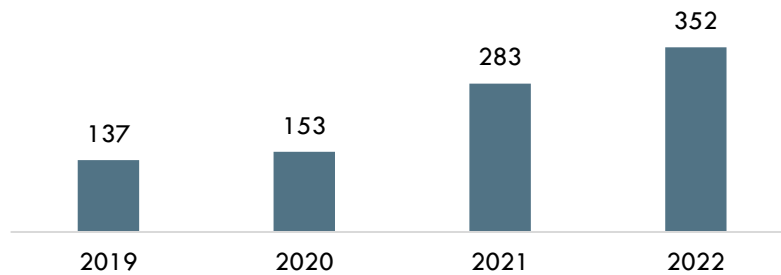
¹⁴ "California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program," California Community Colleges, calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx.

¹⁵ Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2019-20. Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study: Among students who responded to the CTEOS, the percentage reporting employment in the same or similar field as their program of study.

Online Job Postings

This report analyzes not only historical and projected (traditional LMI) data, but also recent data from online job postings (real-time LMI). Online job postings may provide additional insight about recent changes in the labor market that are not captured by historical data. Between 2019 and 2022, there was an average of 231 online job postings per year for *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* in San Diego County (Exhibit 7). Please note that online job postings do **not** equal labor market demand; demand is represented by annual job openings (see Exhibit 1). While this brief includes online jobs postings data to help with curriculum development, the community colleges should note that this type of data is impacted by several variables: employers may post a position multiple times to increase the pool of applicants; a job posting can remain posted after a business decides not to fill a position; or an employer may use one posting to fill multiple positions, for example.

Exhibit 7: Number of Online Job Postings for *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* in San Diego County (2019-2022)¹⁶



¹⁶ Lightcast; "Job Posting Analytics." 2018-2022.

Top Employers

Between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2022, the top five employers in San Diego County for *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* were University of California San Diego, Sharp HealthCare, Scripps Health, Family Health Centers of San Diego, and National Vision based on online job postings (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8: Top Employers for *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* in San Diego County¹⁷

Top Employers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• University of California San Diego• Sharp HealthCare• Scripps Health• Family Health Centers of San Diego• National Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encinitas Vision• Rady Children's Hospital• Total Vision• La Jolla Lasik Institute• NVISION Laser Eye Centers

Education, Skills, and Certifications

Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations have a national educational attainment ranging from a high school diploma or equivalent to a postsecondary non-degree award (Exhibit 9a).

Exhibit 9a: National Educational Attainment for *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations*¹⁸

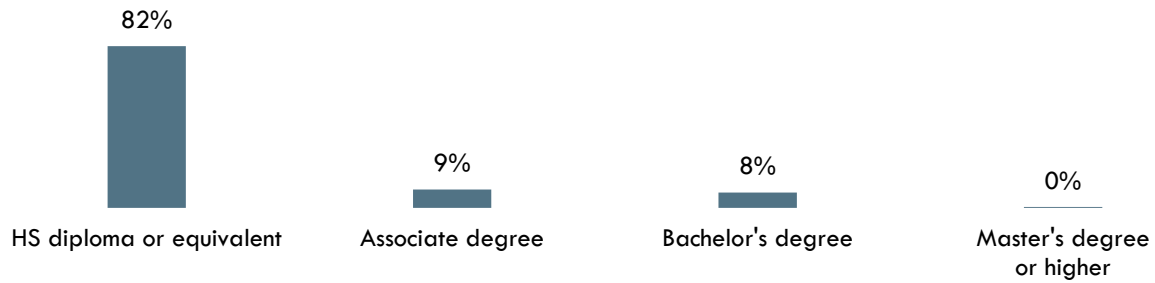
Occupational Title	Typical Entry-Level Education
Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	Postsecondary non-degree award
Ophthalmic Laboratory Technicians	High school diploma or equivalent

¹⁷ Lightcast; "Job Posting Analytics." 2020-2022.

¹⁸ Lightcast 2023.03; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

Based on online job postings between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2022 in San Diego County, employers posted a **high school diploma or equivalent** as the most requested educational requirement for *Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations* (Exhibit 9b).¹⁹

Exhibit 9b: Educational Requirements for Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations in San Diego County²⁰



*May not total 100 percent due to rounding

Exhibit 10 lists the top specialized, soft, and software skills that appeared in online job postings between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2022.

Exhibit 10: Top Skills for Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations in San Diego County²¹

Specialized Skills	Soft Skills	Software Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ophthalmology • Optometry • Medical Prescription • Photography • Patient Education And Counseling • Contact Lenses • Medical Records • Electronic Medical Record • Patient Flow • Surgery • Corneal Topography • Retina • Visual Field Tests • Topography • Corneal Pachymetry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Visual Acuity • Multitasking • Detail Oriented • Customer Service • Computer Literacy • Scheduling • Professionalism • Interpersonal Communications • Management • Filing • Multilingualism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

¹⁹ Lightcast; "Job Posting Analytics." 2020-2022.

²⁰ "Educational Attainment for Workers 25 Years and Older by Detailed Occupation," Bureau of Labor Statistics, last modified April 9, 2021. bls.gov/emp/tables/educational-attainment.htm.

²¹ Lightcast; "Job Posting Analytics." 2020-2022.

Exhibit 11 lists the top certifications that appeared in online job postings between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2022.

Exhibit 11: Top Certifications for Ophthalmic Assistant Occupations in San Diego County²²

Top Certifications in Online Job Postings

1. Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification
 2. Certified Ophthalmic Assistant
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²² Lightcast; "Job Posting Analytics." 2020-2022.

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Important Disclaimers

All representations included in this report have been produced from primary research and/or secondary review of publicly and/or privately available data and/or research reports. This study examines the most recent data available at the time of the analysis; however, data sets are updated regularly and may not be consistent with previous reports. Efforts have been made to qualify and validate the accuracy of the data and the report findings; however, neither the Centers of Excellence (COE), COE host district, nor California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office are responsible for the applications or decisions made by individuals and/or organizations based on this study or its recommendations.