

Health and Public Safety Division Program Overview

Health Information Technician Program

Congratulations on your decision to pursue a degree as a Health Information Technician. This is an excellent profession to pursue, one worth the hard work that the educational process requires. As part of the admission process for this program, you are required to read through the material presented on this website. Please be aware that you must read ALL of the material, complete the required forms, and return them to Enrollment Services at Western (address on form) in order to meet the requirement of completing the mandatory overview.

If you are interested in information technology, business administration, law and the betterment of health care and you are an organized, detail-oriented individual, this diverse career field may be just right for you! A strong background in health sciences (Anatomy & Physiology, Pathophysiology) and computer sciences (database, spreadsheet, and word processing) are vital to the work the Health Information Technician does. The Health Information Technician (HIT) is a professional with a unique blend of clinical knowledge and information management skills, who codes medical information for research and reimbursement, applies laws relative to maintenance, disclosure and retention of health information and analyzes, computerizes and graphically displays data to support clinical and business decision making. This is a two year associate degree program.

*The admission requirements are subject to change without notice. This website will be updated, at minimum on October 15 and February 15 of each year.

The Admission Process

Review the [Intent to Enroll](#) form to identify and complete the admission requirement for your program:

Step I – Application to the College

1. **Application to the College** Complete and submit the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) application. If you are interested in more than one program, you must complete an application for each program. A one-time \$30.00 application fee payable to Western must be submitted with the application. Applications are available in Enrollment Services located in the Welcome Center or at any regional learning center. The WTCS application can also be obtained online at <http://www.westerntc.edu/admissions>.
2. Submit **official transcripts** from high school and, if applicable, college. If submitting college transcripts, it is possible that you may have taken courses that can be applied towards your chosen program. To have your transcript evaluated for transfer of credit, complete and submit the form found at <http://www.westerntc.edu/transfer>.
3. **Placement tests** (COMPASS, ASSET, or ACT). You are required to take a placement test and meet the minimum scores unless the following applies:
 - If you have a bachelor's or master's degree, you are not required to take a placement test.
 - If you have successfully completed (C grade or better) college level Written Communication or Beginning Composition, you are not required to take the Writing placement test.
 - If you have successfully completed (C grade or better) College Mathematics, you are not required to take the Math placement test.

Satisfactory placement scores for the Health Information Technician program can be obtained online at:

http://www.westerntc.edu/programs/program.aspx?PROGRAM_NBR=105301 under Admission Requirements.

Testing is available in La Crosse at the Western Technical College Campus Assessment Center or at the regional learning center sites in Independence, Black River Falls, Tomah, Mauston, or Viroqua. For more information on placement tests, visit the assessment website at <http://www.westerntc.edu/admissions/assessment.asp>. If you take the

placement test at another location, you must request that your scores be sent to Western.

Remediation courses are available for you if you do not meet the placement scores for the program. Students must retest after remediation. All remediation coursework must be completed prior to being accepted into the program.

Step II – Application to the Program

1. Review the **Online Program Overview** (this document). You must complete the [Intent to Enroll](#) form when you are prepared to begin your program of choice. Review the form to identify and complete the admission requirements specific to your program. You may send the completed requirements, as they are fulfilled, to Enrollment Services, located at the Welcome Center, however, **do not** mail in the Intent to Enroll form. The Intent to Enroll form will be submitted at your *mandatory* Enrollment Services Advisor meeting. Maintain and fill in the Intent to Enroll form as every requirement is submitted or attach the completed requirement/s to the form and bring to your appointment.

When all admission requirements are fulfilled, call Enrollment Services (608) 785-9553 to schedule an appointment to review your paperwork with an Enrollment Services Advisor. Bring the Intent to Enroll form to your appointment with any un-submitted documentation. At this appointment, the Enrollment Services Advisor will finalize the admission process and provide you with an estimated start date. At this time, you will sign the second page of the Intent to Enroll form verifying that you have completed the requirements to enter the program and have been assigned an estimated start date.

If you are unable to begin the program on the assigned start date, you will need to resubmit the Intent to Enroll form and schedule another appointment. Students are unable to request a pass on their assigned date. They will be assigned a later start date upon resubmission of the Intent to Enroll form.

2. Meet **reading requirement** as noted in Step I, item 3.
3. Meet **math requirement** as noted in Step I, item 3.
4. Meet **writing requirement** as noted in Step I, item 3.
5. Read and complete the **Essential Functions** for your program. Essential Functions are a listing of the physical, cognitive, and mental abilities that you will need in order to complete the program. You must read the Essential Functions and complete the appropriate section on page two of the Intent to Enroll form. If you have a documented disability, there may be accommodations that can be made to assist in your successful completion of the program. Please contact Disability Services at Western (608 785-9875) if you are in need of more information.

