

Medical Billing and Physician Coding Certificate Information

A Guide for Prospective Students

Welcome,

Thank you for your interest in the Medical Billing and Physician Coding certificate programs at College of DuPage.

This guide was developed to help prospective students understand the differences between Medical Billing and Physician Coding, explore the educational pathways available at College of DuPage, and determine which certificate may best align with their interests and career goals.

The healthcare revenue cycle offers a variety of career opportunities for individuals interested in healthcare, business, insurance, compliance, and healthcare data. While Medical Billers and Physician Coders often work closely together, they perform distinct roles and require different knowledge and skills. Understanding these differences is an important first step in selecting the program that is right for you.

This guide addresses common questions regarding program requirements, professional credentials, remote work opportunities, and employment considerations. Most students will find the information needed to make an informed decision about their next steps. Should you have additional questions after reviewing this guide, College of DuPage faculty and advisors are available to assist you.

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Before You Get Started

Medical Billing and Physician Coding Are Different Careers

According to the AAPC, “medical coders identify billable information in the clinical documentation and translate that information into standardized codes. Medical billers use those codes to bill patients and create medical claims to submit to insurance companies.” (AAPC, 2023)

Medical Billers are responsible for the financial side of healthcare services. They use diagnosis and procedure codes to submit claims to insurance companies, post payments, investigate claim denials, process appeals, and help ensure healthcare providers are reimbursed accurately for the services they provide. Medical Billers often communicate with insurance companies, patients, providers, and other healthcare professionals throughout the reimbursement process.

Physician Coders review medical documentation and translate healthcare services, diagnoses, and procedures into standardized codes using classification systems such as ICD-10-CM, CPT, and HCPCS Level II. Accuracy is critical because coding directly impacts reimbursement, compliance, quality reporting, and healthcare data.

Which Career Is Right for You?

- Students who enjoy working with insurance processes, reimbursement, problem solving, and communication with multiple stakeholders often find Medical Billing to be a good fit.
- Students who enjoy analyzing medical documentation, applying detailed coding guidelines, and working independently with healthcare data may find Physician Coding to be a better fit.
- Students with little or no healthcare experience are strongly encouraged to begin with the Medical Billing Certificate. This recommendation is based on current hiring practices and the limited availability of entry-level coding positions.
- The Physician Coding Certificate is **not recommended** as a first step for most students. Coding positions are highly competitive, and employers frequently seek candidates with prior experience in healthcare, medical billing, medical records, or revenue cycle operations. Students who enter the field through Medical Billing often develop the foundational knowledge and professional experience needed to become more competitive candidates for future coding opportunities.

Is This the Right Career Path for You?

Before pursuing a career in Medical Billing or Physician Coding, prospective students should ask themselves an important question.

Are you prepared to work in a profession where the rules change constantly, mistakes can have financial and compliance consequences, and learning never stops?

Medical Billing and Physician Coding are often misunderstood as simple administrative positions. In reality, both professions require specialized knowledge and the ability to navigate a complex and constantly evolving healthcare environment. Professionals must understand healthcare reimbursement, insurance requirements, coding systems, government regulations, payer policies, and compliance standards. In many situations, there is not a single correct answer. Instead, professionals must analyze information, interpret guidelines, research solutions, and apply critical thinking skills to make informed decisions.

Healthcare is one of the most heavily regulated industries in the United States. Coding guidelines, payer policies, reimbursement methodologies, and regulatory requirements change frequently. As a result, successful professionals are committed to lifelong learning and continuing education throughout their careers.

Prospective students should be comfortable learning complex concepts, solving problems, adapting to change, and working independently. Much of the work is performed at a computer and requires sustained concentration and attention to detail for extended periods of time.

Students should not choose Medical Billing or Physician Coding solely because they hope to work remotely. While remote opportunities exist, employers seek professionals who are genuinely interested in healthcare reimbursement, coding, compliance, and the healthcare revenue cycle. Successful professionals are motivated by the work itself and committed to developing expertise in a challenging and continually evolving field.

Remote Work Should NOT Be Your Primary Motivation

One of the most common questions prospective students ask is whether Medical Billers and Physician Coders can work remotely. While remote opportunities do exist, students should understand that remote work is not guaranteed and should not be the primary reason for pursuing either profession.

In many organizations, remote work is earned rather than automatically granted. Employers often require employees to demonstrate proficiency, productivity, accuracy, reliability, and the ability to work independently before being considered for remote positions. Even after remote status is granted, continued remote work is frequently dependent upon maintaining established productivity and quality standards.

Students should also understand that remote work does not mean flexible work hours. Most remote Medical Billers and Physician Coders are expected to maintain a regular work schedule, meet productivity expectations, and remain accountable for the same performance standards as employees working on site.

Successful professionals enter the field because they are interested in healthcare reimbursement, coding, compliance, problem solving, and the healthcare revenue cycle. While remote work may be a potential benefit of the profession, it should not be the primary motivation for pursuing a career in Medical Billing or Physician Coding.

