

# Respiratory Therapy – Bachelor Degree

*Inland Empire/Desert Region (Riverside and San Bernardino counties)*

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*This workforce demand report uses state and federal job projection data developed before the economic impact of COVID-19. The COE is monitoring the situation and will provide more information as it becomes available. Please consult with local employers to understand their current employment needs.*

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## Summary

- Community college respiratory care/therapy programs provide the knowledge, skills, and abilities that lead to the community college-level respiratory therapists occupation.
- Employment is expected to increase by 15% through 2025, with 131 job openings available annually over this period.
- This occupation's 10<sup>th</sup> percentile hourly earnings are \$27.11 per hour, above the regional \$24.36 per hour self-sustainable earnings standard for a single adult with one child.
- Regional community colleges have issued 52 awards annually in respiratory care/therapy programs over the last three academic years. Other postsecondary education providers in the region have issued 115 awards annually in respiratory care/therapy programs.
- The Centers of Excellence recommends expanding respiratory therapist programs. For more information, see the [recommendation section](#).

## Introduction

California Community College respiratory care/therapy (TOP 1210.00) programs prepare students for employment through instruction related to the clinical assistance in the diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of acute and chronic respiratory disease, including pulmonary function, drug administration, mechanical ventilation, medical gas therapy, airway management, patient assessment, and assistance to the physician in carrying out special procedures, and as part of emergency and life-support team (Taxonomy of Programs, 2012). The knowledge, skills, and abilities trained by respiratory care/therapy programs lead to the respiratory therapist occupation.

### **Respiratory Therapists (SOC 29-1126)**

Assess, treat, and care for patients with breathing disorders. Assume primary responsibility for all respiratory care modalities, including the supervision of respiratory therapy technicians. Initiate and conduct therapeutic procedures; maintain patient records; and select, assemble, check, and operate equipment.

**Sample job titles:** Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Respiratory Therapist, Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT), Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT), Respiratory Care Practitioner (RCP), Respiratory Therapist (RT), Staff Respiratory Therapist, Staff Therapist

*Entry-Level Educational Requirement: Associate Degree*

*Work Experience Required: None*

*Typical On-The-Job Training: None*

*Incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework: 65%*

According to a nationwide survey of employers conducted by the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, the typical entry-level education of respiratory therapists is currently an associate degree. However, they acknowledge that employers may prefer candidates with a bachelor's degree (BLS, 2021). Licensing organizations for respiratory therapy have all taken a stance on respiratory therapists' entry-level educational requirements. The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) states, "Training and education for entry-to-practice as a respiratory therapist should be provided within programs awarding a bachelor's or master's degree in respiratory care (or equivalent degree titles), and all newly accredited respiratory care educational programs must award, as a minimum, the bachelor's degree in respiratory care (or equivalent degree title)" (AARC, 2015). Further, "The California Society for Respiratory Care endorses and supports bachelor's degree programs in respiratory care (or equivalent) for education and training as a minimum requirement for licensure beginning in 2030" (CSRC, 2021). This report provides an online job advertisement assessment to determine if the educational requirement for respiratory therapists is increasing and if earnings and skills differ between a bachelor's degree or an associate degree minimum educational requirements.

## Job Counts and Projections

In 2020, there were 1,627 respiratory therapist jobs in the Inland Empire/Desert Region. Employment is projected to increase by 15% through 2025; 131 annual job openings are expected over this period. Exhibit 1 displays the job counts, five-year projected job growth, job openings, and the share of incumbent workers age 55 years and greater in the region.

