

AI-Resilient Career Options for High School Graduates in NYC (2025–2035 Outlook)

Emerging AI and automation technologies are transforming many industries. However, numerous **in-demand jobs remain “AI-resilient” – relying on hands-on skills, human judgment, and physical presence that algorithms and robots cannot easily replicate** ¹ ². Many of these roles are accessible to high school graduates through vocational programs or apprenticeships, offer entry-level pay in the \$17–\$20 per hour range, and are in-person or hybrid** by nature. Below is an overview of such career opportunities across several industries, followed by detailed sections for each:

Job Title	Entry Path / Training	NYC Pay Range	Why AI-Resilient
Electrician (Apprentice)	4–5 year paid apprenticeship (e.g. union IBEW) ³	~\$18/hour to start; ~\$30+ as journeyman ⁴ ⁵	Hands-on installation & troubleshooting require on-site human adaptability ² .
Plumber / Pipefitter	4–5 year apprenticeship (union or trade program)	~\$18/hour start; ~\$30+ with experience ⁶	Custom solutions in unpredictable environments – work too varied for robots ⁷ .
HVAC Technician	Trade school or union apprenticeship (e.g. Local 638)	~\$16–\$22/hour entry (apprentice) ⁸ ; ~\$30/hour mid-level ⁹	Installing AC/heating systems is physical and requires real-time human judgment ¹⁰ ¹¹ .
Security/Fire Alarm Installer	Employer training or apprenticeship (low-voltage systems)	~\$18–\$20/hour entry; ~\$27/hour median ¹²	On-site device setup and custom wiring demands human problem-solving ¹³ .
Automotive Mechanic	Vocational auto-tech program or on-the-job trainee	~\$17/hour entry-level ¹⁴ ; \$25+ with experience	Physical repairs and complex diagnostics need human expertise (not easily automated).
Certified Nursing Asst. (CNA)	4–12 week certification course & state exam	~\$19/hour on average ¹⁵ (entry-level)	Direct patient care – requires empathy, dexterity and human observation.
Emergency Medical Tech (EMT)	~6-month EMT training course & certification	~\$18–\$20/hour to start ¹⁶ ; ~\$20/hour avg. ¹⁶	On-scene emergency care and transport rely on human judgment in unpredictable situations.
Medical Assistant	6–12 month medical assistant diploma program	~\$18–\$22/hour (NYC average) ¹⁷ ¹⁸	Blends clinical tasks and patient interaction – requires a human touch and multitasking.

Job Title	Entry Path / Training	NYC Pay Range	Why AI-Resilient
Phlebotomy Technician	Short phlebotomy training course & certification	~\$18–\$21/hour average ¹⁹	Drawing blood safely requires fine motor skills, compassion, and real-time adjustment.
Teacher Assistant (Para)	On-the-job DOE training; NYS certification exam	~\$19/hour average in NYC ²⁰	Classroom support is deeply interpersonal – guiding and supervising students needs human insight.
Security Guard	8-hour pre-license training; NYS guard license	~\$18–\$19/hour average ²¹ ²²	Physical presence for safety, situational awareness, and response can't be done by AI cameras alone.
Mail/Delivery Carrier	Short USPS training; valid driver's license (for drivers)	~\$17–\$20/hour start ²³ (CCA positions)	Last-mile delivery and face-to-face customer interaction – tasks not easily handled by drones/robots in NYC ²³ .

Each of these roles is explored in detail below, including typical responsibilities, training pathways, reasons they are “**AI-proof**” for the next decade, pay expectations, and links to relevant programs or hiring portals.

Skilled Trades and Apprenticeships (Construction & Technical Trades)

Skilled trades are among the most **future-proof** careers for high school grads ¹. These jobs involve **hands-on construction, installation, and repair** work that AI cannot do remotely. New York's union apprenticeship programs allow you to “**earn while you learn**” – getting paid on the job while training under experienced journeymen ³. Most apprenticeships require only a high school diploma or GED ²⁴ and provide free classroom instruction in the trade. **Women and minorities** are strongly encouraged to apply in these fields ²⁵. Below are some top skilled-trade options:

Electrician (Apprentice Electrician)

Job Description: Electricians install, maintain, and repair electrical wiring, lighting, and power systems in homes, businesses, and industrial buildings ⁵. Daily tasks include running conduit, connecting circuits, troubleshooting outages, and reading blueprints.

AI-Resilience: This trade requires **adaptability, problem-solving and physical presence** on-site, often in unique building layouts ². Fixing a blown circuit or wiring a building involves real-time judgment and manual skill – things **AI-driven robots cannot replicate in uncontrolled environments** ². The work is non-routine (every project is different) and often requires creativity to meet electrical code and safety standards, keeping it **low risk for automation**.

Entry Path & Training: In NYC, the typical path is a **5-year union apprenticeship** (e.g. through IBEW Local 3). Apprentices learn on the job under licensed electricians and attend evening trade classes ³. Requirements include a HS diploma (or equivalent) and passing an aptitude test; no prior experience is needed for entry-level programs ²⁴. Applications are highly competitive – for example, Local 3 opens recruitment periods periodically and may cap the number of applicants ²⁶ ²⁷. The NYS Department of Labor lists current **Registered Apprenticeship** openings on its website ²⁸ ²⁹. **To apply:** check the **Local Union JATC (Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee)** announcements ²⁶ ³⁰ or the NYS DOL apprenticeship portal ²⁸ for NYC electrician apprentice opportunities. Successful candidates will undergo both on-job training and classroom instruction (often at no tuition cost) for the duration of the program ³¹ ³².