Professional Credentials Matter

The Medical Billing and Physician Coding certificate programs at College of DuPage are designed to provide students with foundational knowledge and skills that can support entry into the healthcare revenue cycle profession. Students who complete these programs may choose to pursue industry recognized professional credentials such as the Certified Professional Biller (CPB) or Certified Professional Coder (CPC) offered by the AAPC.

It is important to understand that professional credentialing examinations are separate from the College of DuPage certificate programs. Registration fees, examination requirements, eligibility requirements, preparation materials, and credential maintenance requirements are determined by the credentialing organization and may change over time.

While College of DuPage coursework is designed to support students in preparing for professional credentialing examinations, successful completion of a certificate program does not guarantee success on a credentialing examination. Professional credentialing examinations are comprehensive assessments that require significant preparation, study, and commitment beyond completion of coursework alone.

Students should view certificate completion as the beginning of their professional journey rather than the final destination. Healthcare reimbursement, coding systems, payer requirements, and regulatory expectations continue to evolve throughout a professional's career. Successful Medical Billers and Physician Coders are committed to lifelong learning, continuing education, and ongoing professional development.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is This an Online Program?

- No. The Medical Billing and Physician Coding certificate programs are not fully online.
- Students should expect a combination of online, hybrid, and in-person coursework. Each certificate includes one required in-person, on campus course per semester. In addition, two courses require students to attend live Zoom class meetings every other week as part of the course requirements.
- The in-person and Zoom courses are offered in the evening, which can be beneficial for working professionals and students who need to arrange childcare or other daytime commitments.
- Students should carefully consider transportation, work schedules, childcare arrangements, and other personal commitments before enrolling. Students seeking a fully online program should be aware that these certificate programs include required in-person and scheduled virtual class meetings.
- Course days, times, and delivery formats are subject to change. Students should refer to the College of DuPage catalog and class schedule for the most current course information.

Do I need an advising appointment before starting the program?

- No. Most prospective students will find the information needed to make an informed decision within this guide. However, students who have questions after reviewing the guide are welcome to contact the program chair or Healthcare Advising for additional assistance.

How long does each certificate take?

- The Medical Billing and Physician Coding certificates are designed to be completed in approximately two semesters when courses are taken in the recommended sequence.
- Students should be aware that first-semester courses must be successfully completed before enrolling in second-semester courses. This sequencing is intentional, as the knowledge and skills learned in the first semester provide the foundation for success in advanced coursework.
- In addition, courses are not offered during the summer semester. As a result, students should plan accordingly and understand that it is not possible to complete the certificate by taking all courses simultaneously or by accelerating the program through summer enrollment.
- Students are encouraged to review the course sequence carefully and develop an academic plan that aligns with their educational and professional goals.

How Much Does the Certificate Cost?

- The cost of completing the Medical Billing and Physician Coding certificates varies based on several factors, including residency status, tuition rates, fees, textbooks, and any previously completed coursework that may apply toward the certificate.
- Because tuition and fees are subject to change, students should refer to the College of DuPage website for the most current tuition and fee information.
- Both certificate programs are eligible for financial aid for students who meet applicable eligibility requirements. Students interested in financial assistance should contact the Financial Aid Office for additional information.
- Students may also qualify for workforce development funding, grants, scholarships, employer tuition assistance, or other financial assistance programs. Eligibility requirements vary. Contact the Financial Aid Office or appropriate college office for additional information.

Can I Complete the Medical Billing and Physician Coding Certificates at the Same Time?

- No. Students should not plan to complete the Medical Billing and Physician Coding certificates simultaneously.
- The certificates share overlapping coursework and are designed to be completed in a specific sequence. First-semester courses provide the foundation for second-semester coursework and must be completed before advancing in the curriculum.
- Students interested in earning both certificates should complete one certificate first and then pursue the second certificate. Attempting to complete both programs at the same time is not recommended and is not consistent with the intended course sequence.

Does College of DuPage Provide Job Placement?

- No. College of DuPage does not provide job placement or guarantee employment upon completion of the Medical Billing or Physician Coding certificate programs.
- The certificate programs are designed to provide students with foundational knowledge and skills that support entry into the healthcare revenue cycle profession. Employment opportunities may be influenced by factors such as prior healthcare experience, professional credentials, geographic location, employer requirements, and current job market conditions.
- Students are encouraged to utilize the college's career services, professional networking opportunities, and industry resources as they pursue employment opportunities.

Coursework

Medical Billing Certificate

The Medical Billing Certificate prepares students for careers within the healthcare revenue cycle. Students learn healthcare reimbursement principles, insurance requirements, claim processing, payment posting, denial management, healthcare regulations, and medical terminology. The program is designed to provide a strong foundation for individuals seeking to enter the healthcare industry and is strongly recommended for students with little or no prior healthcare experience.