*Exhibit 1: Five-year projections, 2020-2025*

2020 Jobs	2025 Jobs	5-Yr % Change (New Jobs)	5-Yr Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	% of workers age 55+
1,627	1,871	15%	653	131	22%

Source: Emsi 2021.4

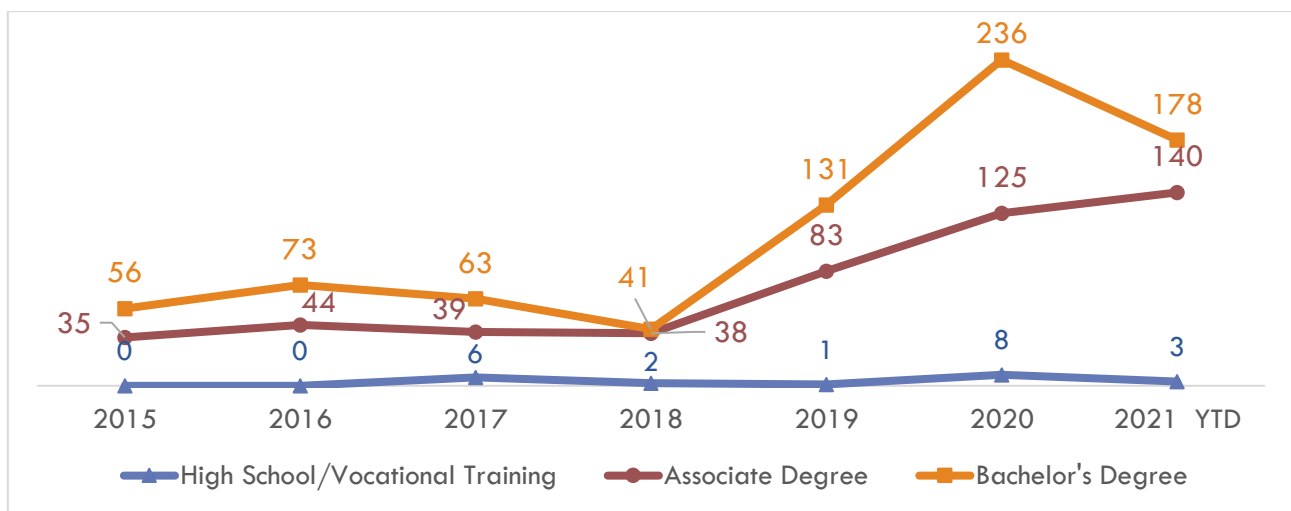
## Job Advertisements for Respiratory Therapists with Bachelor's Degrees

A search of online job advertisements (ads) over the last 12 months (December 2020 through November 2021) for respiratory therapist jobs was conducted to reveal the details about the employers seeking these workers, including the time it takes to fill positions, earnings information, in-demand skills and educational requirements. Over the previous 12 months, 151 job ads for respiratory therapists were posted in the region; however, only 11 of these regional job advertisements specifically stated a need for a bachelor's degree as a minimum education requirement. There are insufficient regional ads to reliably determine a trend in employer preferences for respiratory therapists with bachelor's degrees.

The search of job advertisements was expanded to the state level to provide more generalizable and reliable results. Exhibit 2 displays the change in job advertisements for respiratory therapists with bachelor's degrees over the last seven years, from 2011 to 2021 (year to date). In 2020, there were 236 job ads posted for respiratory therapists with bachelor's degrees in California. Job ads for bachelor's degree workers have increased dramatically since 2018. It should be noted that the number of job ads for respiratory therapists with an associate degree also increased over this time.

Exhibit 2 shows the number of job ads posted during the last 12 months in the region and the regional and statewide average time to fill this job. On average, regional employers in the region fill online job advertisements in 26 days, two days shorter than the statewide average time to fill. Time to fill information indicates that regional employers face similar challenges filling open positions as other employers in California.

