

The Demand for Orthotics and Prosthetics Technicians: Preliminary Survey Results

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INTRODUCTION

The Quincy Subgrantee of the Massachusetts Balance of State Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) Prime Sponsor has been operating orthotics and prosthetics (O&P) technician training programs.

Due to recent budgetary cutbacks in CETA monies, the Quincy CETA office faced a difficult dilemma in selecting which of its skills training programs to operate. It was felt by the Quincy CETA staff that graduates of earlier Quincy CETA technician courses had saturated the market in Massachusetts. In researching the demand for technicians in the country as a whole, we found that there were no "hard" data in existence. Estimates of demand for technicians were, in many cases, based on "off-the-cuff" guesses.

Therefore, as part of an overall strategy of determining which of its programs were most viable, Quincy CETA elected to perform a survey of the 530 certified orthotics and prosthetics facilities in the country to estimate the short-term future demand for trained technicians.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Exhibit 1 is a sample of the survey questionnaire which was sent to the O&P facilities. The first question asked about the number of technicians actually employed in 1981 and 1982. This question would give

information about employment growth. The second question asked each facility to estimate the number of technicians that they would hire in 1983 and in 1984. Questions three and four requested salary information. Question number five asked for specific hiring requirements for technicians. The sixth question would give information on the supply side of the market—that is, where the O&P facilities found prospective technicians to hire. Finally, question number seven asked if the respondents would like more information on the Quincy CETA O&P program.

In order to facilitate responses from the O&P facilities, a self-addressed return envelope was included in the questionnaire package.

RESULTS

Of the 530 questionnaires mailed out, four were returned because the facilities were either no longer in existence or had relocated. 191 surveys were mailed back to the Quincy CETA office, which was a response rate of over 36 percent. Of these respondents, 184 were complete enough to be used in the tabulation of the replies. Therefore, the results discussed below are based on 184 respondents, or 35 percent of the total number of certified orthotics and prosthetics facilities in the country.

The details of the survey are shown for four separate categories: 1) all respondents,

Survey of Demand for Orthotic & Prosthetic Technicians

Respondent:

1. Number of Technicians Employed in Firm?

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>
Orthotics Technicians	_____	_____
Prosthetics Technicians	_____	_____

2. How many Technicians do you think you will hire in:

	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
Orthotics Technicians	_____	_____
Prosthetics Technicians	_____	_____

3. What is your starting hourly wage for technicians? (please check)

	<u>\$4-4.50</u>	<u>\$4.50-5</u>	<u>\$5-5.50</u>	<u>\$5.50-6</u>	<u>\$6-6.50</u>	<u>Other (Specify)</u>
Orthotics	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Prosthetics	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

4. What salary range could a technician expect after two years experience? (please check)

	<u>\$5.50-6</u>	<u>\$6-6.50</u>	<u>\$6.50-7</u>	<u>\$7-7.50</u>	<u>\$7.50-8</u>	<u>Other (Specify)</u>
Orthotics	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Prosthetics	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. Specific hiring requirements for technicians (please check)

	<u>High School Diploma</u>	<u>College 2 yr 4 yr</u>	<u>Previous Experience</u>				<u>Certification</u>	
			<u>1 yr</u>	<u>2 yr</u>	<u>3 yr</u>	<u>none</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Orthotics	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Prosthetics	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other (please specify)	_____							

6. What are your sources for technicians? (please check)

	<u>Technicians School</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>In-house Training</u>
Orthotics	_____	_____	_____
Prosthetics	_____	_____	_____
Other (please specify)	_____		

7. Would you be interested in more information on the Quincy Skills Center School of Orthotics and Prosthetics? Yes _____ No _____

Exhibit 1.

2) orthotics and prosthetics facilities, 3) orthotics facilities, and 4) prosthetics facilities (See Tables 1-4 respectively).

Since the tables are straightforward, only certain responses need to be discussed here. First, the starting salary and the salary for a technician with two years experi-

ence is approximately ten percent less for a prosthetics technician than for an orthotics technician, for prosthetics and orthotics firms respectively. Secondly, the majority of respondents rely on in-house training as a source of technicians.

