

BECOME A TEXAS CNA

A STEP-BY-STEP CAREER GUIDE FOR
2026 AND BEYOND



CNA TRAINING INSTITUTE

A FASTER WAY INTO HEALTHCARE



If you've considered working in healthcare but keep coming back to the time and cost of nursing school, that initial hesitation makes sense. In reality, not everyone wants to commit to years of education before knowing if the work is a good fit. Fortunately, becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) offers a more immediate way to step into the field!

CNA training focuses on practical, hands-on skills and can be completed in a matter of weeks. From there, many students move quickly into paid roles where they're working directly with patients and healthcare teams. For some, it becomes a long-term career. For others, it serves as a starting point before moving into nursing or another healthcare path.

Let's take a look at what the CNA certification process looks like in Texas, including how long it typically takes, what you can expect to earn, and how the role can fit into a larger career progression.

WHY MANY STUDENTS START WITH CNA TRAINING

Before committing to a multi-year nursing program, many students choose to begin with CNA certification because it provides immediate exposure to the healthcare environment. Instead of relying on assumptions, you get firsthand experience working with patients, healthcare teams, and daily clinical routines.

CNA training focuses on the core skills that every healthcare professional builds on. These include patient safety, communication, infection control, and assisting with daily care. Because of this, many nursing programs either prefer or strongly value applicants who already have CNA experience.

There is also a practical advantage. CNA training allows you to test your interest in healthcare without a long-term commitment. If you enjoy the work, you can confidently move forward into nursing programs. If not, you have still gained valuable experience and income along the way.

For many students, this step removes uncertainty and replaces it with clarity.

STEP-BY-STEP: HOW TO BECOME A CNA IN TEXAS

The process of becoming a CNA in Texas is straightforward, but understanding each step can help you move through it more efficiently and with confidence.

Step 1: Meet the Basic Requirements

Most CNA programs in Texas have a similar set of entry requirements. These are designed to ensure that students are prepared to safely work in a healthcare setting.

Typically, you will need to:

- Be at least 18 years old, although some programs allow younger students
- Pass a background check
- Complete basic health screenings such as a TB test
- Provide identification and, in some cases, proof of education

You can review official state guidelines through the [Texas Health and Human Services Nurse Aide Registry](#).

These requirements are usually straightforward and can be completed quickly, which helps keep the overall timeline short.

STEP 2: COMPLETE A STATE-APPROVED TRAINING PROGRAM



Once you meet the requirements, the next step is enrolling in a state-approved CNA training program. In Texas, these programs are designed to prepare you for both the certification exam and real-world patient care.

Most programs include a mix of classroom learning and hands-on clinical experience. You will learn how to assist patients safely, communicate effectively, and follow healthcare protocols.

Here is what most students can expect:

- 60-100 total training hours
- Classroom instruction covering patient care basics
- Clinical practice in a healthcare setting

According to [Texas Health and Human Services](#), all CNA programs must meet state-approved training standards. In terms of timing, many students complete their training in about 4-8 weeks. This is one of the main reasons CNA certification is considered a fast-track option.

STEP 3: PASS THE CERTIFICATION EXAM



After completing your training, you will take the state competency exam administered by Prometric.

The exam has two parts. The first is a written or oral test that evaluates your understanding of patient care concepts. The second is a hands-on skills test where you demonstrate specific tasks such as hand hygiene, taking vital signs, and assisting with mobility.

Both portions must be passed to receive certification. While this may sound intimidating, students who consistently practice their skills and understand the process tend to perform well.

STEP 4: GET LISTED ON THE TEXAS NURSE AIDE REGISTRY



Once you pass the exam, your name is added to the Texas Nurse Aide Registry. This step is what officially allows you to work as a CNA in the state.

Employers often verify your certification through this registry before hiring, so it serves as your professional credential.

STEP 5: BEGIN WORKING



After certification, many students are able to begin working quickly. In fact, some receive job offers shortly after passing the exam, especially in high-demand areas.

Common work settings include:

- Long-term care facilities
- Rehabilitation centers
- Home health agencies
- Hospitals

Because healthcare operates around the clock, there are often opportunities for flexible schedules, including nights and weekends.

HOW MUCH DO CNAS MAKE IN TEXAS?

Understanding potential earnings is an important part of making any career decision, especially since CNA salaries in Texas can vary depending on experience, location, and work setting.