*Exhibit 2: Job advertisements for respiratory therapists with a minimum education requirement in California*



Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

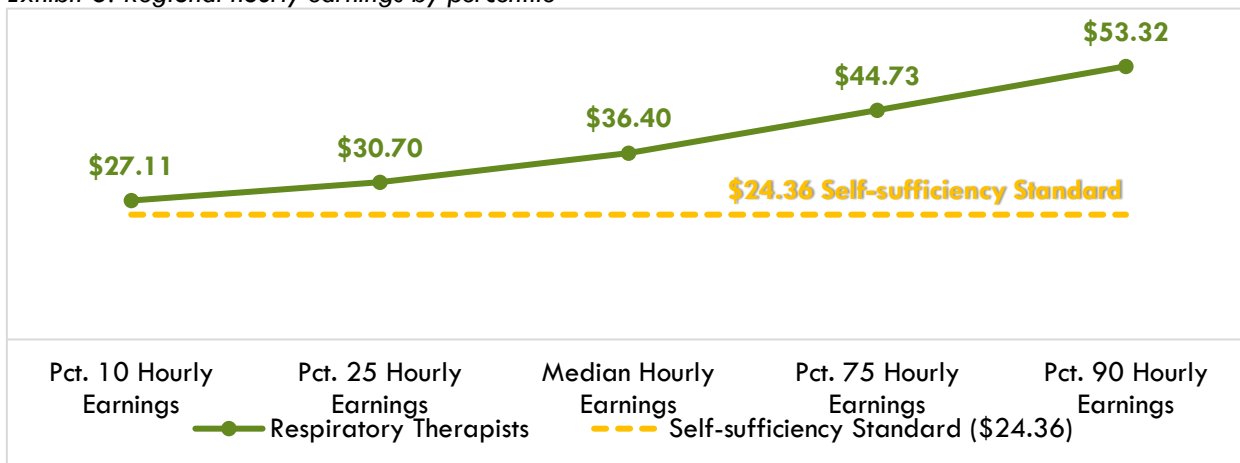
\*2021 Job advertisements include only display ads posted between January 2021 and October 2021

## Earnings and Benefits

Community colleges should ensure their training programs lead to employment opportunities that provide self-sustainable income. The University of Washington estimates that a self-sufficient hourly rate for a single adult with one school-age child is \$24.36 per hour or \$51,452 annually in Riverside County; \$23.73 per hour or \$50,119 annually in San Bernardino County (Pearce, 2021). For this study, the higher hourly earnings requirement in Riverside County is adopted as the self-sufficiency standard for the two-county region.

Exhibit 3 displays the hourly earnings for respiratory therapists. The hourly earnings surpass the regional self-sufficiency standard at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile, indicating that at least 90% of workers in the field earn a self-sustainable wage. The median hourly earnings is \$36.40 per hour or \$75,713.38 annually.

Exhibit 3: Regional hourly earnings by percentile



Source: Emsi 2021.3

According to the occupational guides developed by the California Labor Market Information Division, benefits for respiratory therapists generally include medical, dental, life, vision insurance, vacation, sick leave, holidays, and retirement plans (Detailed Occupational Guides, 2021).

## Salary from Online Job Ads

Exhibit 4 displays online job ad salary data for respiratory therapists over the last 12 months in California. Online job advertisement market Salary provides insight into the likely salary of workers within a specific occupation and further detail on the impact of additional education on salary.

Online job ad salary information reveals that employers offer respiratory therapists a median salary of \$61,300 to \$62,700 annually, above the region's \$51,452 annual (\$24.36 hourly) self-sufficiency standard. The average median annual salary of jobs ads listing bachelor's degree as a minimum educational requirement was \$1,400 higher than associate degree job ads. Additionally, the advertised salary range (25th and 75th quartile) for a bachelor's degree as a minimum education requirement was higher (\$55,000 to

\$68,700 annually) compared to an associate degree as a minimum education (\$54,800 to \$64,500 annually). This indicates that bachelor degree holders may have access to higher earnings throughout their careers. The salary figures are prorated to reflect full-time, annual earnings status.

*Exhibit 4: Advertised salary information*

Education	25th quartile	Median	75th quartile
Associate degree	\$54,800	\$61,300	\$64,500
Bachelor's degree	\$55,000	\$62,700	\$68,700

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

## Employers, Skills, Education, Work Experience, and Certifications

Looking at regional online job ads, Exhibit 5 displays the employers that posted five or more job ads for respiratory therapists over the last 12 months. Showing employer names provides some insight into where students may find employment after completing a program. Kindred Healthcare Incorporated, with locations in Rancho Cucamonga, Perris, Ontario, and Riverside, posted the most job ads in the region, followed closely by Loma Linda University Health. Employers marked with a star (\*) indicated they were seeking a worker with a bachelor's degree in at least one of their job ads.