Pay: Apprentices “earn while learning.” In NYC, a first-year electrician apprentice earns around **\$18–\$19 per hour** ⁴ (about \$40k annually ³³). Pay increases with each term; by the final year, apprentices approach the full **journeyworker rate** (Local 3 electricians earn ~\$62/hour base wage after completion) ³⁴. According to the **Bureau of Labor Statistics**, fully qualified electricians in the NYC area make a **median wage of ~\$29–\$30 per hour** ⁵ (about \$60k–\$62k annually). This solid pay reflects the high demand and specialized skills of the trade. *Sources for applications:* The **Local 3 IBEW** website and the **NYC Department of Labor’s apprenticeship listings** are good starting points (e.g. the DOL site confirms that apprenticeships are available in electrical trades statewide ³²).

Plumber / Pipefitter (Apprentice)

Job Description: Plumbers and pipefitters assemble, install, and repair piping systems that carry water, gas, and other fluids ⁶. They work on **plumbing** (water supply, drainage, fixtures), **heating systems, gas lines, and fire sprinkler** systems in buildings. Day-to-day duties include cutting and joining pipes, clearing clogs, installing fixtures (sinks, toilets, boilers), reading blueprints, and testing for leaks. Pipefitters focus more on industrial piping and HVAC/chiller systems, but the apprenticeship is often combined.

AI-Resilience: **Plumbing work is highly hands-on and unpredictable**, making it difficult to automate. Every building’s pipe layout is different; solving a customer’s plumbing issue might involve crawling into tight spaces, diagnosing odd noises, or custom-fitting parts – tasks robots struggle with. As noted in job analyses, “**plumbing involves working in unpredictable environments with custom solutions that AI-controlled robots cannot handle effectively.**” ⁷ **Human judgment** is needed to assess leaks or code compliance, and plumbers often interact with clients to explain repairs – an interpersonal element AI can’t replace. Given the manual dexterity and problem-solving required, this career has a **low risk of AI displacement** in the next decade.

Entry Path & Training: Plumbers in NYC typically train via a **4- or 5-year apprenticeship** through a union like **UA Local 1 (Plumbers)** or **Local 638 (Steamfitters)**. A high school diploma is required ³⁵, and candidates may need to pass a math/mechanical aptitude exam. During apprenticeship, you work full-time under master plumbers and attend weekly classes on plumbing code, safety, and trade theory. The **UA Local 1 Training Center** and **NYC District Council of Plumbers** offer information on recruitment periods. The process is competitive – for example, Local 1 might only accept applications during certain weeks each year. Alternatively, some start as **plumber’s helpers** or in pre-apprenticeship programs (like those run by **NYC SBS** or community organizations) to gain experience before applying. *Links:* The **NYC Department of Labor’s apprenticeship postings** often include plumber/pipefitter openings, and the **Local 1 Plumbers Union website** provides apprenticeship details.

Pay: Plumbing apprentices in NYC start around **\$17-\$20 per hour**, similar to electrician apprentices. As skills increase, wages step up regularly (usually every 6–12 months). By the final year, an apprentice can earn over \$30/hour ⁶. Upon becoming a licensed journeyman, plumbers earn ~\$60k–\$70k per year (around **\$30/hour median in NYC** ⁶). Union contracts also include benefits (health insurance, pension) that add substantial value. Overall, you can **earn a living wage from day one** as an apprentice and reach **professional-level pay** by the end of the program, all without a college degree.

HVAC/R Technician (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration)

Job Description: HVAC technicians install and service heating and cooling systems – furnaces, boilers, central A/C units, refrigeration units, and ventilation ducts. They perform tasks like **wiring thermostats, brazing refrigerant lines, mounting compressors, replacing motors and fans, cleaning coils, and balancing air flow**. They also diagnose and fix issues in climate-control systems. Much of the work is done on-site in homes, commercial buildings, hospitals, etc., often on rooftops or mechanical rooms.

AI-Resilience: HVAC installation and repair is **extremely hands-on and variable**. It's one of the jobs experts cite as safe from automation: *"HVAC system installation remains a hands-on role... You cannot automate lifting a condenser, sealing ducts, or handling unpredictable airflow issues on-site. These tasks require precision, flexibility, and real-time judgment... No algorithm can replicate the responsiveness needed during a live installation. We do not expect that to change soon."* ³⁶ ³⁷ In other words, the work demands human *trade skills* and on-the-spot adaptability – measuring and cutting ductwork, adjusting fittings in a cramped attic, or responding to an unexpected gas leak. While AI can assist with system design or predictive maintenance, it **cannot replace HVAC technicians** in the field. Given the mix of physical labor, technical knowledge, and safety considerations (e.g. handling refrigerants), this career will continue to be **led by people, not machines** ³⁸.

Entry Path & Training: Many HVAC techs learn through **apprenticeships or vocational programs**. In NYC, the **Steamfitters Local 638** covers HVAC mechanics; their union apprenticeship (5 years) trains you in pipefitting and HVAC service with paid OJT. According to HVAC industry sources, *"most companies in NYC will hire entry-level techs with a HS diploma and little or no experience. These apprentices (or helpers) are trained on the job by working alongside experienced technicians."* ³⁹. There are also **fast-track training programs**: for example, the NYC **SBS "HVAC Pre-Apprenticeship"** is a free 12-week program at CUNY City Tech teaching fundamental skills (OSHA 30, EPA 608 refrigerant license, basic HVAC theory) ⁴⁰ ⁴¹ – after which graduates get job placement support. Community colleges like **LaGuardia CC** offer HVAC certifications as well ⁴². A common route is to start as an **HVAC helper** or **assistant mechanic** at a company, and concurrently take night classes for formal knowledge. *Links:* Interested candidates can check **NYC Workforce1** centers or **HVAC union (Local 638)** for apprenticeship info, and programs like **HVACR CareerConnectNY** list many training resources.

