

Medical Assistant

Medical assisting is a multiskilled allied health profession; practitioners work primarily in ambulatory settings such as medical offices and clinics. Medical assistants function as members of the health care delivery team and perform administrative and clinical procedures.



Career Description

Medical assistants work under the supervision of physicians in their offices or other medical settings. In accordance with respective state laws, they perform a broad range of administrative and clinical duties:

Administrative Duties

- Scheduling and receiving patients
- Preparing and maintaining medical records
- Performing basic secretarial skills and medical transcription
- Handling telephone calls and writing correspondence
- Serving as a liaison between the physician and other individuals
- Managing practice finances

Clinical Duties

- Asepsis and infection control
- Taking patient histories and vital signs
- Performing first aid and CPR
- Preparing patients for procedures
- Assisting the physician with examinations and treatments
- Collecting and processing specimens
- Performing selected diagnostic tests
- Preparing/administering medications under physician direction

Both administrative and clinical duties involve maintenance of equipment and supplies for the practice. A medical assistant, who is sufficiently qualified by education and/or experience, may be responsible for supervising personnel, developing and conducting public outreach programs to market the physician's professional services, and participating in the negotiation of leases and equipment and supply contracts.



Employment Characteristics

More medical assistants are employed by practicing physicians than any other type of allied health personnel. Medical assistants are usually employed in physicians' offices and other ambulatory healthcare settings, in which they perform a variety of administrative and clinical tasks to facilitate the work of the physician. The responsibilities of medical assistants vary, depending on whether they work in a clinic, hospital, large group practice, or small private office.



Salary

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the median annual wages of wage-and-salary medical assistants were \$28,300 in May 2008. The middle 50% earned between \$23,700 and \$33,050. The lowest 10% earned less than \$20,600, and the highest 10% earned more than \$39,570. For more information, refer to www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm.

According to the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA), the average entry-level salary for Certified Medical Assistants (CMAs) in 2009 was \$23,932. The average annual salary for full-time practitioners with a CMA was \$30,834.

For more information, go to www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary.



Employment Outlook

With demand from more than 200,000 physicians, there are, and will probably continue to be, almost unlimited opportunities for formally educated medical assistants. According to the BLS, employment of medical assistants is expected to grow 34% from 2008 to 2018, much faster than the average for all occupations. As the health care industry expands because of technological advances in medicine and the growth and aging of the population, there will be an increased need for all health care workers. The increasing prevalence of certain conditions, such as obesity and diabetes, also will increase demand for health care services and medical assistants. Increasing use of medical assistants to allow doctors to care for more patients will further stimulate job growth.



Educational Programs

Length. Programs grant an associate's degree, certificate, or diploma.

Prerequisites. High school diploma or equivalent is usually required.

Curriculum. The curricula of programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) must ensure achievement of the *Entry-Level Competencies for the Medical Assistant*. The curriculum must include anatomy and physiology, medical terminology, medical law and ethics, psychology, communications (oral and written), medical assisting administrative procedures, and medical assisting clinical procedures. Programs must include a practicum that provides practical experience in qualified physicians' offices, accredited hospitals, or other health care facilities.



Inquiries

Careers

American Association of Medical Assistants
20 North Wacker Drive, Suite 1575

Chicago, IL 60606-2903
(800) 228-2262
(312) 899-1500
www.aama-ntl.org

American Medical Technologists
10700 West Higgins Road, Suite 150
Rosemont, IL 60018
(847) 823-5169
E-mail: mail@amt1.com
www.amt1.com

Certification

American Association of Medical Assistants
20 North Wacker Drive, Suite 1575
Chicago, IL 60606-2903
(312) 424-3100

American Medical Technologists
710 Higgins Road
Park Ridge, IL 60068-5765
(847) 823-5169
E-mail: mail@amt1.com
www.amt1.com

Health Care Careers Directory 2010-2011

Program Accreditation

Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs
(CAAHEP) in collaboration with:
Medical Assisting Education Review Board (MAERB)
20 North Wacker Drive, Suite 1575
Chicago, IL 60606-2963
(312) 899-1500
(312)899-1259 Fax
www.maerb.org
E-mail: accreditation@maerb.org

Note: Adapted in part from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US
Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-2011*
Edition, Medical Assistants, at www.bls.gov/oco/ocos164.htm.