A change in your ability to perform any of the Essential Functions must be reported to Laurie Raddatz, Associate Dean, (608) 785-9409, or to your instructor immediately.

6. Complete the **Immunization Form**. The immunization information can usually be obtained from your personal physician. **IMPORTANT**: The immunization form **MUST** be signed by a physician, physician assistant, nurse or nurse practitioner.

If you do not have two consecutive years of TB testing, you must have a “two-step” TB test done. TB tests are administered at your local physician’s office, county health departments or (for current Western students taking at least 6 credits) at the UWL Health Center in the Health Science Center in La Crosse. You are required to maintain current TB tests until you graduate from the program (i.e., renewed annually).

It is your responsibility to submit immunization records, including TB tests, prior to or with the Intent to Enroll form to Enrollment Services located in the Welcome Center so the documentation can be entered into your official student health record here at Western.

Hepatitis B series: It is your choice whether or not to have the series. If you elect to do the Hepatitis B series, you need to *start* the series, but do not have to *complete* the series in order to submit the immunization form. You must submit the remaining dates when the series is complete.

It is strongly recommended that you **maintain a copy** of all forms/verifications for your own personal record.

7. Complete the **Background Information Disclosure** form. The State of Wisconsin requires that individuals who will be working with vulnerable adults and/or children undergo a criminal background check. You must complete the form and submit the \$20 fee (made payable to Western Technical College) in order to meet this admission requirement. Western does not accept background checks conducted by third parties (i.e. your employer). You are required to disclose *all* past experiences with the law. Any arrests or new charges must be reported to Laurie Raddatz (608 785-9409), Associate Dean of Health and Public Safety within five (5) working days. Failure to do so may result in program dismissal. In addition, if you have resided outside of Wisconsin in the past 3 years, you will be informed of how to obtain your out of state background check at your own expense.

Although the form itself refers to crimes, criminal convictions, and pending criminal charges, the information that comes back from the background check does include all contacts with law enforcement whether or not a criminal conviction occurred. Therefore, include contacts such as non-criminal traffic matters, arrests, charges for which you were acquitted, and charges that were pled down to an ordinance violation or forfeiture. This form is found at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/Forms/F8/F82064.pdf>

If your background check reveals past experience with the law, two clinical sites will be contacted to determine the likelihood of your being able to have a clinical experience at those sites. **Clinical sites have the right to refuse clinical placement to any student based on the background check results.** This information will assist you in understanding the likelihood of being able to complete the clinical courses

for the program. If you have charges on your background check, we are unable to guarantee that you will be able to be placed for the multiple clinical experiences that most programs require. It is your decision whether or not you want to enter the program based on the uncertainty of being accepted at clinical sites. See Frequently Asked Questions for more information on the impact of a positive background check.

8. **Biology**. You must successfully complete (C grade or better) biology at the high school and/or college level. If you have not previously taken this course, you can fulfill this requirement by taking it at Western. This requirement must be completed prior to taking General Anatomy and Physiology.
9. **Chemistry**. You must successfully complete (C grade or better) chemistry at the high school and/or college level. If you have not previously taken this course, you can fulfill this requirement by taking it at Western. This requirement must be completed prior to taking General Anatomy and Physiology.
10. **General Anatomy & Physiology**: You must successfully complete college level General Anatomy & Physiology (C grade or better). This can be taken at Western or may be able to transfer in from another college if the course material is the same.
11. Complete **Keyboarding Test** successfully at 35 words per minute (WPM). Testing is available free of charge at the Western Assessment Center in La Crosse, (608) 785-9566, as well as at the Regional Learning Centers. Please call for an appointment. A test can also be done online at www.typingtest.com. You must submit test results to Enrollment Services.

** In the event that you have difficulty printing the necessary forms, please contact the Welcome Center at 608-785-9553 to have the forms mailed to you.

Health Information Technology (HIT) Program Overview

Program Information

- Visit the [Program Resource page](#)
Note: All of the program courses for Medical Coding Specialist (MCS) are included in the HIT program.
 - Review the Curriculum page for course sequencing
 - Review the Placement Information page for information on graduate placement and salaries
 - Review the Program Brochure for course descriptions and prerequisites. Courses are offered only once per year. The program begins with General A&P in the summer.
 - Review the Learn More About This Program page for Admission Criteria, Frequently Asked Questions, and other items of interest.