Pay: HVAC is a **well-paying trade**. Entry-level techs in NYC earn around **\$17-\$22 per hour** depending on their training ⁸. Notably, union apprentices have a structured wage progression: for example, **Local 638 service tech apprentices start at \$15.90/hr for the first 6 months, then \$21.71/hr for the next 6 months** ⁸. **After one year, pay rises to ~\$26/hr in Year 2, and so on up to \$44.85/hr by Year 5 as a journeyman** ⁸. Even outside of union jobs, the average HVAC tech in NYC makes about **\$30-\$33 per hour** (roughly \$65k–\$70k annually) ⁹ ⁴³, reflecting high demand. Employers often pay extra for overtime (time-and-a-half for evenings/weekends) ⁴⁴, and there is abundant work year-round (heating in winter, cooling in summer). Importantly, as you gain HVAC certifications and experience with complex systems,

your value (and pay) increases significantly. Many experienced NYC HVAC/R technicians earn \$80k+ with overtime, and there is *strong job growth (13% projected)* for this occupation ⁴⁵ .

Security and Fire Alarm Systems Installer

Job Description: These technicians **install and maintain electronic security systems**, including burglar alarms, CCTV camera networks, access control systems, and fire alarm panels, in homes and commercial buildings. Daily activities involve running low-voltage wiring, mounting sensors and cameras, programming control panels, testing alarm signals, and troubleshooting system faults. They often work for security companies or as independent contractors and must ensure systems meet local building and fire codes.

AI-Resilience: On-site installation and troubleshooting of alarm systems is a physical job that **cannot be offshored or fully automated**. Every building has a different layout and set of requirements – the installer needs to make judgment calls on sensor placement, drill through walls, integrate with existing electrical systems, and adjust settings for the environment. This kind of **“hands-on skills and adaptability to different environments”** is something AI cannot easily replicate ¹³ . While AI can enhance camera software (e.g. intelligent video analytics), you still need humans to **physically set up hardware and make custom configurations**. Moreover, clients prefer a human expert to consult on their security needs and to trust with access to their property. With the continued emphasis on safety and security, these roles remain in demand and relatively **robot-proof**.

Entry Path & Training: Many security/alarm installers learn on the job as **apprentice installers or technician helpers**. Some states (including NY) require an individual or their company to have a low-voltage or alarm installer **license**, which often entails a background check and a certain amount of work experience. In NYC, large employers like Johnson Controls, ADT, Convergent, etc., have training programs for new technicians. A high school grad can be hired as an **installer trainee**, where you’ll shadow a senior tech to learn wiring and device programming. Vocational training in electronics can be a plus but isn’t mandatory. There are also **apprenticeships**: for example, the **Joint Apprenticeship Committee for Security and Fire Alarm Installers** (local programs) train workers in this specialized trade – these may be listed on the NYS DOL apprenticeship site when recruiting. Additionally, **NYSERDA** has noted growth in related roles (like smart home tech and solar installers) requiring similar skills ⁴⁶ . *Link:* Prospective technicians can check **NYC Workforce1** or company career pages for “entry-level alarm installer” jobs, and consider getting an **OSHA 30 safety card** which many construction-related employers require.

Pay: Security system installers earn solid middle-class wages. In New York, the **median pay is about \$56k/year** (≈ \$27/hour) ¹² . Entry-level techs typically start closer to **\$18-\$20 per hour**, and with a couple years of experience (and possibly an alarm license), can reach the mid-\$20s. Overtime and emergency call-outs (e.g. for alarm malfunctions) can boost income. This field also offers advancement – one can move up to senior installer, project manager, or start a licensed contracting business. Given the combination of electrical/electronic skills and the trust required for this work, wages have stayed competitive and will likely grow with demand.

Automotive Mechanic / Technician

Job Description: Auto mechanics inspect, maintain, and repair cars and light trucks. Common duties include **engine tune-ups, oil changes, brake replacements, diagnosing check-engine lights, repairing heating/cooling systems, and electrical diagnostics** using computer scan tools. Mechanics use a wide

array of hand and power tools to fix mechanical or electrical issues and often specialize in areas like transmissions, engine rebuilds, or auto body repair.

AI-Resilience: Jobs in auto repair are **considered relatively safe from automation**. Modern cars do have computerized diagnostics (and even AI-driven service kiosks emerging), but **actually fixing vehicles requires human dexterity and problem-solving**. As one analysis noted, automotive repair involves technical knowledge plus on-the-spot troubleshooting and even customer service – a combination that gives it “**a low risk of automation**” ⁴⁷. For example, an AI might flag an error code, but a mechanic still must pinpoint the cause (sensor, wiring, or actual part failure) and get their hands dirty replacing it. Repair environments are unstructured (every car model is different, wear-and-tear varies), making it hard for robots to handle the myriad tasks. Additionally, mechanics often communicate with vehicle owners about symptoms and repair options – **empathizing and building trust**, which is a human strength. While AI will continue to assist with diagnostics, it’s unlikely to replace the auto technician turning the wrenches in the next 5–10 years.