According to [Indeed](#), the average CNA earns about \$16.90 per hour in Texas. Other salary sources provide additional context:

- Annual range: \$32,000 to \$38,000+ ([NURSA](#))
- Higher-end earnings with experience: \$40,000+ ([Ziprecruiter](#))

What This Looks Like in Practice

Experience Level	Estimated Annual Salary
Entry-Level	\$28,000 – \$32,000
Mid-Level	\$32,000 – \$38,000
Experienced	\$38,000 – \$40,000+

Many CNAs reach around \$35,000 within their first year, especially when working full-time or picking up additional shifts.

NATIONAL SALARY COMPARISON

To put Texas wages into perspective, it helps to look at national data. As stated by the U.S. [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the median CNA salary is approximately \$39,530 per year:

While Texas salaries may be slightly lower, the overall cost of living is also lower in many areas, which balances out earnings versus cost of living in a way that can make take-home income feel more comparable day to day.



JOB OUTLOOK FOR CNAS IN 2026 AND BEYOND

The demand for CNAs is expected to remain steady in the coming years. Healthcare needs continue to grow, especially as the population ages.

The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) projects about 4-5 % job growth for nursing assistants: This growth is supported by several factors:

- Increased demand for long-term care services
- Expansion of home health care
- Ongoing workforce turnover
- Where Opportunities Are Strongest

CNAs are most commonly employed in:

- Nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- Hospitals
- Rehabilitation centers
- Home health settings

These environments provide a range of experiences, allowing students to explore different areas of healthcare.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN CNA TRAINING



CNA training is focused on building practical, real-world skills. These are the same foundational abilities used by nurses and other healthcare professionals every day.

Some of the most important skills include:

- Taking and recording vital signs
- Assisting patients with daily activities
- Practicing infection control and safety procedures
- Communicating with patients and healthcare teams

While these tasks may seem basic, they form the backbone of patient care. Learning them early provides a strong advantage if you continue into nursing.

PRACTICAL TIPS TO PASS THE CNA EXAM THE FIRST TIME



Success on the CNA exam often comes down to preparation and consistency. Here are a few practical strategies that can make a difference:

- Practice each skill multiple times until it feels natural
- Focus on completing steps in the correct order
- Take your time during the skills test instead of rushing
- Use official practice materials to become familiar with the format

Students who approach the exam with a clear understanding of expectations tend to perform better and feel more confident.

HOW FAST CAN YOU START WORKING?



One of the biggest advantages of becoming a CNA is the short timeline.

Step	Estimated Time
Training	4–8 weeks
Exam Scheduling	1–3 weeks
Job Placement	Immediately or within a few weeks

In total, many students go from starting a program to earning a paycheck in about 2-3 months. This makes CNA one of the fastest ways to enter the healthcare field!

CAREER GROWTH AFTER CNA

For many students, CNA certification is just the beginning rather than the end goal. It creates a clear path into higher-level healthcare roles, especially for those planning to continue into nursing. A common progression is moving from CNA to Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) or continuing on to become a Registered Nurse (RN).



These roles come with increased responsibilities and higher earning potential. [Simmons University states that LVNs](#) typically earn around \$50,000 or more per year, while RNs often earn \$70,000 or more depending on experience and location.

Starting as a CNA allows you to gain hands-on experience, build confidence in clinical settings, and work toward these long-term career goals while already employed in the healthcare field.

IS BECOMING A CNA RIGHT FOR YOU?



This career path is a good fit for individuals who want to enter healthcare quickly and enjoy hands-on work. It is especially beneficial for those considering nursing but looking for a practical starting point.

It may not be the best fit if you prefer a desk-based role or are uncomfortable with direct patient care. Being honest about your preferences can help you make the right decision.

A CLEAR AND PRACTICAL NEXT STEP



At some point, reading about a career can only take you so far! The next step is seeing how it fits into your actual schedule, budget, and timeline. If you're seriously considering becoming a CNA, it helps to look at the details that will shape your next few months, including program schedules, training timelines, and enrollment requirements.

One simple way to do that is by exploring what a real program looks like in practice. You can review class availability, see how the training is structured, and get a clearer sense of how quickly you could get started by visiting [the CNA Training Institute](#).

Here, you can review upcoming class schedules and see exactly how the training process is structured.