*Exhibit 5: Employers posting the most job ads for respiratory therapists*

Top Employers	Job Ads
Kindred Healthcare Incorporated	14
*Loma Linda University Health	12
*Tenet Health Systems	8
*Prime Healthcare Services	5
John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital	5
Integrated Resources Incorporated	5
*County Riverside	5
Kaiser Permanente	4
*Eisenhower Health	4
*County of San Bernardino	4
<i>All other employers</i>	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

In descending order, exhibit 6 and 7 list the most frequently mentioned specialized and employability skills employers seek when looking for workers to fill respiratory therapist positions. Specialized skills are occupation-specific skills that employers request for industry or job competency. Employability skills are

foundational skills that transcend industries and occupations; this category is often referred to as "soft skills." The skills requested in job ads may be utilized to guide curriculum development. Exhibit 6 displays skills for employers seeking workers with a bachelor's degree as a minimum level of education, and Exhibit 7 lists associate degree or vocational training as a minimum level of education.

*Exhibit 6: Sample of in-demand skills from employer job ads, bachelor's degree*

Specialized skills (n=31)	Employability skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respiratory Therapy</li> <li>Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS)</li> <li>Critical Care</li> <li>Life Support</li> <li>Acute Care</li> <li>Pediatric Advanced Life Support</li> <li>Patient Care</li> <li>Treatment Planning</li> <li>Therapeutic Procedures</li> <li>Neonatal Resuscitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning</li> <li>Troubleshooting</li> <li>Teamwork/Collaboration</li> <li>English</li> <li>Communication Skills</li> <li>Writing</li> <li>Preventive Maintenance</li> <li>Detail-oriented</li> </ul>

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

*Exhibit 7: Sample of in-demand skills from employer job ads, Associate degree or high school/vocational training*

Specialized skills (n=36)	Employability skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respiratory Therapy</li> <li>Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS)</li> <li>Critical Care</li> <li>Patient Care</li> <li>Acute Care</li> <li>Life Support</li> <li>Pediatric Advanced Life Support</li> <li>Treatment Planning</li> <li>Therapy</li> <li>Neonatal Resuscitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning</li> <li>Troubleshooting</li> <li>Teamwork/Collaboration</li> <li>Communication Skills</li> <li>Preventive Maintenance</li> <li>English</li> <li>Detail-oriented</li> <li>Problem Solving</li> </ul>

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Exhibit 8 and 9 display the certifications most frequently requested or required by employers in job ads for respiratory therapists in California over the last 12 months. The Respiratory Care Board of California (RCB) requires that prospective respiratory therapists hold a minimum of an associate degree from an approved respiratory care education program before examination through the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) (RCB, 2021). For more information regarding respiratory therapy licensure, please visit the RCB website (RCB, 2021). For a complete list of approved training programs, please visit the RCB website (RCB, 2021 a). Exhibit 8 displays certifications for employers seeking workers with a bachelor's degree as a minimum level of education, and Exhibit 8 lists associate degree or vocational training as a minimum level of education.

*Exhibit 8: Certifications most frequently required by employers, bachelor's degree*

<b>Certification (n=133)</b>	<b>Job Ads</b>
Respiratory Care Practitioner (RCP)	280
Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) Certification	239
Registered Respiratory Therapist	190
Neonatal Resuscitation Program (NRP)	155
Basic Life Saving (BLS)	135
American Heart Association Certification	93
Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) Certification	61
Basic Cardiac Life Support Certification	45
Registered Pulmonary Function Technologist	42
Certified Respiratory Therapist	26

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

*Exhibit 8: Certifications most frequently required by employers, Associate degree or high school/vocational training*