Entry Path & Training: Many mechanics get started with a **vocational high school program or post-secondary trade school** in automotive technology (for instance, NYC’s **Cooperative Tech HS** or **Bronx Design & Construction Academy** offer automotive shop classes). However, it’s feasible to start right out of high school as a **lube technician or mechanic’s apprentice** at a dealership or auto shop. Employers often provide on-the-job training; working under experienced mechanics is how apprentices learn engine repair, hydraulics, and computerized diagnostics. Additionally, earning **ASE certifications** (Automotive Service Excellence) in areas like brakes or engine performance can boost credibility – these typically require some study and passing an exam (no college needed). Some large companies (e.g. **MTA bus maintenance**, or **UPS/FedEx fleet mechanics**) have their own training programs and apprenticeships for vehicle technicians. *Links:* Check local **automotive dealerships**, transit agencies, or the **NYC Dept. of Citywide Services (DCAS)** for automotive technician trainee job postings. Also, programs like **Mechanics and Tech for Hire** via Workforce1 can connect entry-level candidates to shops.

Pay: An **entry-level mechanic** in NYC (with minimal experience) earns roughly **\$35,000–\$40,000 per year** ¹⁴ – about **\$17–\$19 per hour** to start. This increases as you gain experience and certifications; the average auto mechanic in NYC makes around **\$25/hour** (\$50k+ annually) and specialist technicians (or those in unions) can earn more. Niche areas like **diesel engine specialists or auto body repair** also pay well and are similarly AI-resistant ⁴⁷ ⁴⁸. For instance, bus/truck diesel mechanics often require a bit more training but have median wages near \$46k/year (over \$22/hour) and are in demand ⁴⁸. If you stick with the field, master mechanics for luxury brands or fleet maintenance can earn \$30–\$40/hour. Overall, auto repair provides a **steady income with growth potential**, and importantly, almost every neighborhood needs skilled mechanics – it’s a locally rooted career unlikely to be outsourced or automated away.

(Skilled trades continued in next section...)

Healthcare & Emergency Response Careers

Healthcare roles that involve **direct patient care and real-time response** are among the most “**AI-proof**” jobs for the foreseeable future ⁴⁹. These positions require empathy, ethical judgment, and physical assistance – qualities and capabilities that AI lacks. Many such roles are **accessible with a high school diploma plus a short certification or training program**, and they offer entry wages in the high-teens per

hour. In New York City's aging population and large healthcare system, demand for these workers is strong (and growing). Below are key examples:

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)

Job Description: CNAs (also called Nursing Aides or Patient Care Technicians) provide basic patient care under the supervision of registered nurses in hospitals, nursing homes, and long-term care facilities. Their duties include **feeding, bathing, and dressing patients, taking vital signs, repositioning bedridden patients to prevent bedsores, assisting with mobility or physical therapy exercises, and observing and reporting any health changes**. They are the front-line caregivers who spend extensive time attending to patients' daily needs.

AI-Resilience: This role relies heavily on **human compassion, dexterity, and observational skills**. A robot or AI cannot easily replicate a CNA's gentle touch when turning a frail patient or the social interaction and comfort they provide. In fact, healthcare jobs like nursing assistants are rated as having **low automation risk**, because they require "people skills" and flexibility ⁴⁹. There have been experiments with care robots, but these are rudimentary and not poised to replace human aides in the next decade – patients often need the **emotional support and trust** that comes from a real person. CNAs also use judgment to notice subtle signs of distress or improvement, something AI might miss. Especially in a diverse city like New York, **cultural sensitivity and communication** in a patient's language are crucial aspects. All these factors keep CNA positions **secure from AI replacement**.

Entry Path & Training: To become a CNA in NY, you must complete a **state-approved nursing assistant training program** (often 4–12 weeks long, offered by community colleges, Red Cross, or healthcare institutions) and pass the **NYS CNA certification exam**. A high school diploma or GED is required to enroll. NYC has many free or low-cost CNA training opportunities, including through the **NYC Department of Education's adult education**, certain **Workforce1 Healthcare Career Centers**, and initiatives like **1199SEIU Training and Employment Fund** (for eligible candidates). After passing the exam, you get placed on the NY State CNA registry and can apply to hospitals (e.g. NYCH+H city hospitals often hire CNAs) or nursing facilities. Some CNAs also cross-train as **Patient Care Techs** or **Home Health Aides** to widen job options. *Links:* The **NYC Nursing Assistant Training Directory** on the NY State Department of Health site lists approved programs, and job postings can be found via hospital career pages or aggregators (Indeed, etc.).

Pay: In New York City, CNAs earn around **\$18–\$20 per hour on average** ¹⁵. As of late 2025, the average is about **\$19.90/hour in NYC hospitals** ⁵⁰. Entry-level positions may start closer to \$17–\$18, while experienced CNAs or those in specialized units (ICU, etc.) can earn over \$20. Overtime and union contracts (if working at a unionized facility) can further increase pay. For example, some postings show **new CNAs starting at \$17.00/hr base pay (with differentials for evenings/nights)** ⁵¹. Given recent labor shortages, many facilities are also offering hiring bonuses or premium pay for weekend shifts. Overall, the wage is within the targeted \$17–\$20 range, and importantly, this role often includes benefits and opportunities for advancement (many CNAs go on to become LPNs or RNs with further schooling). With the **aging population**, CNA jobs are projected to remain in high demand (and safe from automation) over the next decade ⁴⁹.

Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)

Job Description: EMTs are first responders who provide **emergency medical care and transportation** for the sick or injured – for example, responding to 911 calls for heart attacks, accidents, fires, etc. They assess patients, perform life-saving interventions (CPR, bleeding control, airway management), and drive ambulances to the appropriate hospital. NYC EMTs often work for the FDNY EMS or private ambulance services. Their fast-paced role includes **lifting and moving patients**, communicating with dispatch and hospital ERs, and documenting medical care.