All Respondents

Sample = 184

1. Number of Technicians Employed

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>
Orthotics	440	476
Prosthetics	323	354

2. Number of Technicians to be hired

	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
Orthotics	112	96
Prosthetics	94	84

3. Starting hourly wage for technicians:

Orthotics	\$5.00 to \$5.50
Prosthetics	\$5.00 to \$5.50

4. Salary after two years experience:

Orthotics	\$7.00 to \$7.50
Prosthetics	\$7.00 to \$7.50

5. Specific hiring requirements for technicians:

	<u>High School Diploma</u>	<u>College 2 yr</u>	<u>Previous Experience</u>			<u>Certification</u>
			<u>1 yr</u>	<u>2 yr</u>	<u>None</u>	
Orthotics	61%	8%	18%	14%	3%	11%
Prosthetics	52%	8%	15%	12%	4%	9%

6. Sources for technicians:

	<u>Tech School</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>In-house Training</u>
Orthotics	27%	4%	77%
Prosthetics	22%	3%	73%

7. Percent requesting more information about Quincy CETA's program:

72%

Table 1.

O & P Facilities

Sample = 123

1. Number of Technicians Employed

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>
Orthotics	360	388
Prosthetics	257	284

2. Number of Technicians to be hired

	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
Orthotics	85	72
Prosthetics	80	66

3. Starting hourly wage for technicians:

Orthotics	\$5.00 to \$5.50
Prosthetics	\$5.00 to \$5.50

4. Salary after two years experience:

Orthotics	\$7.00 to \$7.50
Prosthetics	\$7.00 to \$7.50

5. Specific hiring requirements for technicians:

	<u>High School Diploma</u>	<u>College 2 yr</u>	<u>Previous Experience</u>			<u>Certification</u>
			<u>1 yr</u>	<u>2 yr</u>	<u>None</u>	
Orthotics	67%	10%	20%	15%	5%	12%
Prosthetics	66%	10%	20%	15%	5%	13%

6. Sources for technicians:

	<u>Tech School</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>In-house Training</u>
Orthotics	32%	4%	89%
Prosthetics	29%	4%	87%

7. Percent requesting more information about Quincy CETA's program.

77%

Table 2.

Orthotics facilities Sample = 34

1. Number of Technicians Employed

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>
Orthotics	80	88

2. Number of Technicians to be hired

	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
Orthotics	27	24

3. Starting hourly wage for technicians:

Orthotics \$5.00 to \$5.50

4. Salary after two years experience:

Orthotics \$7.00 to \$7.50

5. Specific hiring requirements for technicians:

	<u>High School Diploma</u>	<u>College 2 yr</u>	<u>Previous Experience</u>			<u>Certification</u>
			<u>1 yr</u>	<u>2 yr</u>	<u>None</u>	
Orthotics	85%	6%	23%	21%		15%

6. Sources for technicians:

	<u>Tech School</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>In-house Training</u>
Orthotics	29%	9%	91%

7. Percent requesting more information about Quincy CETA's program:

65%

Table 3.

Prosthetics Facilities

Sample × 27

1. Number of Technicians Employed

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>
Prosthetics	61	66

2. Number of Technicians to be hired

	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
Prosthetics	12	16

3. Starting hourly wage for technicians:

Prosthetics \$4.50 to \$5.00

4. Salary after two years experience:

Prosthetics \$6.50 to \$7.00

5. Specific hiring requirements for technicians:

	<u>High School Diploma</u>	<u>College 2 yr</u>	<u>Previous Experience</u>			<u>Certification</u>
			<u>1 yr</u>	<u>2 yr</u>	<u>None</u>	
Prosthetics	74%	7%	7%	7%		7%

6. Sources for technicians:

	<u>Tech School</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>In-house Training</u>
Prosthetics	19%	4%	100%

7. Percent requesting more information about Quincy CETA's program:

59%

Table 4.

PROJECTIONS OF DEMAND

For this preliminary paper, the projections of demand will be simplistic. Demand will be calculated by relating the response rate to the total number of certified facilities. Table 5 shows the projected demand by facilities in 1983 and 1984.

As Table 5 indicates, in 1983 there will be a demand for over 580 technicians and in 1984, demand will be for 500 technicians.

A future study will include additional projections as well as a more in-depth discussion of the implications of this survey.

Projected Demand for Technicians

<u>Facility</u>		<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
All	Orthotics Technician	320	275
	Prosthetics Technician	263	235
O & P Facilities	Orthotics Technician	243	206
	Prosthetics Technician	229	189
Orthotics Facilities	Orthotics Technician	77	69
Prosthetics Facilities	Prosthetics Technician	34	46

Table 5.

AUTHOR

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