<b>Certification (n=133)</b>	<b>Job Ads</b>
Respiratory Care Practitioner (RCP)	233
Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) Certification	178
Registered Respiratory Therapist	176
Neonatal Resuscitation Program (NRP)	137
Basic Life Saving (BLS)	118
American Heart Association Certification	90
Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) Certification	69
Driver's License	26
Certified Respiratory Therapist	25
First Aid Cpr Aed	19
Registered Pulmonary Function Technologist	15

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

## Student Completions and Programs Outcomes

Exhibit 12 displays completion data for respiratory care/therapy (TOP 1210.10) programs in the region. Over the last three academic years, from 2017 to 2020, regional colleges have issued 52 awards annually from state-approved respiratory care/therapy programs. The student completion and outcome methodology are available in the appendix.

*Exhibit 12: 2017-20, Annual average community college awards for respiratory care/therapy programs in the Inland Empire/Desert Region*

<b>TOP 1210.00 – Respiratory Care/Therapy</b>	<b>Associate Degree</b>	<b>Certificate requiring 60+ semester units</b>	<b>Total CC Annual Average Awards, Academic Years 2017-20</b>
Crafton Hills	29	-	29
Victor Valley	18	5	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>52</b>

Source: MIS Data Mart

California program outcome data may provide a useful insight into the likelihood of success for the proposed program. Community college student outcome information based on the selected TOP code and region is provided in Exhibit 13. The outcome methodology is available in the appendix section of this report.

*Exhibit 13: 1210.00 – Respiratory care/therapy strong workforce program outcomes*

<b>Strong Workforce Program Metrics: 1210.00 – Respiratory Care/Therapy Academic Year 2018-19, unless noted otherwise</b>	<b>Inland Empire/Desert Region</b>	<b>California</b>
Unduplicated count of enrolled students (2019-20)	205	2,475
Completed 9+ career education units in one year (2019-20)	50%	39%
Perkins Economically disadvantaged students	92%	86%
Students who attained a noncredit workforce milestone in a year (2019-20)	-	44%
Students who earned a degree, certificate, or attained apprenticeship (2019-20)	47	354
Transferred to a four-year institution (transfers)	-	83
Job closely related to the field of study (2017-18)	100%	99%
Median annual earnings (all exiters)	\$47,504	\$42,242
Median change in earnings (all exiters)	67%	33%
Attained a living wage (completers and skills-builders)	78%	58%

Sources: LaunchBoard Community College Pipeline and Strong Workforce Program Metrics

Exhibit 14 displays awards reported by other postsecondary education providers in respiratory care therapy/therapist (CIP 51.0908) programs. Completion data is compiled from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for the most recent three years available. On average, four other postsecondary education institutions in the region have issued 115 awards annually over the last three academic years from state-approved programs. Loma Linda University has the only accredited, bachelor's degree respiratory care therapy/therapist program in the region, according to the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (COARC, 2021). This program awarded an average of 10 bachelor's



degrees and three master's degrees over the last three academic years. Loma Linda's catalog indicates the tuition for their Respiratory Care—Bachelor of Science (traditional) program is \$32,436 for year 1 (53 units) and \$37,944 for year 2 (62 units) or \$612 per unit (Loma Linda University, 2021).

*Exhibit 14: Other postsecondary educational provider respiratory care therapy/therapist training programs, three-year annual average credentials in the region*

51.0908 – Respiratory Care Therapy/Therapist	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Other Educational Providers Annual Average Credentials, Academic Years 2016-19
American Career College-Ontario	36	-	-	36
Concorde Career College-San Bernardino	23	-	-	23
Loma Linda University	-	10	3	13
Platt College-Ontario	42	-	-	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>115</b>

Source: IPEDS

## Recommendation

Community college respiratory care/therapy programs provide the knowledge, skills, and abilities that lead to the community college-level occupation, respiratory therapists. Employment for respiratory therapists is expected to increase by 15% through 2025, with 131 job openings expected annually. The 10<sup>th</sup> percentile hourly earnings (\$27.11 per hour) for respiratory therapists surpass the region's self-sustainability rate (\$24.36 per hour), indicating that at least 90% of workers in this occupation earn a self-sustainable wage.

