



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 Tennessee law.

Section 63-19-110 of the Tennessee Physician Assistant Act reads as follows:

Nothing in this part shall apply to registered nurses or licensed practical nurses utilized by a physician under Section 63-6-204 or Section 63-9-113, or to technicians, other assistants or employees of a physician not rendering services as a physician assistant and who perform delegated tasks in the office of a physician...

This language exempts medical assistants and other unlicensed individuals working in the office of a physician from the licensure requirements of the Physician Assistant Act. Therefore, it is my legal opinion that this statutory language authorizes physicians to delegate a reasonable scope of clinical and administrative tasks (such as performing venipuncture; administering of intramuscular, intradermal, and subcutaneous injections—including immunizations/vaccinations; measuring vital signs) to knowledgeable and competent unlicensed professionals such as medical assistants working under their direct/onsite supervision in outpatient settings. Tasks which constitute the practice of medicine, or which state law permits only certain health professionals to perform, however, may not be delegated to unlicensed professionals such as 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 Tennessee 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



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