Clinical Experience

- HITs should refer to the Clinical Experience link at <http://learn.westerntc.edu/brownt>. (There is no clinical component in the MCS program). Review the following policies
 - Attendance
 - Behavior
 - Dress code
 - Implications of a positive criminal background check
 - Required immunizations
 - Health and safety training
 - Malpractice insurance

Online Requirements

- Most of the program specific courses for the Health Information Technician are offered online, providing students with a great degree of flexibility in scheduling in terms of the place and time they will complete the course work. Students should plan on spending at least as much time with the material for an online course as they would in a regular classroom. There are specific expiration (due) dates for assignments that

are controlled by the course management software. If assignments are not completed on time, they will no longer be accessible online. Organization and time management skills, a reliable Internet connection and regular communication with the instructor are essential for student success in an online course. There are proctored (live) exams for each online course which the student may take with the instructor, a proctor, in the library, in the Academic Success Center or at any regional learning centers.

- Visit the Virtual College website at www.westerntc.edu/onlinelearning and refer to System Requirements
 - Review the Recommended PC Platform. Most of the program specific courses are online or web supported. It is essential that you have an appropriate system, e-mail and Internet connection to be successful in this program.
 - Order the Microsoft Software package (Word, Excel, Access and PowerPoint) at student discount pricing. This is needed for students to gain access to lecture notes and lab activities on the program website.

Essential Resources

- See <http://www.westerntc.edu/getstarted> for **Important Documents** - Academic Calendar, Admissions Application, Transfer Credit Evaluation
- See Student Handbook or www.westerntc.edu/currentstudents for **Important Documents** - Student Handbook, Student E-mail Guide, Grievance Form; **Policies and Procedures** - including but not limited to Academic Standing, Attendance, Grading and Appeals, Drop/Add or ,Withdrawal, Code of Conduct and Academic Dishonesty, Graduation Requirements, Student Rights, Privacy, Nondiscrimination Policy; **Registration Information** - Tuition and Fees, Drop/Withdrawal Refund Policy; **Student Support Services**
- See <http://www.westerntc.edu/programs> then click “Health Information Technology” under “Health Behind The Scenes” for Curriculum, Course Outcomes Summaries (credits, prerequisites, textbooks and supplies, competencies, objectives), Program Accreditation information

Professional Association Membership

Upon graduation from the program, HIT students are eligible to take the Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) exam of the American Health Information Management Association. Passing the exam signifies that the student has met nationally recognized, entry level competencies. For more information, visit <http://www.ahima.org>.

Professional Organizations

- » [American Health Information Management Association](#)
- » [Wisconsin Health Information Management Association](#)

Program Head:

Tamra R. Brown, ME, RHIA
brownt@westernnc.edu
(608)785-9549

Instructor:

Susan Summerfield, BBA, RHIT
summerfields@westernnc.edu
(608) 789-6103

Summer Contact:

Paula Zastrow
Administrative Program Assistant
zastrowp@westernnc.edu
608-785-9409

Instructor Websites

» [Tamra Brown](#)

Job Market

- HITs may enter the field in a variety of healthcare settings including acute care, ambulatory care, long term care, home care and insurance companies. Typical entry level job positions include coder, release of information technician, deficiency analyst, data analyst, claims analyst.

With job experience, students may move into supervisory positions, utilization management, quality improvement technician or advanced data management positions. Some may choose to advance their education by pursuing a bachelor's degree in Health Information Administration.

- The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, projects an employment increase for health information workers by 18% through 2016 – faster than average for all occupations. Technicians with a strong background in coding will be in particularly high demand.
- For current salary information you can visit the HIT program page at www.westerntc.edu. Click Programs, Health Information Technology, and look under the Placement Info tab.

Questions

If you have questions, contact the Program Head, Tamra Brown, at brownt@westerntc.edu or (608)785-9549.

Acceptance to a Program

Students will be admitted to this program once the student has completed the Intent to Enroll, met the program requirements and met with an Enrollment Services advisor. Program admission is based upon a first come, first served basis. Once the program is filled, students will be admitted to the next term. If an opening occurs in an earlier term, you may be contacted.

In the event that the program is not full, applications will continue to be accepted until 3 weeks prior to the start of the program. Applicants who meet all admission requirements will be accepted on a first come, first served basis until the program is full.

It is to the student's advantage to complete admission requirements for the program as soon as possible.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What is the policy on body art and piercing?** In the Health and Public Safety Division, you may display no **Body Art or Piercing** that might be considered offensive. Most employment settings have policies that are generally broad, however they do reserve the right to deny employment and student clinical placement if body art or piercings are found to be offensive to those in that setting. The wearing and displaying of jewelry in the health care or public safety setting is generally limited to wrist watches and wedding rings or small non-dangling earrings. The purpose of this limitation is related to infection control, safety and public perception of the employees while they are on duty.