Regional community college issued 52 awards in respiratory care/therapy (TOP 1210.00) programs over the last three academic years. Other postsecondary education providers in the region have issued 115 awards annually over the previous three academic years. Loma Linda University has the only accredited bachelor's degree respiratory care therapy/therapist program in the region, according to the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (COARC, 2021). This program awarded an average of 10 bachelor's degree and three master's degrees over the last three academic years. Loma Linda's 2021-22 catalog indicates the tuition for their Respiratory Care—Bachelor of Science (traditional) program is \$32,436 for year 1 (53 units) and \$37,944 for year 2 (62 units) or \$612 per unit (Loma Linda University, 2021).

The Centers of Excellence recommends expanding current respiratory care/therapy programs to include a bachelor's degree award option. The regional annual job opening demand for more respiratory therapists is strong (131 annual job openings), and this occupation's hourly earnings exceed the region's self-sustainability

standard. The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) and the California Society for Respiratory Care recommend a bachelor's degree as a minimum licensing requirement for respiratory therapists beginning as early as 2030, and only one private college in the region currently offers a bachelor's degree respiratory care therapy/therapist program. There appears to be an opportunity to provide an affordable, community college respiratory care/therapy bachelor's degree program in the region to meet the increased educational requirement for licensing. Colleges considering respiratory care/therapy programs should partner with local employers to discuss their workforce hiring needs and training requirements to help students find gainful employment in this field.

### Contact

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## Appendix: Methodology

Exhibit 12 displays the average annual California Community College (CCC) awards conferred during the three academic years between 2017 and 2020 from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) Data Mart. Awards are the combined total of associate degrees and certificates issued during the timeframe, divided by three in this case to calculate an annual average. This is done to minimize the effect of atypical variation that might be present in a single year.

Community college student outcome information is from LaunchBoard and based on the selected TOP code and region. These metrics are based on records submitted to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) by community colleges, which come from self-reported student information from CCC Apply and the National Student Clearinghouse. Employment and earnings metrics are sourced from records provided by California's Employment Development Department's Unemployment Insurance database. When available, outcomes for completers are reported to demonstrate the impact that earning a degree or certificate can have on employment and earnings. For more information on the types of students included for each metric, please see the web link for LaunchBoard's Strong Workforce Program

Metrics Data Element Dictionary in the References section (LaunchBoard, 2021 a). Finally, employment in a job closely related to the field of study comes from self-reported student responses on the CTE Employment Outcomes Survey (CTEOS), administered by Santa Rosa Junior College (LaunchBoard, 2021 a).

Job advertisement data is limited to the information provided by employers and the ability of artificial intelligence search engines to identify this information. Additionally, preliminary calculations by Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce found that "just 30 to 40 percent of openings for candidates with some college or an associate degree, and only 40 to 60 percent of openings for high school diploma holders appear online" (Carnevale et al., 2014). Online job advertisements often do not reveal the hiring intentions of employers; it is unknown if employers plan to hire one or multiple workers from a single online job ad, or if they are collecting resumes for future hiring needs. A closed job ad may not be the result of a hired worker.

Table 1. 2020 to 2025 job growth, wages, entry-level education, training, and work experience required for respiratory therapists in the Inland Empire/Desert Region (Riverside and San Bernardino counties combined)

Occupation (SOC)	2020 Jobs	5-Year Change (New Jobs)	5-Year % Change (New Jobs)	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Entry-Experienced Hourly Wage (10 <sup>th</sup> to 90 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	Median Hourly Wage (50 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	Average Annual Earnings	Entry-Level Education & On-The-Job-Training	Work Experience Required
Respiratory Therapists (29-1126)	1,627	244	15%	131	\$27.11 to \$53.32	\$36.40	\$79,000	Associate degree & None	None

Source: Emsi 2021.4