AI-Resilience: EMT work epitomizes tasks that **cannot be automated** easily. When a medical emergency happens, you need human responders who can **improvise in chaotic environments** – be it a cramped apartment or busy street – and make split-second decisions based on their training and situational judgment. AI cannot physically perform CPR on a person or comfort a patient in pain during transport. As one career outlook noted, jobs with unpredictable, hands-on duties like EMTs remain **human-critical** despite advances in technology ⁴⁹. AI might assist via decision support tools (protocol checklists, diagnostic aids), but **the act of patient rescue and care is fundamentally human**. Additionally, EMTs require empathy and communication, especially in NYC’s multi-cultural context – they calm panicked family members, obtain medical histories, and work in teams. These interpersonal elements are far beyond AI’s capabilities. Given the continued need for emergency services, EMT roles are considered **“future-proof”** from automation.

Entry Path & Training: Becoming an EMT in NYC requires completing a **New York State DOH-approved EMT-Basic course** (usually about 150–200 hours, which can be 3-4 months part-time or 4-6 weeks intensive full-time) and passing the **NY State EMT certification exam**. Many training programs are available: e.g. **NYC EMS Academy (FDNY)** offers courses, as do community colleges like LaGuardia or Bronx Community, and private EMS institutes. A high school diploma is required, and you must be at least 18 (or 17 to start training, 18 by the exam). After certification, one can apply to work at the **FDNY EMS** (civil service exam required) or one of the hospital-based or private ambulance units (Mount Sinai EMS, Northwell, etc.). FDNY also runs an **EMT Trainee program** that hires you and sponsors your training (common for city residents). Some EMTs pursue further training to become Paramedics (which is a higher license, but requires more education). *Links:* The **Regional EMS Council of NYC (REMSCO)** lists upcoming EMT courses and exams, and the **FDNY EMS Recruitment** page details the process for joining the department.

Pay: EMTs in New York don’t do it for the money – it’s a challenging job – but pay is decent for a HS-level position. The **average EMT salary in NYC is about \$42,000 per year (~\$20.25/hour)** ¹⁶. **Entry-level EMTs** (newly certified) typically start around **\$18–\$19/hour** in NYC ¹⁶. For instance, FDNY EMS starts EMTs at roughly \$39k/year (with annual raises) which equates to ~\$18.75/hr, and they can earn more with overtime. Private ambulance companies might pay \$17–\$21/hr depending on the shift. Experience and any additional certifications (e.g. becoming a paramedic) can increase earnings substantially – paramedics average around \$60k/year in NY. There are also differentials for nights or bilingual skills in some agencies. In summary, EMT pay **falls in the \$17–\$20/hr range for entry-level**, aligning with our criteria ¹⁶. The role often includes benefits (health insurance, etc.), and can be a stepping stone to higher-paying healthcare or public safety careers (paramedic, firefighter, nursing). With strong union representation (for FDNY EMS via DC37) and high demand, wages have been rising gradually.

Medical Assistant (MA)

Job Description: Medical Assistants are versatile allied health workers found in **clinics, doctor's offices, and outpatient centers**. They handle a mix of **clinical tasks (taking patient vitals, drawing blood, giving injections, preparing exam rooms)** and **administrative tasks (scheduling appointments, updating medical records, insurance billing)**. An MA essentially keeps a medical office running smoothly and allows doctors and nurses to see more patients. They may work in primary care, specialty practices (pediatrics, ophthalmology, etc.), or hospitals in outpatient departments.

AI-Resilience: MAs perform **highly interactive roles** requiring frequent patient contact and adaptability – traits that make them **hard to automate**. For example, an MA might ease a nervous patient before a blood draw, or coordinate urgent referrals by phone – these **human communication and coordination tasks** aren't something AI can fully take over. Even as electronic health records and AI scheduling bots become common, clinics still need a person to handle **unexpected situations, comfort patients, and ensure quality of care**. An AI can't physically measure a patient's blood pressure and respond if the patient feels faint. Nor can it translate a rushed doctor's instructions into a reassuring explanation for the patient. Because MAs juggle diverse duties and must exercise judgment (e.g. prioritizing walk-in patients, spotting if someone looks very ill in the waiting room), their job is considered **low risk for automation in the near future** ⁴⁹. They effectively provide the human touch in healthcare settings that technology alone cannot replace.

Entry Path & Training: Most Medical Assistants complete a **short post-secondary training program** – typically a **6-month to 1-year Medical Assistant certificate or diploma** offered by technical schools, some high schools (as a CTE program), or community colleges. In NYC, programs like at **CUNY BMCC, Hostos CC, or vocational schools** teach anatomy, medical terminology, phlebotomy, basic pharmacology, and office procedures, often including an externship in a clinic. While New York State does **not require a license** for MAs, having a certificate and passing a national exam (like CMA or RMA) makes you a stronger job candidate. It's also possible to learn on the job: some clinics hire high school graduates as **medical office assistants** or **medical scribes**, and then train them in clinical tasks over time. However, formal training is increasingly preferred by employers. *Links:* The **NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS)** runs a **Medical Assistant Training Program** in partnership with local colleges – check **Jobs NYC** or **SBS Career Centers** for details. Also, major healthcare systems (NYC Health + Hospitals, NYU Langone, Mount Sinai) list MA openings on their career websites, some of which are **apprenticeship-like roles** that provide training while working.

Pay: Medical Assistants in NYC make around **\$20–\$22 per hour on average** ⁵² ¹⁸. Starting pay for a new MA is often in the **\$17–\$19/hour** range, depending on the setting. For example, a posting for a clinic in Queens might offer ~\$18/hour to start, whereas a Manhattan specialist office might start around \$20. Indeed.com reports the **average NYC MA hourly wage is about \$22.33** ⁵², which likely reflects experienced MAs or those with certifications. A **ZipRecruiter analysis** showed *no-experience MAs in NYC average ~\$21.76/hour* ¹⁷, suggesting many entry MAs are already near \$20. With a few years of experience or specialization (e.g. lead MA, or in surgical assisting), one can earn \$25+ per hour. Benefits are common (since many are hospital employees or large practice employees). Given the strong demand for healthcare staff, medical assistant wages have been rising and should stay competitive, all while remaining well within the **\$17–\$20/hr early-career range** that we focus on.

