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15 Top Office and Home-Based Jobs for Seniors

By Philip Moeller

Anyone looking for work knows the job market is tough and likely to stay that way for a long time. To help retirement-age job seekers, RetirementJobs.com has put together what it says is a carefully developed list of attractive positions outside the home and for those seeking at-home jobs. According to its chief career counselor, Bob Skladany, the list is based on numbers of projected job openings, the likelihood that the industry is "age friendly," whether the jobs are age appropriate (in terms of their physical demands, schedule flexibility, and providing social interaction), and whether they offer an attractive mix of pay, benefit, and advancement opportunities. While RetirementJobs.com normally charges a membership fee to access its site, it has provided open access to its national list of employers with senior-friendly workplaces.

Here are the 15 best job opportunities for older people, plus the amounts of training or education required, names of leading senior-friendly employers, and pay ranges.

1. Nursing. Formal education two to six years plus; licensing required for registered and practical nurses. Massachusetts General Hospital, Lee Memorial Health System, University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Beaumont Hospitals, and most major hospitals. Pay: \$20 to \$60 plus per hour based on training, level, and specialization.
2. Healthcare technician. One to four years of training beyond high school in healthcare specialty (laboratory, X-ray, nutrition, nursing assistant). Same hospitals as above plus Quest Diagnostics. Pay: \$12 to \$25 per hour based on training, responsibility level, and specialization.
3. Healthcare administration (nonmedical). A wide range of healthcare-specific and general education and skills based on job requirements, from clerical to administrative management. Same hospitals as above and temporary staffing firms including Manpower, Kelly, and MPS Staffing. Pay: \$10 to \$15 per hour for clerical; \$20 to \$30 for professional; and \$25 plus for managerial positions.
4. Tutor, teaching assistant and aide. A background in education and child care helpful as well as formal education beyond high school. All elementary and public school systems and temporary staffing educational divisions such as Kelly Educational Staffing. Pay: \$8 to \$15 per hour based on level of responsibility and qualifications.

5. Contract and temporary professional. Formal education, four to eight years, and relevant experience within profession (law, information technology, human resources, engineering, sciences, accounting and finance, project management). Any major staffing agency including Manpower, Robert Half, and Kelly. Pay: \$30 to \$70 per hour based on profession and level of experience and knowledge.

6. Merchandise and grocery retailing. Ranges from no formal education or training to four years or more beyond high school, based on position. Safeway, Wegmans, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Fresh Market, and other reputable grocery chains. Pay: \$8 to \$15 per hour for sales associates and customer service; \$15 to \$30 for supervisors and managers.

7. Specialty retail sales. Ranges from no formal education to several years or industry experience and training within specialty (cosmetics, automotive, furniture, electronics). Best Buy, Macy's, Borders, L.L. Bean, Barnes & Noble, REI, Staples, Starbucks Coffee, Crate & Barrel. Pay: \$11 to \$30 per hour based on product and personal sales.

8. Accounting and finance and tax preparers. Ranges from no formal education to technical training, such as tax preparation, to formal education of four to six years plus relevant experience. H&R Block, Accountemps, Robert Half F&A, Accounting Principals, and the accounting and finance unit of any identified age-friendly employer. Pay: \$12 to \$15 per hour for clerical and bookkeeping; \$15 to \$30 for tax preparers & specialists; \$25 to \$40 for formally trained professionals.

9. Banking and lending. Ranges from no formal education to technical training to formal education of four to six years plus relevant experience. Wells Fargo, Citizens Bank, National City Bank, Bank of America, and any other major, reputable financial firm. Pay: \$10 to \$15 per hour for teller and customer service; \$15 to \$30 for lending; \$20 to \$35 for supervisors and managers.

10. Driver (car, van, light truck, bus). Passenger vehicle license up to special vehicle licensing and certification, with "clean" driving record. Boston Coach, First Student Bus, Schneider National Trucking, major retailers, and staffing agencies. Pay: \$10 to \$15 per hour for small vehicle; \$12 to \$20 for larger vehicles. There is a large "buyer beware" caution in responding to work-at-home pitches. Skladany says "98 percent" of them are either fraudulent or otherwise not appropriate for older people. He warns that several major questions need to be answered before moving forward with an offer. "Can you identify the principals [owners] of the business?" he says. "Do they make it clear what they offer you, do they make outlandish income claims, and are the opportunities age appropriate and friendly?" Even then, he cautions, there are no guarantees of success, especially in home-based sales positions with even reputable companies such as Avon or Mary Kay. Here are five suitable work-from-home opportunities that have been evaluated by RetirementJobs.com. Remember: Get all the details before you sign anything or send any payments.

11. Customer service and call center. Handle customer service, order processing, and lead-qualification calls. Requirements: high-speed Internet connection, a land-line phone (not a cellular or Internet-phone service) with a headset, and a work area that will allow a quiet and professional environment. Opportunities from companies such as Alpine Access, West, and LiveOps. Expect to pay equipment fees, background-checking fees, and training fees. Some of these jobs pay "by the minute" that you're on the phone, and others pay hourly wages. You commit to a work schedule, and you're expected to be available at the assigned times.

12. Medical services. Includes medical billing, claims, and records coding or file transcription. Medical records and administration often require training beyond high school and some relevant experience.

13. Virtual assistant and concierge services. From home, workers provide the same services as an administrative or personal assistant or the concierge desk in a hotel. Requirements: a complete computer, Internet, and phone setup, and you have to commit to specific hours of coverage. Prior experience is a plus.

14. Personal care assistance. Babysitting, elder care, pet care, and housesitting. Sample employer: Homewatch International, Inc. Paid by the hour, and your pay reflects qualifications, including training in medical nursing.

15. Writers and editors. Pay is low: not more than \$15 to \$20 per hour, at best.