



Brya Ratcliff, Keiser University nursing student tends to patient on clinical at Imperial Point Medical Center

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Hot jobs

Four employment sectors offer the fastest job growth in South Florida

Healthcare, technology, financial analysis among the most promising employment fields

By Marcia Heroux Pounds, Sun Sentinel

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Florida jobs used to be primarily in the real estate, construction, hospitality and healthcare sectors. Of these, only healthcare has offered steady job growth in recent years.

With unemployment at a 30-year high, where should workers hunt for a job in 2010 or beyond, especially if they would prefer to remain in the state or South Florida?

Labor market projections give a clue about where the jobs are and will be, with some sectors adding jobs and others replacing those lost in the economic downturn.

Topping the list in the region and the nation is nursing.

Projections call for 13,484 registered nurses in [Palm Beach County](#) by 2017, an increase of 32 percent from 2009, according to the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation. In Broward, personal and homecare aid jobs are expected to rise by 51 percent to 1,583 by 2017.

Besides healthcare, jobs in technology are expected to be hot in Broward and Palm Beach counties. So will specialized jobs in teaching and social work.

Brya Ratcliff, 28, who is studying nursing at Keiser University, plans to be a registered nurse. While she hopes her chosen profession is a good bet for a job, what drew her to nursing is patient care. "I wanted to be where there's interaction with patients," said Ratcliff, a 2003 University of Florida graduate who studied nutrition.

Other healthcare sectors where jobs are and will continue to be in demand include: medical assistants, vascular sonographers, ultrasound technologists, occupational therapists and physical therapists, according to Dr. Mary Moore, associate vice chancellor of academic operations for Keiser University, which teaches nursing at its 14 locations around the state.

Linda Quick, president of the South Florida Hospital & Healthcare Association, said caregivers for the elderly will be in demand as the Baby Boomer generation ages, and mental health jobs including social work, counseling and health-care system navigators as life becomes increasingly stressful and complex.

Mental health and substance abuse counselor jobs, for example, are expected to grow by more than 5 percent a year in [Palm Beach County](#), according to the latest forecast by the Agency for Workforce Innovation.

In technology, South Florida's fastest-growing jobs include network systems and communications analysts and computer analysts.

"The jobs we see as being hot going forward are primarily in the technology area," said Kelly Smallridge, president of the Business Development Board of [Palm Beach County](#). "I met with IBM and SBA Communications the other day and they said database administrators, engineers and analysts were the highest in demand."

Smallridge also sees growth at [Palm Beach County](#)'s Lockheed Martin and Sikorsky operations, which work on national defense projects, and Florida Turbine Technologies, which specializes in clean energy engineering.

Wireless communications jobs are at the forefront in [Broward County](#), which has a growing sector that includes BlackBerry maker Research In Motion, Motorola, Foxconn Technology Group and General Dynamics C4 Systems. They all have operations in Plantation or Sunrise.

"Once, Motorola was the only game in town. If you lost your job, you would have to pick up your family and relocate," said Bob Swindell, interim CEO for Broward Alliance. "Now there are multiple opportunities for jobs [in telecommunications]."

Those with technology skills also might find jobs at software maker Citrix Systems, diabetes testing firm Home Diagnostics, or medical device and pharmaceutical maker Baxter International, all with operations in Fort Lauderdale.

Broward Alliance also has launched an effort to attract more headquarters to the county. Corporate headquarters are usually looking for workers in human resources, marketing and sales and in South Florida, workers who understand the cultures of Central and South America and have multi-language skills, he said.

"I've got eight companies in the pipeline considering relocation," Swindell said.

One sector that may be a surprising pick for job growth is finance. Management analysts are forecast to grow at a clip of more than 3 percent a year in [Palm Beach County](#), according to state projections. In Broward, cost estimators are expected to see more than 3 percent-a-year growth.

"The hot jobs in finance are primarily senior financial analyst spots. Companies in this environment place a premium on forecasting, budgeting and plans to improve profitability," said Julian Guilarte, division director for Robert Half Management Resources in Coral Gables.

A budget systems analyst, for example, would be a liaison with accounting and information technology departments, using data to generate forecasts and financial models.

Like in healthcare, more finance jobs are calling for technology skills. "Anybody who brushes up on their

skills is obviously doing themselves a favor," Guilarte said.

The same is true for healthcare, which is requiring more technology skills of its physicians, nurses and other personnel.

"The real need is for people to become multi-faceted and interdisciplinary. They can't say, 'I'm the nurse so somebody has to do the IT part, or I'm the IT person so don't interfere with me about real patients.' They have to have a broader capacity," Quick said.

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