If you have significant visible body art and piercings, we are unable to guarantee that you will be able to be placed for the multiple clinical experiences that most programs require. You may be asked to cover the body art with clothing or dressings or remove the piercings in order to complete your rotation. If your program has a more restrictive policy on body art or

piercings, it will be enforced. It is your decision whether or not to enter the program based on the uncertainty of being accepted at those sites.

2. **How flexible is the program in meeting my individual needs?** Most of the program specific courses for the Health Information Technician are offered online, providing the student with a great degree of flexibility in scheduling in terms of the place and time they will complete the course work. Some online courses may require 3 or 4 class meetings and proctored testing sessions. Students should plan on spending at least as much time with the material for an online course as they would in a regular classroom. There are specific expiration (due) dates for assignments which are controlled by the course management software – if assignments are not completed on time, they will no longer be accessible online.
3. **What's it like to take an online class?** Organization and time management skills, a reliable Internet connection and regular communication with the instructor are essential for student success in an online course. The recommended PC platform and information about ordering discounted software can be found on the Virtual College website at www.westerntc.edu/onlinelearning (see System Requirements).
4. **Is field work part of the curriculum?** Health Information Technology students attend clinical rotations in the second year of the program. Most sites that have an agreement with Western to provide this experience are within driving distance of La Crosse. Travel, meals and lodging are the student's responsibility. Everyone must plan for the possibility of an out of La Crosse clinical experience. Clinical is taken for credit and is unpaid.
5. **Are there licensing or certification requirements after graduation?** Upon graduation, HIT students are eligible to take the national accreditation exam of the American Health Information Association. Passing the exam signifies that the student has met nationally recognized entry level competencies.
6. **What happens if there is something on my background check?** First, it is very important that you be honest when completing the Background Information Disclosure form. Some facilities may automatically refuse a student who is perceived to be less than truthful on the form. If a student has a positive background check (meaning that there is something in your background), two clinical sites will be contacted to determine the likelihood of accepting you for a clinical placement. You will be contacted regarding

the response of the clinical sites so that you can make a decision as to whether or not to enter the program. Results of the inquiry to the clinical site is not a guarantee of being able to place you at every clinical site but will give you an indication of the likelihood of being able to be placed at some clinical site. It does not guarantee what will actually happen once you are in the program. It is your decision as to whether or not you want to enter the program.

7. Whom do I contact if I have questions?

- Questions specific to the program:
 - Contact Tamra Brown, Program Head.
- Questions related to career decisions:
 - Contact a counselor at (608) 785-9553.

Questions on your admission file:

- Contact through email (include your name, ID# or birth date) and your specific question to:
 - Sandy Peterson petersons@westernnc.edu,
 - Deb Kaiser kaiserd@westernnc.edu .
 - Stacey Nelson nelsons@westernnc.edu

Student Accident Insurance

All students involved in a clinical course as part of their program will be automatically enrolled in Western Technical College's Accident Only Insurance Plan.

This insurance covers injuries that you may incur on the way **to or from** any clinical experience, and any injury that you might sustain **at the clinical site while performing your clinical duties as a Western Technical College student**. This insurance ONLY covers you for injuries related to these student experiences; your choice of insurance for other portions of your life remains your responsibility. This insurance is considered a secondary insurance to any primary insurance you may have. There is no deductible for this coverage at this time.

Once you are enrolled in your clinical course, your instructor will provide further information and details on how to obtain your insurance card. Answers to questions can be found at: www.gallagherkoster.com/WesternTech.

Concluding thoughts:

- You are responsible to keep your contact information (address/phone number) current. Contact Enrollment Services to let the College know of any changes or update your information on your MyWestern student account.
- Pay close attention to the deadlines for completing program admission requirements. Your most time-consuming admission requirement is immunizations. Start working on completing the forms immediately.
- Students in a health or public safety program are required to have a C grade or better in all general studies and program courses. Students who have less than a C grade in General Anatomy and Physiology are required to participate in remedial work designed to assist in successful completion when they repeat the course. Please see the student handbook for more information on College and Division policies. The student Handbook is available on the college website (http://www.westerntc.edu/student_handbook/StudentPlanner.pdf).

Best wishes as you continue your journey towards entering a health or public safety program at Western Technical College. We look forward to working with you as you pursue a career in health or public safety.