

## Optician/Ophthalmic Dispenser

### ■ Job Description

An optician or ophthalmic dispenser fills prescriptions for corrective eye wear by helping individuals select frames. They measure distance between pupils for proper fit, order lenses from ophthalmic laboratories, check new lenses for correct prescriptions, and adjust new lenses.

Most dispensing opticians are also allowed to fit and dispense contact lenses. They interpret prescriptions, take measurements, and order the appropriate lenses. They may also educate customers on how to insert and remove lenses and care for them properly.

### ■ Job Settings

Ophthalmologist's offices, optometrist's offices, optical or department stores, hospitals, and clinics

### ■ Projected Need

Nationally and in Illinois, average employment growth is expected for opticians through 2010. As the number of middle-aged and elderly people increases, so will the need for corrective lenses and contacts. The need to replace those who leave the occupation will result in additional job openings. This occupation is vulnerable to changes in the business cycle, because eyeglass purchases can often be postponed for a time. Employment of opticians often falls somewhat during downturns in the economy.

In Illinois, there were about 4,760 people employed in this small occupation in 2000.

### ■ Salaries

Nationally, the median wage for opticians is \$12.55 per hour. Half of all opticians earn between \$9.72 and \$16.31 per hour.

In Illinois, beginning opticians earn \$8.94 per hour. Median hourly wage is \$12.24. Experienced opticians receive \$14.41 per hour.

### ■ Related Careers

Biomedical equipment technician, dental lab technician, ophthalmic lab technician, orthodontic technician, and prosthetic/orthotic technician

### ■ Differences in Training

Training is available on the job, in community colleges and technical colleges. Programs range in length from a few weeks to two years. Most opticians learn their skills on the job from experienced opticians. Some learn their skills through formal training programs that include courses in optical math, optical physics, and tools and equipment use.

### ■ Related Educational Programs

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

*The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/>. You must log into CIS prior to clicking on the links below.*

### [Opticianry](#)

### ■ Credentials

Twenty-two states require licensure of dispensing opticians, excluding Illinois. Certification is particularly important for practicing opticians in non-licensing states, in which case this is their only distinguishing professional credential. Certification is offered by the American Board of Opticianry (ABO) and the National Contact Lens Examiners (NCLE). Certification must be renewed every three years through continuing education.

### ■ Resources

National Academy of Opticianry  
National Federation of Opticianry Schools  
8401 Corporate Drive, Suite 605  
Landover, MD 20785  
Phone: 800.229.4828  
E-mail: [info@nao.org](mailto:info@nao.org)  
<http://www.nao.org>

Opticians Association of America  
7023 Little River Turnpike, Suite 207  
Annandale, VA 22003  
Phone: 703.916.8856  
<http://www.oaa.org>