



GUIDE

AAPC

**Build your dream team.
Help others achieve
their dreams.**

Xtern Program
BY AAPC



Introduction

Need extra hands on your revenue cycle team? AAPC's Xtern Program connects your organization with newly certified coding professionals eager to gain hands-on experience — at no cost to you. Xterns help with coding and administrative tasks while you mentor and evaluate potential hires in a low-risk setting. Whether you need additional support or are looking to build a strong talent pipeline, hosting an AAPC Xtern is a strategic way to enhance your team's efficiency.





Why host an AAPC Xtern?

Here are some of the benefits of participating in the AAPC Xtern program:

- ✓ **Enhance team efficiency** – Xterns assist with coding, documentation, and administrative tasks, allowing your staff to focus on high-priority work.
- ✓ **Reduce hiring risks** – Evaluate Xterns' skills and work ethic, before committing to a full-time hire.
- ✓ **Improve workflow & productivity** – With additional support, your team can streamline processes and enhance overall operations.
- ✓ **Develop the future workforce** – Mentor and train certified coding professionals, ensuring a skilled, knowledgeable talent pipeline.
- ✓ **No cost to your organization** – Hosting an Xtern is free, and they bring valuable skills to your team.





What kind of work can an AAPC Xtern do?

AAPC Xterns are certified coding professionals eager to gain real-world experience. While their primary focus is medical coding, they can also assist with administrative and operational tasks, easing your staff's workload while gaining valuable industry exposure.

Example duties for an AAPC Xtern:

Medical coding support (At least 60% of their time)

- Review and apply CPT®, HCPCS, and ICD-10-CM codes.
- Assist with charge capture and reconciliation.
- Conduct audits on coded claims for accuracy.
- Research coding guidelines and payer policies.

Xterns can contribute in multiple departments, including:

- Coding & Billing
- Accounts Receivable (AR) & Business Office
- Front Desk & Patient Registration
- Pre-Authorization & Insurance Verification

Revenue cycle and administrative support

- Extract and analyze medical records for completeness.
- Review telemedicine encounter documentation for compliance.
- Double-check provider documentation in reports.
- Assist with patient registration and insurance verification.
- Help with pre-authorizations and prior approvals.
- Support accounts receivable with claim follow-ups.

Offering a diverse mix of responsibilities ensures that your Xtern gains valuable hands-on experience while your staff benefits from an extra set of capable hands!



How to set up an AAPC Xtern Program

Getting started with an AAPC Xtern is simple. Follow these steps to bring valuable support to your team while ensuring a smooth onboarding experience.

Step 1: Identify and qualify candidates

To ensure a great fit, Xtern candidates should:

- ✓ Hold an AAPC certification (CPC-A or other credentials).
- ✓ Have completed a formal medical coding education program or have prior healthcare experience.

Checklist:

- ☐ Receive and review candidate's resume.
- ☐ Verify AAPC certification (CPC-A or other credential).





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Step 2: Connect with applicants

To ensure a great fit, Xtern candidates should:

- ✓ Thank them for their interest in the program.
- ✓ Inform them of available opportunities.
- ✓ Outline next steps in the selection process.

Checklist:

- ❑ Send thank-you email confirming receipt of resume.
- ❑ Inform candidate of qualifications and any available openings.

Step 3: Conduct candidate interviews

Schedule in-person or virtual interviews to assess fit for your team. During the interview:

- ✓ Explain the role, responsibilities, and expectations.
- ✓ Verify AAPC certification credentials.
- ✓ Allow candidates to ask questions and consider the opportunity.
- ✓ Inform candidates that a background check is required at their own expense due to handling sensitive data.

Checklist:

- ❑ Schedule and confirm interview.
- ❑ Provide arrival instructions (if in-person).
- ❑ Interview candidate and discuss role responsibilities.
- ❑ Inform candidate of required background check.



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Step 4:

Finalize selection and initiate background check

Notify selected candidates and provide instructions for completing a background check:

- ✓ Candidates may choose their own background check provider.
- ✓ The check must include a nationwide criminal background screening.
- ✓ Results must be completed within 7 business days before their first day.

Checklist:

- ❑ Send participation email to selected candidate.
- ❑ Provide background check requirements and deadline.
- ❑ Confirm start date after successful background check





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Step 5: Onboarding and HIPAA training

Before starting work, Xterns must complete onboarding and HIPAA compliance training.

✓ Onboarding Requirements:

- Submit AAPC membership card and photo ID.
- Provide emergency contact information.
- Sign AAPC Xtern Program waiver.