Phlebotomist (Certified Phlebotomy Technician)

Job Description: Phlebotomists are medical professionals who **draw blood from patients** for lab tests, transfusions, or donations. They work in hospitals, blood banks, diagnostic labs, and health clinics. Daily duties include **verifying patient identity, using venipuncture techniques to collect blood samples, labeling and handling specimens, and ensuring equipment is sterile**. They must also put patients at ease (many people are nervous about needles) and handle any complications (such as if a patient feels faint).

AI-Resilience: Blood drawing is a skill that still requires a human touch. Even with some prototype robotic blood-draw devices in development, they are not widely used and can struggle with patients who have difficult veins. A phlebotomist uses **tactile feedback and visual cues** to find a vein and adjust technique in real time – abilities that AI-driven machines find challenging, especially across the wide variety of human bodies. Also, a phlebotomist provides **comfort and reassurance** during the procedure; they can notice if a patient is anxious or unwell and respond appropriately (pausing, asking how they feel, etc.). These **interpersonal and fine-motor tasks are poorly suited to automation**. Moreover, phlebotomists are often cross-trained to do EKGs or assist with patient intake, making them flexible staff. Given the critical nature of maintaining specimen integrity and patient trust, this role remains **quite safe from automation for the next decade** – hospitals will still need humans to perform phlebotomy for the foreseeable future.

Entry Path & Training: Phlebotomy is one of the quickest healthcare fields to enter. In NYC, you can become a phlebotomist by completing a **short training course** (sometimes as short as 4–8 weeks) offered by various allied health schools or continuing education programs, then optionally obtaining a national certification (like NHA's Certified Phlebotomy Technician, or ASCP's certification). Many training programs require at least a HS diploma/GED. Some employers will even hire healthcare support staff (like medical assistants or hospital patient care techs) and then train them in phlebotomy internally. For those interested specifically in phlebotomy, check community colleges (e.g. Kingsborough CC has a phlebotomy program) or organizations like the **Red Cross**, which occasionally offers phlebotomy training tied to jobs in blood donation centers. Once trained, you can apply to work at hospitals (which often hire phlebotomists in their clinical labs), large lab companies like LabCorp or Quest Diagnostics, or blood donation centers like **New York Blood Center**. *Links:* The **NYC Training Guide** (by Workforce1) lists phlebotomy courses in the city. Additionally, job postings on Indeed often say **"No experience phlebotomist"** which indicates on-the-job training – those are good opportunities to get a foot in the door.

Pay: Phlebotomists in New York earn a respectable wage that fits our target range. According to recent data, the **average hourly pay for a phlebotomist in NY is about \$20–\$21** ⁵³ ⁵⁴. For instance, ZipRecruiter notes *entry-level phlebotomists in NYC average around \$20.86/hour* ⁵⁵. Indeed reports a slightly higher statewide average of \$21.41/hr ⁵³. **Starting salaries** for brand-new phlebotomists may be closer to **\$17–\$18/hr**, especially in smaller clinics. However, many hospitals in NYC are unionized with set wage scales, so a union hospital phlebotomist might start around \$19 and go up each year. Overtime (e.g. early-morning draws or weekend shifts) can bump up earnings. Importantly, New York recently raised the minimum wage for home health and related healthcare workers to ~\$19/hr by 2025 ⁵⁶, which influences wage floors in healthcare overall. In summary, phlebotomy offers an accessible entry into healthcare with **pay typically in the high-teens per hour** and room to grow (senior phlebotomists or those who become lab technicians can earn more).

(Healthcare section continued...)

Education & Social Services

Not all AI-resilient jobs are technical – some are about **people care and development**, which AI is ill-equipped to handle. Roles in education, childcare, and community services lean heavily on **emotional intelligence, adaptability, and human connection**. High school graduates can access many of these jobs through training programs or simply on-the-job experience. They typically offer starting wages in the target range and are almost entirely in-person. Here are key examples:

Teacher Assistant / Paraprofessional

Job Description: Teacher Assistants (also called paraprofessionals or “paras” in K-12 schools) support lead teachers in the classroom. In NYC public schools, they might **work one-on-one with students with special needs, assist with classroom management, help prepare materials, supervise lunch/recess, and provide tutoring or language support**. They play a crucial role in early childhood centers, elementary and special education classrooms, ensuring students get more individualized attention and help.

AI-Resilience: Classroom support is a profoundly **human-centric job**. Children require empathy, encouragement, and supervision that no AI can provide. A teacher assistant often must **interpret a child’s emotional needs**, motivate them, or handle spontaneous situations (a conflict between kids, a spilled paint jar, etc.). Automation risk for such roles is extremely low – as one analysis highlighted, highly interpersonal jobs like teaching rank “*very low on the automation-risk scale*.”⁵⁷ Even with advanced educational software, **students need human mentors** to facilitate social learning and adapt lessons in real-time based on student reactions. A tablet or AI tutor cannot replace a caring adult who notices a shy student struggling to read and gently helps them. Moreover, in special education, paras provide **physical assistance and behavioral interventions** (for example, calming a child with autism) that are far beyond AI. Thus, teacher assistants are **safe from AI replacement**, and indeed their importance may grow as teachers focus on hybrid digital curricula – someone still needs to be physically present to guide and nurture students.

