

Are urgent care centers hiring paramedics?



There's expansion across the country in both the urgent care market and the number of jobs for paramedics. But does the supply align with the demand? In many cases, the answer is yes.

First, here's some background about paramedics. There are three levels of EMT positions: basic, intermediate, and paramedic—which is the most advanced level and requires an associate's degree.

Paramedics provide more extensive pre-hospital care than other EMTs, who generally are responsible for assessing a patient's condition and management of respiratory, cardiac, and trauma emergencies. Advanced EMTs do more advanced medical procedures, such as administering intravenous fluids and some medications. Paramedics can also interpret EKGs and use other monitors and complex equipment.

EMTs and paramedics are also used to transport patients from one medical facility to another. Other specific responsibilities and required levels of certification vary by state, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). That site also predicts 24 percent job growth for EMTs and paramedics from 2014-2024.

Here are a few reasons why it makes sense for urgent care centers to hire paramedics:

Higher skillset: At the paramedic level, EMTs have more skills than a medical assistant. They can run IVs, provide assessment of patients, and offer life-saving training to others on staff. These hires could be used effectively for training MAs, thus freeing up the physician's time.

Lower cost: Paramedics have a lower median pay, \$43,766, than the median pay for a registered nurse, \$66,640. So an urgent care center hiring a paramedic would save money by bringing on a paramedic instead of a registered nurse, if the other needed skills align. This could be especially advantageous as the nursing shortage nationwide continues.

Availability: Most paramedics work for fire departments, where many work 12-hour, or even 24-hour, shifts. This means many will have multiple days off during the week and might be looking for part-time work. Urgent care centers can hire paramedics on a floating or other part-time schedule. This arrangement could be mutually beneficial since the urgent care center wouldn't have to provide benefits to the paramedic (who's receiving coverage from the other full-time job) and the paramedic can earn extra income.

A firefighter and EMS professional, Chris Kaiser, offered additional insight [on his blog](#) in this 2010 post documenting his experiences working in an urgent care center:

"At the urgent care clinic where I worked, there rarely was a call for my advanced life support skills. ... My skills at patient history-taking, assessment triage, and bandaging got a work-out. So did my skills in relating to patients on a personal level and interfacing with patients and their families across a demographic spectrum. I also learned how to prepare, acquire, and process various laboratory tests, including point-of-care testing for common conditions and how to properly obtain and prepare samples of advanced labs. Surprising perhaps, I got a great deal more practice drawing up, mixing, and administering medications more so than I ever have in the field. Working with the doctors greatly improved my skills as a diagnostician and has helped me immeasurably in my ambulance practice."

In conclusion, there appear to be potential advantages to employing paramedics in the urgent care setting although the practice isn't widespread at this point. That may soon change.

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