

Ashley McClendon  
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Mr. Simmons  
Career Information Research

# Hospital Administrator

## A Day in the Life of a Hospital Administrator

Doctors on television seem to lead exciting and fulfilling professional lives (their personal lives are disastrous in comparison, but that makes for good TV). There are many people that hear the call to save lives, but not all of them like cutting into people. The hospital administrator plays a vital role in saving lives, without having to take scalpel in hand. Hospital administrators manage hospitals, outpatient clinics, hospices, and drug-abuse treatment centers. In large hospitals, there may be several administrators, one for each department. In smaller facilities, they oversee the day-to-day operations of all departments. Administrators make sure hospitals operate efficiently and provide adequate medical care to patients. Their responsibilities are numerous and sometimes require the assistance of the medical and support staff. They act as liaisons between governing boards, medical staff, and department heads and integrate the activities of all departments so they function as a whole. Following policies set by a governing board of trustees, administrators plan, organize, direct, control and coordinate medical and health services. Administrators recruit, hire, and sometimes train doctors, nurses, interns, and assistant administrators. Administrators plan budgets and set rates for health services. In research hospitals, administrators develop and expand programs and services for scientific research and preventive medicine. In teaching hospitals, they aid in the education of new doctors. Administrators plan departmental activities, evaluate doctors and other hospital employees, create and maintain policies, help develop procedures for medical treatments, quality assurance, patient services, and public relations activities such as active participation in fund-raising and community health planning. Hospital administrators work long or irregular hours. Hospitals are open round the clock – 24/7 – and administrators may be called in at any hour to make decisions and resolve disputes. Administrators also attend staff meetings, participate in health planning councils, go to fund-raising events, and travel to professional association conventions. A hospital administrator's job is difficult and demanding. They need to keep up with advances in medicine, computerized diagnostic and treatment equipment, data processing technology, government regulations, health insurance changes, and financing options. While doctors strive to keep the blood flowing and the heart beating, the hospital administrator is doing his job in keeping the hospital alive and healthy.

## Paying Your Dues

Health Services Administrators should have a master's degree in health services administration. A master's degree in public administration or business administration may also qualify graduates for entry into health care administration. The health services administration degree usually includes a one-year internship (residency) in a health care center. Graduates with a BA degree in this field may work in a health care center before starting a master's program. Nursing home administrators need to be licensed by the Nursing Home Administrators State Board of Examiners to work for health care facilities that receive Medicare funds. Health Services Administrators normally start as administrative assistants in large centers or assistant administrators in medium-sized institutions. They advance by taking increasing

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responsibilities such as associate administrator and, finally, CEO. Moving to a higher classification may require transferring to a smaller state. Some administrators of small facilities may choose to accept a lower-level position in a larger center, which often leads to professional growth.

#### Present and Future

Employment for Health Services Administrators is expected to grow at a rate faster than average, especially in states where the population is increasing and more healthcare facilities are needed to meet the demand. Jobs will be in major medical centers and in large public hospitals. As the population grows older, specialized centers that are care givers for the elderly, or those who may need care more frequently and for longer periods – such as hospice programs that treat terminally ill patients – will provide excellent opportunities for healthcare administrators. Health maintenance organizations (HMOs) that treat large patient lists covered by health insurance are increasing in numbers and will have an ongoing need for administrators at various levels.

#### Quality of Life

##### PRESENT AND FUTURE

A year internship (residency) and a year as an assistant administrator can give you the experience you need to apply for administrator positions at small health care centers, hospices, or Medicare facilities. The hours are long and hard as you learn the “ropes” of running a medical facility.

##### FIVE YEARS OUT

With more experience comes the opportunity to search out better jobs. Although the work hours may decrease as the experience rises, work hours increase proportionally to the size of the medical facility you run. The hospital administrator has seen a lot in five years on the job, and should be able to settle even the toughest disputes between those in the boardroom and the operating room.

##### TEN YEARS OUT

Hospital administrators with ten or more years of experience are in a prime position to move to large medical centers. Like CEOs of Fortune 500 corporations, a seasoned hospital administrator has a good deal of power, and can set policies and procedures into place that benefit a hospital's employees as well as the people they serve.