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How clinics are recruiting the next generation of medical admins



As baby boomers retire en masse, healthcare employers are using 'temp-to-direct' strategies and targeted college partnerships to train and retain essential administrative staff.

Carolyn Gruske 8/27/2026

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As demographics prove, the Canadian workforce is getting older. Already [5.2 million baby boomers](#) have left the labour market and 2030 is projected to see the largest group of workers hit the typical retirement age of 65. For doctors, clinics, and organizations that employ medical administrative staff to keep the offices running, that means

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facing a very real challenge: hiring younger workers to replace people who have decades of experience.

Fortunately, younger people are entering the job market and looking for work in medical administration roles—roles that can encompass job titles such as [medical assistants](#), [health information management workers](#), [general office support workers](#) and [healthcare receptionists](#).

But the gap between those who want to work but lack experience and those who want to hire staff and demand experience is a real one that needs to be bridged. And it's one that people are attempting to fix in a variety of ways.

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Cristina Schultz, a recruitment manager with the recruitment agency [About Staffing](#) in Calgary, says that one of the ways that an increasing number of clinics and doctor's offices have begun hiring support staff of all experience levels is through a "temporary-to-direct hire route." This is where the support staff are under contract to the recruitment agency and are loaned out to the clinic to fill short-term needs. Then, if the clinic is happy with their work, and they are happy working at the clinic, arrangements are made for the clinic to hire them on a permanent basis.

Schultz describes the Alberta job market for medical office administrators as "competitive" due to the number of new clinics opening up in the province. And while there are certainly people out there looking for support staff jobs, many of them are recent graduates who entered medical office assistant training programs after high school, in large part due to the province promoting them as leading to good jobs after graduation.

"There's a misalignment of the experience people have versus the experience organizations are looking for," she explained. "We're certainly seeing a lot more requests for experience versus those who are maybe a little bit greener in the industry. Many organizations are realizing that it can take a little bit of time to train and mentor and get people up to speed, and they're gravitating towards those who might be able to hit the ground running more than taking the route of training and mentoring."

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Experienced admins have choice

As a result, experienced medical administrators can pick and choose the jobs that offer the benefits and working conditions they prefer, whereas recent graduates who are just looking to establish their careers and maybe gain a bit of stability might have to settle for less than they expected. Schultz says that while some new hires can earn \$25 to \$30 per hour, others are only getting minimum wage.

In Ontario, [Regional Medical Associates](#) (RMA) in Hamilton, tends to pay MOAs “several dollars” above minimum wage” but also gives them benefits including RRSP contributions and the ability to work from home four days per week. RMA handles OHIP billing for doctors at McMaster Health Sciences and as McMaster grows, RMA’s need for support staff grows. As a result, claims processing manager Linda O’Hara says she typically hires two or three support staff every year, initially on short-term contracts before transitioning the workers to permanent positions.

O’Hara prefers to hire people trained in OHIP billing procedures, and to get them, she usually looks for graduates from [Mohawk College’s Office Administration Health Services program](#). Her preference is to hire younger workers, despite [stereotypes claiming](#) that Millennials (people born between 1981 and 1996) and especially Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012) have a poor work ethic, an inability to communicate or a lack of ambition.

“They may be inexperienced, but they aren’t set in their ways. They don’t have bad habits to begin with. You can steer them in the right direction in terms of things like punctuality, reliability, and working as part of a team,” she explained.



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O'Hara pairs up every new hire with an experienced employee for training, creating a one-to-one mentorship. It's a relationship that benefits both the new employees who have somebody supporting them and the existing ones, who have the opportunity to do something new and hone some leadership skills.

Wendy Fisher, program co-ordinator and instructor of the Office Administration Health Services program says that employers need to understand that hiring recent graduates comes with both benefits and trade-offs, including the need to offer them some office-specific training.

"I can see where some physicians, especially in family practice where those offices are so busy and there is so much stress on everyone to provide quality patient care, may not have as much time for a new person to step in," she explained adding that recent grads "do need some patience and support and mentorship, but they're such quick workers because their brains have been firing for four straight semesters, so they can pick up new processes. They can identify efficiencies. There's such a great standard to have a new graduate or a young person come in because of the skill level they bring. And they want to help. And when it's their first position coming out of college, they will often stay for quite a while. They're passionate."