Course Sequence

Medical Billing Certificate		
1st Semester		
Course No.	Course Name	Credits
HLTHS 1110	<i>Biomedical Terminology</i>	3
HIT 1301	<i>Anatomy & Pharmacology for Medical Coders and Billers (Online)</i>	3
HIT 1302	<i>Introduction to Diagnostic Coding (On campus, Wednesday typically 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM)</i>	3
	<i>Semester Total</i>	9
2nd Semester		
HIT 1501	<i>Health Insurance and Reimbursement (Meet on Zoom 1 night/week)</i>	3
HIT 1402	<i>Legal and Ethical Concepts for Medical Coders and Billers (Meet on Zoom 1 night/week)</i>	3
HIT 1503	<i>CPT and HCPCS Coding for Billers (On campus, typically Wednesday 6:00 PM – 7:20 PM)</i>	2
	<i>Semester Total</i>	8
	<i>Certificate Total Credits</i>	17

*Students are required to complete first-semester courses, before enrolling in second-semester classes.

** Classes for this certificate are not offered during the summer semester.

Certified Professional Biller (CPB) Credential

- Students who complete the Medical Billing Certificate may choose to pursue the Certified Professional Biller (CPB) credential offered by AAPC. The CPB credential validates knowledge of medical billing, reimbursement methodologies, payer policies, compliance requirements, and revenue cycle processes.
- Completion of the certificate program does not result in the CPB credential. The credentialing examination is administered separately by AAPC and requires a separate application and examination fee.

Learn more about the CPB credential through the AAPC:

<https://www.aapc.com/certifications/cpb>

Physician Coding Certificate:

The Physician Coding Certificate prepares students to assign diagnosis and procedure codes for physician services using ICD-10-CM, CPT, and HCPCS Level II coding systems. Students learn to analyze medical documentation, apply coding guidelines, and support accurate reimbursement and regulatory compliance.

Students with little or no healthcare experience are strongly encouraged to begin with the Medical Billing Certificate before pursuing Physician Coding. Coding positions are highly competitive, and employers frequently seek candidates with prior healthcare experience.

Course Sequence

Sequence of Courses - Physician Coding Certificate		
1st Semester		
Course No.	Course Name	Credits
HLTHS 1110	<i>Biomedical Terminology</i>	3
HIT 1301	<i>Anatomy & Pharmacology for Medical Coders and Billers</i>	3
HIT 1302	<i>Introduction to Diagnostic Coding (on campus, Wednesday, 6:00PM – 8:30 PM)</i>	3
	<i>Semester Total</i>	9
2nd Semester		
HIT 1401	<i>CPT Coding for Physician Office Coding (on campus, Wednesday, 6:00PM – 8:30 PM)</i>	4
HIT 1402	<i>Legal and Ethical Concepts for Medical Coders and Billers</i>	3
HIT 1403	<i>Revenue Cycle Management</i>	3
	<i>Semester Total</i>	10
	<i>Certificate Total Credits</i>	19

*Students are required to complete first-semester courses, before enrolling in second-semester classes.

** Classes for this certificate are not offered during the summer semester.

Certified Professional Coder (CPC) Credential

- Students who complete the Physician Coding Certificate may choose to pursue the Certified Professional Coder (CPC) credential offered by AAPC. The CPC credential is one of the most widely recognized physician coding credentials in the healthcare industry.
- Completion of the certificate program does not result in the CPC credential. The credentialing examination is administered separately by AAPC and requires a separate application and examination fee.

Learn more about the CPC credential through the AAPC:

<https://www.aapc.com/certifications/cpc>

Getting Started

Students interested in the Medical Billing or Physician Coding certificate programs should begin by applying to College of DuPage if they are not already enrolled.

New students can begin the registration process by going to [Registration at COD](#). For assistance contact the Registration office at (630) 942-2377, email registration@cod.edu or in person at Student Services Center (SSC), Room 2221

You can also reach out to our program-specific Healthcare Advisors, and they will be able to help you with your academic plan to be sure you are ready to register for the program. You do need to be a COD student first and then you can make an appointment by emailing healthcareadvising@cod.edu or calling (630) 942-2259.

There are no program-specific admission requirements or prerequisites for either certificate. Students may register for courses once they have been admitted to the college.

Students who have previously completed any of the following courses may not need to repeat them as part of the certificate program:

- HLTHS 1110 Biomedical Terminology
- ANAT 1500 Anatomy and Physiology for Medical Coders and Billers
- ANAT 1551 Human Anatomy and Physiology I
- ANAT 1552 Human Anatomy and Physiology II

Students should consult with Registration and Records regarding transfer credit, prior coursework, and graduation requirements.

Additional Resources

College of DuPage Resources

- [College Catalog](#)
- [Class Search and Registration](#)
- [Financial Aid Office](#)
- [Career Services](#)

Professional Organizations

- [AAPC Website](#)
- [CPB Credential Information](#)
- [CPC Credential Information](#)

Most prospective students will find the information needed to make an informed decision within this guide. Students who have reviewed the guide and still have program-specific questions are welcome to contact the program chair, Andréa Brus at brusa235@cod.edu for additional assistance.