New Mexico's annual median wage in this occupational group ($59,560) is slightly below the U.S. annual median wage ($61,120). The states with the highest wages in this occupational group are California and Alaska, which both pay wages considerably higher than the national average. Colorado, which also pays higher than the national average, is the highest paying contiguous state to New Mexico, with an annual median wage of $65,800.
Where Workers Are Employed
and More Information on Detailed Occupation

Based on 2013 data, over half of all healthcare practitioners and technical workers are located in the Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of New Mexico (see Exhibit 2). An MSA represents the named urban area along with adjacent communities, while non-MSAs generally lack the same level of urban integration. Often, employment is largest in the Albuquerque MSA simply due to its large population; however, the area also has the second highest concentration of healthcare practitioners and technical workers relative to other regions. The North and West Central area has the highest concentration, at 6.7 percent. The Las Cruces MSA has the same concentration of healthcare practitioners and technical workers as the state. All other regions have lower concentrations than New Mexico. The Southwestern Region (non-MSA) follows the Las Cruces MSA, with a concentration of 5.0 percent of healthcare practitioners and technical workers. Los Alamos has the smallest concentration of healthcare practitioners and technical workers, at 3.3 percent of total employment.

Within New Mexico, healthcare practitioners and technical occupation wages are highest in the Santa Fe MSA, which has an annual median wage of $64,840 as of May 2013. As shown in Exhibit 3, in 2013, the statewide annual median wage was $59,560 as compared to $31,490 for all occupations. The Farmington MSA has the second highest annual median wage across all occupations ($33,390) after Los Alamos, as well as a higher than the average annual median wage for healthcare practitioners and technical occupations ($63,410). Los Alamos has the next highest annual median wages for healthcare practitioners and technical occupations ($63,160), though this is considerably lower than the all occupation average ($78,180) for this high-paying area. The North and West Central (non-MSA) Region has the lowest healthcare practitioners and technical occupation wage ($54,350), though this figure is still very high relative to the region’s all-occupation wage.

As Exhibit 4 shows, the most common healthcare practitioners and technical occupation is that of registered nurse, with 33.5 percent of employment. These workers assess patient health problems and needs, develop and implement nursing care plans, and maintain medical records. They may also advise patients on health maintenance and disease prevention or provide case management. This is only one of five health diagnosing- and treating-focused occupations out of the top 12 healthcare practitioners and technical occupations. The other four are pharmacists (3.6 percent); physicians and surgeons (2.9 percent); family and general practitioners (2.5 percent); and speech-language pathologists (2.5 percent). The other seven occupations, which make up 23.6 percent of total healthcare practitioners and technical employment, are health technologist and technician occupations. Occupations within this group include pharmacy technicians, licensed practical and vocational nurses, emergency medical technicians and paramedics, medical and clinical laboratory technicians, medical records and health information technicians, radiologic technologists, and medical and clinical laboratory technologists. Employment in the remaining occupations comprised less than 2.5 percent of total employment, each, and, when combined, makes up 29 percent of the total healthcare practitioners and technical occupation employment.
Exhibit 5 lists the most common healthcare practitioners and technical occupations and their median annual wages. Not surprisingly, 18 of the 19 specific occupations listed have a median wage higher than the all-occupation average. Interestingly, 10 of them also have wages higher than the average of all healthcare practitioners and technical occupations. Physicians and surgeons is the highest paying occupation; the median wage is greater than $187,000 a year. The median wage for general dentists is more than $173,000 a year. Family and general practitioners and pharmacists have annual median wages of over $148,000 and $119,000, respectively.

Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations in New Mexico’s Industries

While healthcare practitioners and technical occupations can be found in several industries, over 75 percent of the occupational group’s employment is concentrated in health care and social assistance. (See Exhibit 6.) Given the dominant share of this industry, it is instructive to review how healthcare practitioners and technical workers within this industry break out among its subsectors. As of 2010, 41.8 percent of healthcare practitioners and technical workers worked in the hospitals subsector. The subsector with the next largest share of employment is ambulatory health care services, which employed 29.1 percent of healthcare practitioners and technical workers. The other two subsectors within health care and social assistance are nursing and residential care facilities and social assistance; health practitioners and technical workers comprised 4.0 and 0.6 percent of total employment, respectively.

Aside from health care and social assistance, the next largest share of healthcare practitioners and technical employment falls within government. In all, 6.8 percent of healthcare practitioners and technical workers are employed within government, with federal government accounting for 5.1 percent. Registered nurses and physicians and surgeons made up the majority of healthcare workers in that industry. Family and general practitioners and chiropractors contributing significantly to this subsector. Each of the remaining major industries with significant numbers of healthcare practitioners and technical workers—educational services, professional, scientific, and technical services, and administration and support services—made up less than 3.0 percent of total healthcare practitioners and technical employment, at 5.4 percent, with pharmacists and pharmacy technicians making up the majority of healthcare workers in that industry. Self-employed workers made up 4.0 percent of healthcare practitioners and technical employment, with dentists, family and general practitioners, and chiropractors contributing significantly to this subsector. Each of the remaining major industries with significant numbers of healthcare practitioners and technical workers—educational services, professional, scientific, and technical services, and administration and support services—made up less than 3.0 percent of total
employment. All other industries, combined, contributed the last 0.9 percent.

Exhibit 7 highlights some of the industry subsectors in which healthcare practitioners and technical workers are employed. As of 2010, the subsector with the most healthcare practitioners and technical employment was hospitals, which employed roughly 42 percent of all workers within this occupational group. Ambulatory health care services also contributed 29.1 percent. Other key subsectors include federal government; self-employed workers; nursing and residential care facilities; health and personal care stores; educational services; and professional, scientific, and technical services. Each of these latter subsectors employed between around 2 and 5 percent of all healthcare practitioners and technical workers.

**Future Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Jobs**

Exhibit 8 shows the healthcare practitioners and technical occupations with the highest number of projected jobs openings. The exhibit also shows the number of openings that are projected to result from job growth versus openings from replacement needs (turnover and retirements). Registered nurses are projected to see the largest number of annual openings over the period (670), followed by licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (200). For registered nurses, growth accounts for almost 60 percent of total openings. About 50 percent of jobs for pharmacy technicians and emergency medical technicians and paramedics are projected to be due to growth. For licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses, the job openings that are projected to be due to growth amount to about 40 percent of the total openings. Projected job openings due to growth in the remaining occupations are also around 40 percent or slightly above.

**Entering into a Healthcare Practitioner or Technical Worker Job**

**Education and Job Experience Requirements**

Educational requirements for healthcare practitioner and technical jobs vary widely depending on the occupation. Occupations such as pharmacy technicians and paramedics often require no more than a post-secondary certificate or diploma, whereas registered nurses may require a bachelor’s degree, and certainly an associate’s degree. Many of the higher-paid occupations, such as physicians and dentists, will require extensive postgraduate education and specialization. Exhibit 9 provides a breakdown of educational program completers in 2011 in the state’s largest programs for certain healthcare practitioner and technical occupations. The distribution is dominated by students of registered nurse training at the associate’s degree level. In fact, of the eight programs listed, completers in nursing programs, in some form or other, make up about 65 percent of all completers.