Entry Path & Training: In NYC, becoming a public school paraprofessional typically requires a high school diploma and a **NYC Civil Service exam for School Aides or Paraprofessionals**. Once hired, there are training workshops provided by the Department of Education (DOE). Paraprofessionals who work in special ed settings often get additional training in behavior management. There is also a **New York State Assessment of Teaching Assistant Skills (ATAS) exam** that certifies Level 1 teaching assistants – many NYC paras complete this within their first year. Some college credits were historically required for certain titles, but there are **Pathways programs** that allow paras to earn while they learn (some eventually become certified teachers through subsidized college programs). Outside of public schools, **daycare centers, Head Start programs, and private schools** also hire teacher aides with just a HS diploma, sometimes requiring a child care certification (which can be obtained via short courses like the CDA – Child Development Associate). *Links:* Check the **NYC DOE careers** site for paraprofessional openings and exam information. Also, organizations like **UNICEF, Harlem Children’s Zone, or local YMCAs** sometimes hire teaching assistants or after-school tutors, which can be entry points.

Pay: Teacher assistants in NYC earn **around \$18–\$20 per hour** on average²⁰. The salary structure for DOE paraprofessionals is set by the union (UFT) contract: as of 2025, starting paras (Teacher’s Aide title) make roughly **\$31k–\$32k annually**⁵⁸ which equates to about **\$17/hour** (for a 10-month work year) – and this is rising to ~\$34k (about \$18/hr) by 2026⁵⁸. Many experienced paras (with some college or longevity) earn in the low-\$20s per hour⁵⁹. ZipRecruiter lists the average *certified teacher assistant* pay in NY at **\$19.01/hr**

²⁰ . Some paraprofessionals also work summer or after-school programs for additional pay. While not a high-paying job, it typically comes with benefits and the **work schedule follows the school year**, which can be a perk. The pay meets our target range and, with new contracts, is edging upward. For example, NYC recently announced increases that put many paras above \$20/hr after a few years of service ⁵⁹ . Importantly, the non-monetary rewards – making a difference in children's lives – are a big attraction of this field, and one that no AI can replicate.

Security Guard / Public Safety Officer

Job Description: Security guards provide **safety and security services** for buildings, businesses, and public spaces. Their responsibilities include **patrolling premises, monitoring surveillance cameras, checking visitor credentials, responding to alarms or disturbances, and reporting incidents to authorities**. They may work at offices, retail stores, schools, hospitals, or event venues. Some positions are unarmed, while others (after additional training) may be armed guards.

AI-Resilience: While surveillance technology and AI camera analytics are advancing, **security roles still fundamentally require human presence and judgment**. A security guard serves as a **deterrent by their mere presence**, and can intervene in ways machines can't – for instance, de-escalating a tense situation, physically blocking unauthorized entry, or providing assistance during emergencies (like evacuating people in a fire). AI can flag unusual activity on a camera, but **a human guard is needed to interpret and act on that information**. Moreover, criminals can often outsmart or disable technology, but are less predictable around an attentive human guard. There are also **customer service aspects** – guards frequently give directions, handle lost-and-found property, or manage crowd control, requiring **emotional intelligence and adaptability**. For these reasons, security jobs are expected to remain **in-demand and human-driven**. In the next 5–10 years, AI might help (smart cameras, drones for large perimeters), but **replacing human security entirely is unlikely** – if anything, guards will work alongside technology. In fact, the **average automation risk for security jobs is moderate to low**, since real-world unpredictability and the need for immediate physical response favor human workers ⁶⁰ .

Entry Path & Training: New York State mandates that security guards obtain a **8-hour pre-assignment training certificate** and then register for a NYS Security Guard license. A high school diploma (or equivalent) is generally required to be hired. After getting the initial 8-hour course done (offered by various licensed schools), you can seek employment; within 90 days of starting work, you must complete a 16-hour on-the-job training course. Additionally, guards must undergo a background check and be at least 18 years old. Many people in NYC go through agencies or programs like **NYS Department of Labor's Security Training** or community programs for this certification. Once licensed, you can apply to security contractor companies or directly to organizations with in-house security. No experience is needed for entry-level unarmed roles. Armed guard roles require a pistol permit and additional firearms training (47-hour firearms course). *Links:* The **NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services** has a list of approved security guard schools. Also, Workforce1 runs info sessions for people interested in security jobs, and large employers like **Allied Universal, Securitas, or FJC Security** frequently hold hiring events (sometimes advertised as "Security Guard Hiring – \$17–\$19/hr" ⁶¹ in NYC).

Pay: In NYC, unarmed **security guards earn roughly \$17–\$19 per hour on average** ²² . Many entry-level positions start around **\$17/hour** (especially in retail or residential building security). The **average hourly wage in Manhattan is about \$19.58** ²² , likely higher due to corporate sites and experience levels. ZipRecruiter's data shows an **average ~\$18.72/hr for unarmed security in NY** ²¹ . Job postings often

advertise ranges like “**\$17 to \$20 hourly**” for various sites ⁶¹ ⁶² . Armed guards or those in high-risk posts can earn more (low \$20s and up). Some positions, such as at certain city agencies or schools, might offer steady schedules with benefits. The security industry in NYC is largely unionized under **32BJ or Allied International Union** for certain sites, which helps maintain wages in that range or higher. Given new minimum wage trends, it’s likely that **no security guard will make below ~\$17 in NYC** going forward. Thus, this job fits squarely in the \$17–\$20 bracket for starting pay, with progression possible to supervisory roles (which can break \$20/hr). And as an accessible job with minimal training, it’s a solid option for those entering the workforce.

