



OPTOMETRIST

Optometrists provide most primary vision care. They examine people's eyes to diagnose vision problems and eye diseases. They test patient's visual acuity, depth and color perception, and ability to focus and coordinate the eyes. Optometrists prescribe eyeglasses and contact lenses and provide vision therapy and low-vision rehabilitation. Optometrists analyze test results and develop a treatment plan. They administer drugs to patients to aid in the diagnosis of vision problems and prescribe drugs to treat some eye diseases. Optometrists often provide preoperative and postoperative care to cataract patients, as well as patients who have had laser vision correction or other eye surgery. They also diagnose conditions due to systemic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure, referring patients to other health practitioners as needed.

◆ **Education:** In addition to having a high school diploma or equivalent training, all States and the District of Columbia require that optometrists be licensed. Applicants for a license must have a Doctor of Optometry degree from an accredited optometry school and pass both a written and a clinical State board examination. The Doctor of Optometry degree requires the completion of a 4-year program at an accredited optometry school, preceded by at least 3 years of preoptometric study at an accredited college or university. Most optometry students hold a bachelor's or higher degree. In 2002, 17 U.S. schools and colleges of optometry held an accredited status with the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education of the American Optometric Association.

◆ **Work Environment:** Most full-time optometrists work about 40 hours a week. Many work weekends and evenings to suit the needs of patients. Emergency calls, once uncommon, have increased with the passage of therapeutic-drug laws expanding optometrists' ability to prescribe medications. 75% of practicing optometrists are in private practice, while some practice in clinics, hospitals, or health and personal care stores.

◆ **Salary:** The average salary for an optometrist in SD is \$117,312.

◆ **Job Outlook:** Employment for optometrists is expected to grow faster than average in response to the vision care needs of a growing and aging population. Greater recognition of the importance of vision care, rising personal incomes, and growth in employee vision care plans will spur employment growth, as well.

◆ **Educational Programs:** Visit the link below to explore South Dakota educational opportunities in this field. <http://www.sdjobs.org/sdhott/SD%20Training%20in%20Healthcare.htm>