Checklist:

- ☐ **Create employee file.**
- ☐ **Collect copies of photo ID and AAPC membership card.**
- ☐ **Obtain emergency contact information.**

✓ HIPAA Compliance Training:

- Complete a HIPAA Privacy training presentation.
- Take and pass a HIPAA Privacy quiz demonstrating an understanding of PHI regulations.

Checklist:

- ☐ **Provide full HIPAA Privacy training materials.**
- ☐ **Ensure candidate views presentation.**
- ☐ **Administer and grade HIPAA Privacy quiz.**
- ☐ **Retain a copy of the completed quiz in the employee file.**



How to set up an AAPC Xtern Program

Step 6:

Assign work and supervise progress

Once onboarding is complete, Xterns can begin assignments under staff supervision.

- ✓ Assign a primary company contact for questions and schedule changes.
- ✓ Supervisors should review and sign off on weekly timesheets.
- ✓ Provide weekly feedback on work performance.
- ✓ Conduct a formal review after 160 hours.
- ✓ Complete a final evaluation and submit it to AAPC at the end of the Xternship.

Checklist:

- ☐ Provide Xtern timesheet and explain tracking process.
- ☐ Assign Xtern to a work unit.
- ☐ Begin work assignments under supervision.
- ☐ Ensure weekly timesheet sign-off by supervisor.
- ☐ Designate a primary company contact for the Xtern.





How to set up an AAPC Xtern Program

Step 7:

Wrap-Up and career support

As the Xternship concludes, determine the next steps:

- ✓ **Consider Employment:** If the Xtern has performed well, you may choose to offer a permanent role.
- ✓ **Career Advancement Support:** If no positions are available, help the Xtern with:
 - Updating their resume with hands-on experience.
 - Assisting with their AAPC Career Board or LinkedIn profile.
 - Providing a professional reference based on performance.

Checklist:

- ☐ **Conduct a performance review after 160 hours.**
- ☐ **Complete a formal evaluation at the end of the Xternship.**
- ☐ **Submit final evaluation to AAPC.**
- ☐ **Assess potential for permanent employment.**
- ☐ **If no internal opportunity, assist in resume update.**
- ☐ **Help Xtern create or update professional profiles.**
- ☐ **Provide a professional reference if earned.**



FAQs

What is an AAPC Xtern?

AAPC's Xtern Program connects newly certified medical coders (CPC-A) with approved facilities for hands-on experience in a professional setting. Xterns gain exposure to real medical records, coding workflows, and industry best practices — all essential steps toward removing their apprentice designation ("A" removal). This program allows them to refine their skills while contributing valuable support to healthcare organizations.

How are AAPC Xterns qualified?

AAPC Xterns have successfully passed the AAPC national certification exam and are eager to apply their training in a real-world setting. They are motivated, professionally trained, and committed to continuous learning. To ensure competency and professionalism, all Xterns agree to:

- ✓ Adhere to AAPC's and the employer's ethical code of conduct
- ✓ Receive and apply constructive feedback
- ✓ Take necessary steps to address knowledge gaps

What are the responsibilities of an AAPC Xtern Program host facility?

Host facilities commit to providing 160 hours of hands-on experience, ensuring that at least 60% of the Xtern's work involves applying their AAPC credential. Xterns should have secure access to records, receive timely performance feedback, and complete a final evaluation. While hiring is not required, facilities are encouraged to consider Xterns for future roles based on performance.

Can I offer a remote Xternship?

Absolutely! Many organizations successfully host remote Xterns, allowing them to contribute without the need for onsite space. Remote Xterns can assist with coding audits, claims reconciliation, and documentation review while receiving virtual mentorship from your team. Assigning a sponsor for check-ins ensures a smooth and productive experience, making remote Xternships a flexible and valuable option for both your team and the Xtern.

What about HIPAA and PHI?

The Department of Health and Human Services has published FAQs about this very topic. It states: "The definition of 'health care operations' in the Privacy Rule provides for 'conducting training programs in which students, trainees, or practitioners in areas of health care learn under supervision to practice or improve their skills as health care providers.' Covered entities can shape their policies and procedures for minimum necessary uses and disclosures to permit medical trainees access to patients' medical information, including entire medical records."

Can I hire an AAPC Xtern when their Xternship is complete?

Yes! Hosting an Xtern allows you to evaluate their skills, work ethic, and fit for your team before making a hiring decision. While there's no obligation to hire, many facilities extend job offers based on performance. Regardless, the Xternship provides valuable real-world experience that prepares them for career advancement.

What if an AAPC Xtern isn't the right fit for my team?

If an Xtern does not meet your expectations, you have the flexibility to end the Xternship at any time. As a host facility, you maintain full discretion over the Xternship arrangement and can determine whether an Xtern aligns with your team's needs.

 Questions? Feel free to reach out at **Xtern@aapc.com**.

