

COMPUTER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

OCCUPATION DESCRIPTION

Provide technical assistance to computer system users. Answer questions or resolve computer problems for clients in person, via telephone or from remote location. May provide assistance concerning the use of computer hardware and software, including printing, installation, word processing, electronic mail, and operating systems. Computer support specialists provide technical assistance, support, and advice to customers and other users. This occupational group includes technical support specialists and help-desk technicians. Troubleshooters interpret problems and provide technical support for hardware, software, and systems. Support specialists may work either within a company that uses computer systems or directly for a computer hardware or software vendor. Increasingly, these specialists work for help-desk or support services firms, for which they provide computer support to clients on a contract basis. Working on monitors, keyboards, printers, and mice, they install, modify, clean, and repair computer hardware and software. Help-desk technicians field telephone calls and e-mail messages from customers who are seeking guidance on technical problems. Most computer support specialists start out at the help desk.

METHOD OF ENTRY

Occupations at this level generally require an associate degree. Completion of the degree program usually requires at least 2 years of full-time equivalent academic work.

TRAINING

Many employers prefer to hire persons with some formal college education. Jobs may require only a computer-related associate's degree. A number of companies are becoming more flexible about requiring a college degree for support positions. However, certification and practical experience demonstrating these skills will be essential for applicants.

RESTRICTIONS ON LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION

Individuals with felony or misdemeanor convictions, including forgery or crimes involving sexual assault or children are subject to evaluation to determine eligibility.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Average Hourly Wage 2007: \$18.01; Average Openings per year: 175