Between 80 and 120 students enroll in the Mohawk course every year, but it's not a program that's unique to the college. It's offered in colleges throughout the province, with the Ontario Ministry of Education being responsible for setting the curriculum standards across the province, after consultation with the medical field and local communities. Fisher says the high standards imposed on the students—for example, misspelling a medical term is worth a five-mark deduction in the medical terminology course—the health-and-safety modules, the police background checks, and the required immunizations results in well-trained students ready to enter the workforce. Students need to achieve a 60% average to graduate from the two-year (four-semester) diploma program. The emphasis that the school puts on soft skills, including communication, also results in employers being satisfied with the grads.



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According to Fisher, 49 % of students taking the course at Mohawk are aged 24 and above, so there's a pretty even mix of those attending straight from high school and those who have experience in the job market, including some who worked as lab technicians or personal support workers looking to move into better paying jobs.

"My mature students, they've all worked in prior roles so when they graduate, they get scooped up pretty quickly, but even the younger ones, they learn to adopt a more forward communication (style) and we get them to be more forward facing. And they have technical skills, where a mature student might be less technical, but we bring (everybody) up to par" says Fisher.

Part of the mandatory training involves a required 70 hours of experiential learning, where the students work in a medical office to gain hands-on training. After every work experience, Fisher conducts a survey of employers. The most recent is from April 2026. Employers were asked questions about

- the student's "ability to complete assigned work independently or seek additional help and support" if needed, with 72.5% replying that the student exceeded expectations, and 27% saying they met expectations
- the student's "ability to adhere to workplace expectations, policies, procedures, and behave appropriately in a professional setting", with 77.5% saying the student exceeded expectations and 20% saying the student met expectations.

"When they graduate, their skills are very high and our employers are very satisfied," Fisher noted, adding that she'd welcome people who want to take on students to get in touch with her.

Fisher also takes care to track other metrics to ensure that the program is meeting the needs of both the medical community and the students. For example, she says that 32% of job postings in the local Hamilton market mention soft skills as a requirement for medical assistants. That's compared to 15% that require proficiency in specific



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software programs. Customer service is listed as a requirement in 26% of the ads and 28% want leadership skills.

Additionally, she reports that the college surveys students roughly six months after they graduate. Between 2020 and 2025, an average of 88% found jobs and 80% were satisfied with the program.

Overall, Fisher says that if doctors and clinics are looking for ways to increase job satisfaction for their administrative staff and keep worker retention-rates high, they do need to ensure that they are paying competitive wages and looking for incentives such as offering pension through the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan. In its [2026 Canadian Retirement Survey](#), which was published in June, HOOPP found that “65 per cent of the survey respondents age 18–34 said they would consider changing jobs if another workplace offered either a [defined benefits] pension or a better pension than they currently have.”

Indeed Fisher added: "Are they (doctors) paying a competitive wage to retain that employee long term? I could see how challenging it would be to train someone for two months just to have them leave for two extra dollars an hour somewhere else, but money is a factor, especially with how expensive things are today."



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StatsCan snapshot: The medical assistant job market



In order to get an understanding of the medical administrator and assistant job market, *The Medical Post* turned to StatsCan, which compiled some data for our readers. While the numbers are a bit dated, since they're based on the 2021 Census, they're the most accurate currently available. Insights from the 2026 Census, which was conducted this year won't be available until December 2027.

The medical administrator and assistant profession is pretty stable. "The renewal ratio among medical administrative occupations was 1.1, which means that for each worker approaching retirement age (aged 55 to 64) in these occupations, there was one

younger worker aged 25 to 34 in the workforce. This ratio was lower than the ratio for health occupations overall (1.6) but higher than the one for all occupations combined (0.8) in 2021.” There are minor variations, of course: there’s a 1.2 renewal rate for health information management occupations and receptionist positions and a 1.0 rate for general office support workers

Canada had 135,360 people working in medical administrative occupations: 32,410 medical administrative assistants; 6,005 workers in health information management occupations; 33,305 general office support workers; and 63,640 receptionists.

In Q1 2026, there were 1,715 vacancies for medical administrative assistants. For comparison in Q4, 2025 there were 2,030 open jobs for assistants. That’s according to the StatsCan table “Job vacancies and average offered hourly wage by occupation (unit group), quarterly, unadjusted for seasonality.” (See stats [here](#).)

For those Q1 2026 jobs, assistant positions had an average offered hourly wage of \$24.40. This represents a slight decline from the previous quarter, where the average was \$24.85.



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