



**AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF MEDICAL ASSISTANTS®**

20 N. WACKER DR., STE. 1575  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60606

Thank you for your inquiry concerning what tasks are delegable legally to medical assistants according to District of Columbia law.

My research has not revealed any language in DC statutes or regulations that addresses what physicians can delegate to medical assistants. Nevertheless, it is my legal opinion that common law legal principles inherent in licensure permit physicians to delegate a reasonable scope of clinical and administrative tasks (such as performing venipuncture; measuring vital signs; and administering intramuscular, intradermal, and subcutaneous injections—including immunizations/vaccinations) to knowledgeable and competent unlicensed professionals such as medical assistants working under their direct/onsite supervision in outpatient settings. (Direct supervision is understood to mean that the delegating physician is on the premises/in the office suite and immediately available, although not necessarily in the same room.) Tasks that constitute the practice of medicine, or which state law permits only certain health care professionals to perform, however, may not be delegated to medical assistants.

I define triage as a communication process with a patient (or patient representative) during which a health care professional is required to exercise independent clinical judgment and/or to make clinical assessments or evaluations. It is my legal opinion that it is not permissible for medical assistants to be delegated triage (as I define the term). I define non-triage communication as a process during which a non-provider health care professional follows provider-approved protocols or decision trees in verbatim receiving and verbatim conveying of information. In non-triage communication, the health professional does not exercise independent clinical judgment. It is my legal opinion that it is permissible for knowledgeable and competent unlicensed professionals such as medical assistants to be delegated non-triage communication.

To my knowledge, there is nothing in District of Columbia law that forbids supervising physicians from delegating tasks to medical assistants through licensed professionals such as physician assistants, nurse practitioners, or registered nurses.

Donald A. Balasa, JD, MBA  
CEO and Legal Counsel  
[dbalasa@aama-ntl.org](mailto:dbalasa@aama-ntl.org)



**CMA (AAMA)® | SETS THE BAR FOR EXCELLENCE IN MEDICAL ASSISTING**

TELEPHONE • 800/228-2262 | FAX • 312/899-1259 | WEBSITE • [WWW.AAMA-NTL.ORG](http://WWW.AAMA-NTL.ORG)