

## Find—and keep—the right MAs for your private practice

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Physicians can't do all the work required for most office visits, and recruiting and training the right medical assistant (MA) may be just the answer you're seeking to ease the physician workload in your private practice.

The AMA STEPS Forward™ open-access toolkit “Medical Assistant Recruitment and Retention” can guide you through the process to help ensure successful MA integration. The toolkit outlines five steps to help your private practice identify various pathways to MA certification, integrate MAs in team-based care models and discover the best practices to hire and retain the MAs who are a good fit your team. The practical advice also can be applied to other practice ownership structures.

“Delegating administrative and documentation tasks that do not require the advanced skills and training of an MD or DO allows the physician to perform needed meaningful work that brings joy to the practice of medicine and better outcomes for the patients,” the toolkit explains. “The extent of the positive impact will be dependent on supporting factors of the organization and team, as well as increased training for the medical assistant.”

AMA STEPS Forward is part of the AMA Ed Hub™ an online learning platform that brings together high-quality CME, maintenance of certification, and educational content from trusted sources, all in one place—with activities relevant to you, automated credit tracking and reporting for some states and specialty boards.

Learn more about AMA CME accreditation.

Here are five steps to help your private practice recruit and retain MAs who will best meet your private practice's needs.

## Understand pathways to becoming an MA

MAs are certified after passing an examination. There are different paths to be eligible to sit for different exams, including military service and graduating from an MA training program that can last anywhere from nine months to two years. If you have trained your staff and they have been performing the role of an MA for at least five years, you can attest to this, which qualifies them to sit for a certifying exam. There are variations of certification, as there are different levels of rigor, content, training and skill assessment.

The three most widely-recognized certifications for medical assistants are:

- Certified medical assistant (CMA), considered the most rigorous assessment.
- Registered medical assistant (RMA).
- Certified clinical medical assistant (CCMA).

## Determine best MA role for your practice

MAs can simply escort patients to rooms and check vitals. But they also can contribute to agenda-setting, pre-visit planning, in-room documentation, in-basket management, medication review and more. Or they can operate somewhere between these two ends of the spectrum.

Identify your unique clinical needs by considering:

- Current team members and their corresponding skill sets.
- Gaps in resources.
- Panel sizes.
- Patient population characteristics.
- Scope-of-licensing laws in your state.
- Practice culture.

## Make the business case for MA recruitment

Use metrics and data to make the case for MAs by showing the positive financial impact they can have on the practice. The toolkit shares examples of how other physicians have made the business case and offers an interactive calculator to help you estimate the time and money you can save when physicians delegate appropriate tasks to properly trained MAs.

## Onboard your team

Define your MAs' role within the practice and ensure it aligns with state law. Before letting MAs care for your patients, complete their onboarding process and perform a skills assessment. Some practices hold week-long MA orientations.

## **Retain top talent**

Focus on empowerment and continuous professional development for your MAs to help retain them and help them perform at a high level.

It takes astute clinical judgement, effective collaboration with colleagues, and innovative problem-solving to succeed in an independent practice setting that is often fluid, and the AMA offers the resources and support physicians need to both start and sustain success in private practice.

Find out more about the AMA Private Practice Physicians Section, which seeks to preserve the freedom, independence and integrity of private practice.