Mail and Delivery Services (Mail Carrier/Courier)

Job Description: Postal mail carriers and delivery couriers are responsible for **delivering letters, packages, and parcels** to homes and businesses. USPS City Carriers typically **sort mail at the post office in the morning, then walk or drive a route** to deliver mail and collect outgoing mail. Private delivery drivers (for UPS, FedEx, Amazon, etc.) load trucks and deliver packages to doorsteps, often using hand-held scanners to track deliveries. These roles involve extensive time on the move, handling items, and interacting with customers.

AI-Resilience: Despite experiments with drones and delivery robots, **last-mile delivery in a dense city like New York remains very human**. Navigating apartment buildings, securing packages in the right mailbox or at the door, managing signatures or ID checks for certain parcels – these are tasks that currently **need human flexibility**. AI and automation have made inroads in warehousing, but on city streets, the obstacles (traffic, stairs, weather, customer preferences) make full automation unlikely in the near future. The USPS itself notes that while technology aids sorting, *actual carrier positions still require people* – they even actively recruit, offering starting pay in the high teens ⁶³ ⁶⁴ . As of 2025, “**Pay ranges from \$17.29 to \$23.74 hourly**” for USPS carrier roles in NYC ⁶⁴ , highlighting that these jobs are very much still done by humans. Drones might handle some lightweight deliveries in suburbs, but in NYC’s crowded environment (think high-rises and no-fly zones), **we will still see mail carriers on foot or vans double-parked with drivers hustling packages**. Furthermore, carriers often serve as a friendly face in the community – they check in on elderly residents, handle customer questions, etc., adding a human layer that’s valued. Overall, **delivery jobs are expected to stay abundant and human-operated for at least the next decade** (with AI perhaps optimizing routes, but not replacing the person at the door).

Entry Path & Training: For USPS mail carriers, one must apply through the official USPS Careers website, meet the basic criteria (18+ years old, HS diploma, driver’s license for motor routes, and pass a postal exam). USPS hires **City Carrier Assistants (CCAs)** as entry-level carriers – these are non-career positions that can convert to career roles. The hiring process involves an online exam and interview; no prior mail experience needed. Once hired, USPS provides training on postal procedures and route operations. For private delivery companies like **UPS, FedEx, or Amazon Delivery Service Partners**, requirements are similar: 18+ (UPS requires 21 for drivers), valid driver’s license (for driving roles), and ability to lift ~50 lbs. They provide short training (a couple of weeks) on delivery methods and device usage. Some start as **package handlers or driver helpers** to get in the door. There are also courier roles (by bicycle or foot) in NYC for companies, often accessible through simple application and orientation. *Links:* The **USPS “USPS is Hiring” announcement** ⁶³ is a good example, and the **USPS careers portal** is the only official way to apply ⁶⁴ . UPS and FedEx list jobs on their websites too (UPS often has seasonal hiring fairs in NYC). The key is to be prepared for background checks and in some cases a DOT medical exam for truck drivers.

Pay: As mentioned, **USPS City Carrier Assistants start around \$17.29/hour in NYC** ⁶⁴. With progression to career carrier, pay increases (career city carriers in NYC can make over \$24/hour after a couple of years, plus full federal benefits). **UPS drivers** earn higher wages due to their union contract – full-time UPS package car drivers now earn over \$21/hour starting and can go up to \$40/hr after progression, though part-time roles (like package handler) start around \$17. Amazon delivery drivers in NYC are often around \$18–\$19/hr to start. For a high school grad, these delivery jobs offer relatively good pay with minimal training. Many also come with overtime opportunities (especially during holiday peak season) which effectively raises earnings. For example, working 10+ hours a day as a carrier (common in busy periods) yields overtime pay at 1.5x, making the effective hourly much higher. In summary, **the typical wage range for entry delivery roles in NYC does fall in the \$17–\$20/hr band** ⁶⁴, with potential to exceed that with tenure or overtime. And given that they’re hiring actively (as indicated by USPS job announcements ⁶³), these positions are accessible now and not at risk of being taken over by robots imminently.

Conclusion: *The careers above illustrate that many solid middle-class jobs remain accessible to those without a college degree – and importantly, they leverage uniquely human strengths that automation can’t easily replace.* Whether it’s the **dexterous craftsmanship of a tradesperson**, the **compassionate care of a health aide**, or the **vigilant presence of a security officer**, these roles all thrive on abilities that make us human. They also highlight “earn-and-learn” pathways like apprenticeships and vocational programs that New York City offers to high school graduates, creating a pipeline into good jobs that pay around \$17–\$20/hour and often increase with experience.

For further exploration and application resources, consider the following:

- The **New York State Department of Labor’s apprenticeship portal** (for trades and technical roles) – it lists current openings and how to apply ²⁸.
- **Workforce1 Career Centers** in NYC – they connect New Yorkers to training programs (like HVAC, cable installation ⁶⁵, medical assistant, etc.) and job opportunities.
- Specific union or program websites: e.g. **IBEW Local 3** (electricians), **UA Local 1** (plumbers), **1199SEIU Training Fund** (healthcare training), **UFT Paraprofessional Chapter** (for those interested in DOE jobs).
- The official **NYC Jobs portal (Jobs.NYC.gov)** and **NYCHA Resident Training Academy** for city government-connected roles in trades, transportation, and public safety.
- **Industry associations** like **HVACR Career Connect NY** ⁶⁶ or **Tech Guilds** that often have information on apprenticeships and can point you to application portals.

By pursuing one of these career paths, a high school graduate in NYC can secure stable employment, earn a decent hourly wage with growth potential, and remain confident that their job will **complement technology, not be replaced by it**. Each of these fields values the human element – whether it’s ingenuity, empathy, or physical skill – ensuring they will stay relevant in the age of AI.

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